

Public Document Pack

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Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



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To: Cllr Helen Brown (Chair)

Councillors: Pam Banks, Gillian Brockley, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Kevin Rush, Dale Selvester and Linda Thew

1 February 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY, 2024 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Delyn Committee Room, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire or on a virtual basis.

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. The live streaming will stop when any confidential items are considered. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 **APOLOGIES**

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 14)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January, 2024.

4 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING** (Pages 15 - 24)

Report of Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

Purpose: To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.

5 **COUNCIL FUND BUDGET 2024/25** (Pages 25 - 30)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities), Corporate Finance Manager - Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: To review and comment on the cost pressures, proposed cost reductions, and associated risks.

6 **COMMON HOUSING REGISTER (SINGLE ACCESS ROUTE TO HOUSING - SARTH)** (Pages 31 - 56)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: To provide an annual update on the Common Housing Register.

7 **VOID MANAGEMENT** (Pages 57 - 58)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: To provide a detailed update to the Committee on Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following item is considered to be exempt by virtue of Paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public interest in withholding the information outweighs the interest in disclosing the information until such time as the commercial arrangements have been finalised.

8 **NORTH EAST WALES (NEW) HOMES BUSINESS PLAN** (Pages 59 - 80)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration

Purpose: To consider the NEW Homes Business Plan.

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **WEDNESDAY 10 JANUARY 2024**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 10 January 2024

PRESENT: Councillor Helen Brown (Chair)

Councillors: Pam Banks, Gillian Brockley, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Dennis Hutchinson, Kevin Rush and Linda Thew

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Bernie Attridge (for Dale Selvester) and Councillor Ted Palmer (for Ray Hughes)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Marion Bateman and Chrissy Gee attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy); Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration); Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement); Service Manager (Housing, Welfare and Communities); Service Manager – Housing Assets and Capital Works Manager

IN ATTENDANCE: Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator & Electoral Services Officer

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Bernie Attridge declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Cost of Living and Welfare Reform as his daughter was in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payment.

Councillor Ted Palmer declared a personal interest as a Council Tenant.

60. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 15th November and 13th December, 2023 were submitted for approval.

13th December 2023

Following a query from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin, it was agreed that a copy of the outcome of the garage site review by ward be circulated to Members of the Committee within the next month.

The minutes of the meetings held on 15th November and 13th December, 2023 were approved as a correct record, as moved and seconded by Councillor David Evans and Councillor Dennis Hutchinson.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

61. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME & ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration and advised on the following amendments which had been made since the last meeting:-

- The Local Housing Market Assessment report, which had been scheduled to be presented in February would now be presented at the March meeting; and
- The Budget 2024/25 report would now be presented to the Committee at the February meeting.

In relation to the action tracking document, shown at Appendix 2 of the report, the Facilitator reported that the letter to be sent to Welsh Government (WG) around funding pressures for homelessness had been approved by the Chair but was being reviewed following the recent WG budget announcement and would be sent prior to the next meeting.

The Facilitator also advised that she was chasing the financial information requested on Out of County Placements, which maybe included in the budget report due for consideration at the next meeting.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Bernie Attridge and seconded by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted.
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

62. WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (WHQS) 2023

The Service Manager – Housing Assets introduced a report to provide an update on the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS 2 2023) and the Council's obligations relating to the delivery of the new standards.

The Council were successful in delivering the previous WHQS programme of works to all Council stock and were now in the maintenance phase of the programme, delivering further investment works to those components within properties where required. As a result of the new standards, the Council would be required to update its specifications, work briefs and programmes of work to comply with the new guidance.

The Service Manager outlined the main Standards set out for all social housing as follows:-

- Is in a good state of repair.
- Is safe and secure.
- Is affordable to heat and has minimal environmental impact.
- Has an up-to-date kitchen and utility area.
- Has an up to date bathroom;
- Is comfortable and promotes wellbeing.
- Has a suitable garden; and
- Has an attractive outside space.

The Service Manager highlighted the new themes of the WHQS 2 and the timeline for achievement of the standard, as outlined within the report.

Councillor Ted Palmer raised concern that he had not received a questionnaire as a Contract Holder and also asked if WHQS 2 would be an improvement on the works carried out as part of the WHQS. The Service Manager explained that the questionnaires he was referring to in his presentation referred to the original questionnaires sent to Contract Holders in 2014. Further questionnaires would be sent out as part of the consultation process for the WHQS 2. He also advised that the WHQS 2 would be an improvement above the standard of the WHQS, in particular community open space and access.

