

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23rd May 2013

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Customers and Communities/
Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships

Report Author: Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships

Title: Revising the Local Housing Strategy –
Denbighshire

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 five years. The existing LHS was adopted in 2007 and is currently in the process of being fully revised.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1 To provide an update on the progress in revising the new LHS being developed in partnership with Glyndwr university.

2.2 To provide an early opportunity for members to input into the evolving LHS

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That members note the progress made and breadth of the current housing challenges that need to be incorporated into the LHS

3.2 That members consider the contents of the report and recommend issues for inclusion in the emerging LHS (2013-18).

4. Report details

4.1 Context

The current LHS was the result of significant amount of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and adopted in 2007. The county's LHS is the key overall strategy in terms of housing and provides strategic direction. It sets out the current housing situation and future direction.

The emerging LHS will differ to the 2007 version in number of ways:

- Evolving dynamic housing environment with new challenges – welfare reform, people delaying purchasing housing, wider regenerational effect of housing, etc. The housing market is markedly different to the one in 2007

- A new, innovative, more focussed document which we have more control over in terms of content
- Increased focus on collaborative projects in North Wales
- Glyndwr University has been selected to revise the LHS in close partnership with Denbighshire County Council as they offer a wealth of expertise, excellent track record and value for money

4.2 Key housing challenges in Denbighshire

Denbighshire is facing challenging times including:

- The Council and partners are facing financial challenges. The Social Housing Grant is reducing to just over £1 million compared to £9 million in 2008. Denbighshire County Council's proactive approach has meant accessing nearly £700,000 in additional money available from Welsh Government
- A shortage of affordable housing across the county especially in rural areas and some urban areas. Alternative ways of funding affordable housing projects are being investigated
- Relatively low turnover of Council/Housing Association stock throughout the County. Meeting housing standards now and in the future is a significant challenge
- Increasing importance of the private rented sector within the county. Many more people are delaying decisions to purchase homes in the current economic environment and seeing this as an alternative option. The condition of stock in this sector is a key consideration
- Relatively stable house prices across the county with limited turnover depending on property size and location
- Providing planned and measured interventions to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform
- Denbighshire has an ageing population which needs a range of options enabling households to make informed choices about the future
- Housing need update (Glyndwr University 2011) has evidenced the need for more 2/3 bedroom properties

4.4 LHS development process

The process consists of the following elements:

- Background research
- Development of an outline draft document to encourage debate (Scrutiny)
- Wide ranging consultation with stakeholders including consultation days

- Development of a finalised draft as a result of consultation
- Final LHS – needs to be adopted by Full Council
- Development of executive summary and easy-to-read versions

4.5 **Draft report**

Appendix A contains the key findings of research and outline draft of the LHS to encourage debate.

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

5.1 The Corporate Plan provides seven strategic objectives, four of which directly relate into housing:

- Quality of housing is key to improving living standards and so we will achieve the Welsh Government's affordable housing targets and have fewer people on the housing waiting list
- Developing the local economy is crucially important - this priority will concentrate on strong support for local businesses, increased tourism, investment in our towns and villages and regeneration of deprived areas
- We know that extra care housing is delivering a better quality of life for many vulnerable people in the community. We will have more extra care housing and fewer people living in residential care homes. We will continue to improve adult and child protection services so that vulnerable people in our county are as safe as possible.
- To deliver these priorities the council itself must be modern and customer focused: simple customer service standards for each service, a flexible workforce and effective use of technology to replace costly bureaucracy.

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

6.1 The projects within the LHS are within existing budgets or subject to grants from external organisations.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken prior to the LHS' adoption.

8. What consultations have been carried out?

8.1 A consultation Plan has been developed including the following key elements:

- Regular discussions and updates with the Lead Member for Customers and Communities
- 2 Local Housing Strategy events have been organised for:
 - 30th May – Canolfan Cae Cymro (Village Hall) Clawddnewydd
 - 5th June – Eirianfa, Factory Place, Denbigh
- A full draft LHS will be devised once the consultation has been completed
- The LHS will require adoption by Full Council

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

9.1 The risks for each projects contained in the LHS are monitored and evaluated regularly as part of the project management approach.

10. Power to make the Decision

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

10.2 Article 6.3.1 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that Scrutiny will be consulted on any proposed changes to the Policy Framework – the Local Housing Strategy forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, whilst Article 6.3.3(a) states that in exercising its policy development and review functions scrutiny may “assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by an in-depth analysis of policy issues...”

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