

Report To:	Communities Scrutiny
Date of Meeting:	25th October 2012
Lead Member / Officer:	Councillor Hugh Irving/Simon Kaye
Report Author:	Sue Lewis (Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships)
Title:	Local Housing Strategy update (Information report)

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out the current local housing situation across all tenures and provides strategic direction for the next five years. The current LHS was developed in 2007 and will be rewritten by July 2013.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To provide information regarding progress upon the LHS action plan for 2011/12 and key headline projects proposed for 2012/13.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 That Members note the progress made and challenges to achieving key actions identified within the LHS.
- 3.2 That members consider key projects and recommend actions to be incorporated within the revised LHS for 2013-18.

4. Report details

4.1 Key Achievements in 2011/12

- During 2011/12, 58 new affordable homes have been developed against a target of 54, a significant achievement given the economic downturn. Since 2003/4, 506 affordable housing units have been delivered. The Welsh Government Local Development Plan Inspector has commended this achievement
- The Council has accessed a significant amount of additional funding through our proactive approach working closely with Welsh Government. During 2011/12, £708,408 has been secured on top of the original allocation of £1.271 million for Denbighshire – i.e. 55.7% more funding
- An update of the Local Housing Market Assessment undertaken by Glyndwr University revealed there is a need to develop 174 new affordable homes each year, for the next five years, across the County. The assessment will underpin the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and the emerging Local Development Plan (LDP)
- Welsh Government (WG) funding has meant appointing a Housing Benefits Co-ordinator, who will develop a range of projects to mitigate the impacts of

the forthcoming housing/welfare benefits changes for vulnerable tenants across the county. Visits to all those adversely affected by the changes are commencing next week

- A highly successful feasibility study has been completed into developing a single access route to housing (SARTH). The project involves Denbighshire, Conwy, Flintshire and Wrexham local authorities; five Housing Associations; and Glyndwr University. A Project Manager has been appointed and is driving the project forward. A common allocation framework has been drafted for public consultation in December 2012. Welsh Government have granted funding towards highly innovative collaborative regional project and the Welsh Local Government Association are monitoring progress
- An affordable housing scheme at The Willows, Llangollen, won a highly coveted Gold "What House?" Award in November 2011. This local landmark had been empty for more than 20 years and was successfully renovated into apartments for local people whilst maintaining the historic character of the building. The project was as successful collaboration between North Wales Housing, CADW and Denbighshire County Council
- Please refer to the Operational Plan in Appendix A for further details about completed actions.

4.2 Key Headline LHS projects - 2012/13

- The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) will be fully rewritten by July 2013. Two proposals to develop the LHS were considered and Glyndwr University selected as they are able to meet the deadline, better quality submission and value for money. Wide ranging consultation process will begin in November/December and Councillors will a key stakeholder in this process
- WG funding has been secured to redevelop an area of West Rhyl; reducing the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs); and developing new family housing. The project will involve partial demolition; the creation of a new green amenity space; and the resettlement of upto 120 residents
- The county's affordable housing policy will be fully reviewed in line with the emerging Local Development Plan. Further hearings are timetabled for November/December and the final report from the inspector is estimated to be available in February 2013
- A pilot project is being undertaken in Denbigh to look at innovative ways forward in terms of the better ways of utilising stock. Denbighshire County Council is working with Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd to use a single neighbourhood approach to the taking the area forward. Knowledge Transfer Partnership funding has been secured and the graduate will be in post by December 2012
- Fuel brokerage project is examining the possibility of securing discounts through bulk purchases of energy. The project is focusing on finding the best way to assist the most vulnerable tenants in houses in multiple occupation and Council/Housing Association tenants as they are most likely to face fuel poverty. This innovative project has attracted interest in North Wales and the rest of Wales

- Please refer to Appendix B for further details about ongoing actions.

4.3 Key challenges for 2012/13

- The regeneration of Rhyl West is a key challenge and Strategic Regeneration Area funding has been secured from WG. Sourcing and arranging alternative accommodation for those losing their homes in the planned demolition area is a significant challenge but excellent progress has been made to date
- Development of a revised LHS (see section 4.2)
- Working closely with Planning Policy to revise the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance in line with the Local Development Plan.

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

5.1 The housing projects contained within this report link directly into the draft Corporate Plan priority of:

- Ensuring access to good quality housing

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

6.1 Projects are funded within existing resources but some are subject to sourcing external funding.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

7.1 A variety of consultative mechanisms are utilised including:

- Regular discussions and updates to the Lead Member – delegated powers, Social Housing Grant, Welsh Government consultations, etc.
- Various groups to feed into the LHS – Affordable Housing Working Group/Liaison Group, Housing Regeneration Officers Group and the Strategic Housing Partnership. The new LHS will need to fully reflect the Welfare Reform changes which are driving the Housing Services restructure
- Reports to Scrutiny twice a year and reports to Cabinet when necessary.

8. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

8.1 The risks for each project are monitored and evaluated regularly as part of the project management approach.

9. Power to make the Decision

9.1 The Local Government Act 2003 – Part VII gives the Council general powers to produce the LHS and associated policies.