

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Partnerships Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> July 2022</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Councillor Rhys Thomas (Lead Member for Housing and Communities) Ann Lloyd (Interim Head of Business Support Services CSS)</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Nigel Jones / Lisa Harte / Mark Dixon</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Homelessness and Housing Support Services</b>

## **1. What is the report about?**

1.1. To update Partnerships Scrutiny Committee and provide members the opportunity to examine the effectiveness of the homelessness multi-disciplinary service which was implemented in line with the Welsh Government's (WG) vision for homelessness and housing related support in April 2021, and to also examine the effectiveness of the cross-service Corporate approach, in addressing homelessness as a wider Council priority and not just that of Community Support Services.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1. To provide members with an update of the actions taken on the 'Accommodation Provision for the Homeless' Audit Report (December 2020), which was referred by Governance & Audit Committee in January 2021.

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

3.1. For Scrutiny to be assured that the implementation of the multi-disciplinary homelessness service and cross-service Corporate approach is in line with the WG vision of homelessness and housing support and that it is contributing to the Homelessness Prevention Service's aim to ensure that everyone is safeguarded and supported to live in homes that meet their needs.

3.2. That Scrutiny reviews progress with addressing the audit actions, comments accordingly, and determines whether it requires any further update reports on the

progress of the improvement plan, or to refer to the Governance & Audit Committee. The Chief Internal Auditor provided a summary of progress made to Governance & Audit Committee on the 16th March 2022, and will provide a further update on the 27th July.

## **4. Report details**

- 4.1. Since March 2020 the number of households being accommodated in emergency temporary accommodation has remained around 180. As we source permanent move-on accommodation for those in emergency temporary accommodation, we also have new households presenting as homeless, single under 35's remains a high proportion within emergency accommodation.
- 4.2. Households in emergency temporary accommodation are staying longer than before the Covid outbreak due to a lack of suitable move-on accommodation. Over the last 18 months we have secured tenancies for 99 households in social housing following the suspension of the Allocations Policy for Social Housing, of which over 50% have come from Denbighshire's Community Housing portfolio.
- 4.3. We continue to develop our plans for the transition to the WG Rapid Rehousing Approach, the use of good quality emergency temporary accommodation is an integral part of the plan. We need to ensure that through the corporate approach and providing the right support to homeless households we reduce the length of time spent in emergency accommodation.
- 4.4. The Council is taking a more strategic and corporate approach to homelessness which is being driven by a cross-departmental team of Heads of Service led by the Chief Executive. More appropriate emergency temporary accommodation which is owned and operated by the Council is being put in place to reduce use of Bed & Breakfast establishments and hotels and will also make it easier for clients to access support services. We have purchased Epworth Lodge in Rhyl to provide 8 units of emergency temporary family accommodation, it is expected to be handed over to the Homelessness Prevention Team during Quarter 3 2022. Work is also taking place to identify other premises that could be used for emergency temporary accommodation, it has been recognised in the internal audit report.
- 4.5. We are fully aware that the biggest barrier to addressing homelessness is the lack of affordable permanent move-on accommodation or social housing suited

to the needs of the client group. This is reflected in the exponentially high growth in the numbers on the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) waiting list. One way of supporting this is to increase the Council's Community Housing portfolio either by re-purposing existing stock or developing new units and during 2022 – 2023 we are expecting a large number of Social Housing properties to come on-stream from both the Council and other Registered Social Landlords. This should help to reduce the SARTH waiting list and hopefully see a number of homeless households permanently accommodated.

- 4.6. We are not going to resolve the issue of sourcing permanent move-on accommodation without sourcing properties in the Private Rented Sector. In 2020 we started a pilot scheme to secure properties through the WG Private Leasing Scheme, in March 2022 WG revised the scheme which now has more incentives for Landlords, including leasing terms of between 5 and 20 years, also grants for renovation up to £25k per property. We have a target to lease 80 properties over the next 5 years, the scheme also has revenue provision for tenancy support services, rent arrears, and staffing.
- 4.7. The Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) within Homelessness Prevention has now been fully implemented. The progress made and the ongoing efforts to implement new practices have been recognised within the audit report. Work is ongoing to develop a robust monitoring and quality and performance framework but this has been slightly delayed, primarily, due to waiting for guidance from Welsh Government. Every citizen entering statutory homelessness provision receives a full What Matters conversation in line with the Social Services and Well-Being Act and the most appropriate member of the MDT is allocated to the individual / household. Ongoing support will continue to address any identified needs once a permanent tenancy has been sourced to reduce the risk of cyclical homelessness.
- 4.8. The staff resource working across Homelessness Prevention has increased from 20 to 28 following the restructure in 2021 with some staff dispersed within other Council services: Community Housing; Single Point of Access (SPoA); and Youth Services, building on the infrastructure and strengths within these services to enhance our support to citizens as well as staff benefiting from accessing a wider range of skills, knowledge and experience. We are utilising Community Housing's established infrastructure to manage properties and are working towards increasing our portfolio of private rented sector (PRS) properties to end

homelessness. The partnership between Youth Services, Children's Services and Homelessness Prevention is supporting complex young people, 24/7 specialist provision is being commissioned for some of the Looked After Children.

4.9. Denbighshire receives £7.3m Housing Support Grant (HSG) from WG to provide housing related support, provision procured using HSG must support WG Homelessness Prevention Policy Paper: A Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Approach for Wales, with an expectation that we procure a range of services from specialist organisations and the Third Sector. The Grant cannot be used to deliver the statutory elements of homelessness. Through the HSG, we fund Tenancy Support Workers to work with tenants in DCC Community Housing to prevent eviction and risk of homelessness, also piloting a similar role to work with households who we have supported to end their homelessness within the PRS. All HSG provision is being reviewed to ensure it supports our vision to end homelessness in line with the RRH Approach. During April 2022 we awarded the Early Intervention and Prevention Contract enabling early stage upstream intervention to support citizens to maintain or find alternative tenancy long before they reach the homelessness prevention stage.

4.10. Internal Audit's original review of 'Accommodation Provision for the Homeless' provided a low assurance rating due to the number of risk/issues raised. A follow up in 2021 identified that a number of areas had progressed since our original review, however, actions were taking longer to be delivered than anticipated, the low assurance rating remained. A further follow up review was concluded in June 2022 (Appendix 1)

4.11. Considerable progress has been made now that the MDT model has been implemented, the team is nearly fully resourced. Our last follow up review concluded that 37% of actions had been fully implemented, with 60% of actions relating to major risks/issues outstanding. Currently, 72% of actions have been fully implemented, with 20% remaining actions relating to major risks/issues. Therefore, we now provide a medium assurance rating. A further follow up review is planned for December 2022

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

5.1. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan contributes to supporting the Corporate Plan 2017-22: Everyone is supported to live in homes that meet

their needs; The Council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience; Younger people want to live and work here and have the skills to do so.

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

6.1. The delivery of Homelessness services is funded through core budget for the statutory and HSG for the non-statutory elements such as Multi-Disciplinary Team and the wider wrap-around support from specialist services e.g. domestic violence and abuse, family support and debt advice. There are no additional costs associated with this report.

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

7.1. A Wellbeing Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

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

8.1. Housing Support Programme Strategy was accepted by full Council in February 2022, with final publication in April 2022, it has 7 priorities and an action plan linking into the Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the RRH Transition plan and reviewed quarterly by the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1. Not applicable because there is no decision required from this report.

## **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1. Not applicable because there is no decision required from this report.

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

11.1. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

11.2. Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution Outlines Scrutiny's powers in respect of scrutinising and reviewing the Council's performance in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas