

Report to	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	1 st February 2024
Lead Member	Councillor Rhys Thomas - Lead Member for Housing & Communities
Head of Service	Liz Grieve - Head of Housing & Communities
Report author	Geoff Davies - Lead Officer Community Housing
Title	Community Housing Tenancy Management

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To consider the management of council housing / estates, including support available to all households and powers to deal with breaches of tenancy conditions.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To examine the Community Housing Team's management of council housing including dealing with antisocial behaviour, criminal activity and complaints about tenant's behaviour whilst supporting victims and also perpetrators of breaches of tenancy.
- 2.2. Community Housing receive occasional enquiries from members about how we manage council estates, including the behaviour of households and also the condition of gardens. This included a question being raised at a recent Scrutiny meeting looking at the Housing Strategy. At that meeting Community Housing offered to bring a separate report to Communities Scrutiny.

3. What are the Recommendations?

The committee considers the contents of the report and appendix 1 and makes any comments or recommendations.

4. Report details

- 4.1. In recent years the landscape around housing tenancy management has changed. The historical image of a Housing Officer as an enforcement official with a rule book with an expectation to enter our tenant's homes on demand has significantly changed.
- 4.2. Housing Officers have embraced this significant change in how they approach their roles to become less process driven and more people focussed in responding to community needs.
- 4.3. A number of factors have driven this change including a greater awareness that blunt instrument and bureaucratic approaches often only further entrench issues within households and communities. The outcome that this only further marginalises households that will then continue to require longer and costlier interventions as well as not addressing the issues.
- 4.4. We have moved away from specialist Housing roles that would deal solely with Income Management or Neighbourhood matters, to create generic officers who can provide a more holistic service to tenants and which also increases our efficiency in managing workloads.
- 4.5. In very recent years, challenges for Housing staff have increased due to the impact of the pandemic lockdowns on society as a whole; the cost of living crisis increasing pressure on households and communities and the ever growing pressures on other services that are important to support quality neighbourhoods.
- 4.6. Housing Officers are also required to support complex and often fraught issues involving a mixture of issues such as mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, child protection, domestic abuse, safeguarding, threats of suicide and have always to be aware of the safety of tenants is our utmost priority and this includes an increasing focus on matters such as mould and also fire safety.

- 4.7. Increasingly complex housing needs means that when allocating vacant homes in our communities we have to find appropriate homes, and ways to integrate households with complex and challenging needs, into settled communities. This is to ensure we adhere to our legal obligations through Housing Allocations & Homelessness Policies. There is always extremely limited availability of homes which means options are very limited. Our approach with new tenants is dealt with in the appendix 1 report.
- 4.8. Partnerships with agencies such as North Wales Police are crucial and other options such as support or mediation are considered. Appendix 1 outlines our approach to tenancy management and includes case studies to illustrate the innovative approaches used to resolve issues.
- 4.9. We must also acknowledge the implementation of new tenancy legislation through the Renting Homes (Wales) Act. Whilst this has had a big impact on our ways of working and processes, the legislation does not change any of the tools for dealing with tenancy contract breaches. This would still require application to the County Court for Injunction or Possession due to the breach. There are other remedies available and these are covered by the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- 4.10. We have introduced a programme of Tenancy Visits to get to know our tenants and their households better, with a longer term aim to reduce the demands to respond to issues by implementing a more proactive and preventative approach.
- 4.11. We have introduced a Tenancy Support service (funded by Housing Support Grant) who have been vital in supporting the team through providing additional and more intensive, short term support to enable households to navigate through difficult periods.
- 4.12. The focus of this report is on management of people and households so does not give detail on income management, general estate management matters and wider community resilience work which although interconnected and form part of a Housing Officer's scope, these would need separate consideration.
- 4.13. Engaging with tenants' groups is important to understand local communities and issues and priorities in local areas. We continue to work with DTARF, the

Denbighshire Tenants and Residents Federation which represents resident's groups. The Community Resilience Team are working with DTARF and resident's groups to ensure representation and to grow our engagement activities. However, we look at a wide range of feedback to ensure we understand local needs.

4.14. It is important to note that overall, satisfaction among council tenants remains good and stable. Detailed work is carried out to monitor our satisfaction and the areas our tenants want us to prioritise. A separate report about the recent STAR survey of council tenants shows high levels of satisfaction with the service.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1 Housing is a Corporate Priority - A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs and to Ensure sufficient good quality housing is available, meeting the needs of all Denbighshire residents.

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

6.1. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is ring fenced and costs for delivering services to tenants are budgeted and funded by the HRA.

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

7.1. No impact assessment has been carried out as no decision is required or changes to services are proposed in this report.

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

8.1. No formal consultation has been carried out as no decision or changes proposed with this report. Housing staff meet our tenant's representative forum DTARF on a monthly basis to discuss issues of concern for our tenants and our communities.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. There are no costs associated with this report.

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

10.1. The risk associated with managing communities is that failure to respond to known issues can lead to escalation and potential harm to individuals as well as the impact on the reputation of the Council. The Community Housing service is striving to be as proactive as possible in getting to know our households and communities.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. This report is for information only.