

**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

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

**Report Author:** Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships

**Title:** Developing the Local Housing Strategy –  
Denbighshire (2013-18)

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**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 being fully revised.

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

To provide an opportunity to comment on the draft Local Housing Strategy prior to wider consultation.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

For members to consider the draft LHS and make any relevant comments before wider consultation.

**4. Report details.**

4.1 Context

The current LHS was the result of a 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 regeneration affect 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

- Glyndŵr University has been selected to develop 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 over £1.6 million in additional money from Welsh Government since 2011
- 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 (Glyndŵr University 2011) and subsequent preliminary analysis has highlighted the following key areas:
  - 60% of households are unable to afford private rented option because of much higher rents and more households in the lower income bands (33% in 2009). Private rented has become more unaffordable than homeownership with a mortgage (using Welsh Government guidance)
  - The median income level has reduced from £25-30k per household in 2009 to £20-25K in 2013
  - For a third of households the only affordable option open to them is to rent a Council or Housing Association home (April 2013)

### 4.3 **LHS development process**

The process consists of the following elements:

- Background research – Big Plan, etc.
- Development of an outline draft document to encourage debate (Scrutiny – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013)
- Consultation day with stakeholders on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013
- Development of a draft as a result of consultation – wide circulation
- Final LHS – adopted by Full Council (September 2013)
- Development of executive summary and easy-to-read versions.
- Once finalised this will be made available on the DCC website
- The LHS will be monitored by a range of mechanisms including the Strategic Housing Partnership (Lead Member, senior housing staff and local Housing Associations) and regular reporting to Scrutiny. An option analysis of other potential mechanisms is currently being developed.

### 4.4 **Draft report**

- Appendix A summarises the changes made in light of the consultation event on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013
- Appendix B contains latest draft LHS to promote discussion – previous discussed the outline on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013

## **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
- Extra care housing
- Developing the local economy
- Modern and customer focused services

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

6.1 The cost of developing the LHS with Glyndwr University is a fixed cost of £7,500 plus expenses for the consultation event. These costs are contained within the existing budget for Housing Services.

6.2 The profile of LHS will be raised and used to bring in further funding from external partners through collaborative working.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?**

7.1 The development of the LHS and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is concurrent and progress made to date includes:

- Attendance of corporate training on EqIA (28<sup>th</sup> May 2013)
- Ability to utilise existing expertise within Community Housing Service and Glyndŵr University
- Preliminary discussion with Corporate Equalities Officer and further meetings planned.

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

Please refer to section 4.3 and Appendix A which summarises the responses from the consultation event.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Development of the LHS must be incorporated within existing budgets. The cost implications of any schemes or developments emerging from the Plan in future would need to be assessed individually.

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

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

**11. Power to make the Decision**

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

11.2 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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