In response to a question from Councillor Geoff Collett around 'Net Zero', the Capital Works Manager explained the meaning around 'Net Zero' as part of the WHQS 2, outlining biodiversity as a driver towards net zero and reducing carbon emissions. He also explained that there was also a need to look at all green spaces and spaces which could be utilised to help promote wildlife.

Councillor Bernie Attridge commented on the potential to undertake regeneration schemes on some of the estates and asked whether consideration would be given to the benefits provided to areas where many of the Council properties had been purchased as part of the right to buy scheme. The Service Manager agreed that it would be easier to regenerate an area where all of the Council properties were still under the ownership of the Council and that the Council needed to be mindful of how Housing Revenue Account monies were spent. He advised that consultation would be held with Members and contract holders as the Council progressed with its investment plans.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Pam Banks around damage caused at properties, the Service Manager advised that all contractors were briefed and asked to provide appropriate care to protect properties from unnecessary damage. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration asked Members to contact him if any incidents arose so that they could be dealt with in a timely manner.

The Chair asked if there was still allowance for acceptable fails. The Capital Works Manager advised that WG had changed the wording from 'acceptable fails' to 'conditional pass', but the meaning remained the same, so if a Contract Holder did not want any of the works carried out, subject to health and safety, this would be allowed.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Bernie Attridge and seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the capital investment programme in the next phase of delivery as it moved towards complying with the new updated Welsh Housing Quality Standards and requirements.

63. CAR PARKING PROVISION – COUNCIL OWNED PROPERTIES

The Service Manager – Housing Assets introduced a report which focussed on the works which had been completed and continued to be delivered through the Council's Environmental Programme, which included the provision of car parking.

The Service Manager informed the Committee on how the schemes were assessed and discussed the scoring matrix of how they determined where works would be prioritised and completed. The car parking matrix was used to score all those that were feasible and could go ahead in line with the budget.

He reported that a number of Members had put in several requests for schemes, including projects that required permits to park. He added that several complexes had been identified which were being considered but added that they must also comply with Streetscene Policy. Engagement would be carried out with all Members as to which schemes could be moved forward.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy and Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration both outlined the need to carefully consider the implementation of car parking permit schemes due to the current pressure on the Enforcement Team.

In response to comments made by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin around Member consultation, the Service Manager said that the majority of requests for parking schemes were made by Members and that Local Members would be consulted prior to a decision being made on a scheme.

In response to a question from Councillor Linda Thew around car parking schemes linking to the demolition of garage sites, the Service Manager explained that they do have a similar scheme in place for such sites which forms part of a separate programme. Such sites were considered for parking areas/new builds/wilding areas. He asked Councillor Thew to share information on sites she had identified.

Councillor David Evans commented on the need for more off road parking for residents but raised concern around parking permits and the fairness of how they would be allocated with it benefitting some and not others and that it could make neighbours compete for the space. He added that there would always be an inequality to those who had driveways and could park for free and those who don't have a driveway and were required to pay for a permit. For the reasons he outlined, he said that he was not in support a permit parking scheme.

The Service Manager advise that car parking permits would be for Council properties only, with sheltered housing accommodation currently under review. The scheme would not include private residents. The Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration commented on the challenges around providing adequate car parking spaces with families having multiple vehicles.

Councillor Kevin Rush asked for information on the average cost for providing a driveway. The Service Manager advised that the average cost was around £2,000-£3,000 per driveway. Budget dictated how many driveways could be completed within a year and he re-iterated that driveways were very costly to provide, which was why other options were considered.

The Chair asked if some of the proposed car parking schemes could be incorporated within the sheltered housing review. The Service Manager advised that some would be picked up as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2 programme.

Following questions around future schemes, it was agreed that information on the priority of schemes be shared with Members of the Committee.

Councillor Ted Palmer suggested that the recommendation as outlined within the report be amended to reflect that the Committee supported the feasibility of a car parking scheme in principle following consultation with Contract Holders and Local Members.

The Chair suggested that the recommendation outlined within the report be amended to read:-

- That the Committee support the proposed actions relating to the feasibility of a car parking permit scheme, following consultation with Contract Holders and Local Members.

The above recommendation was moved by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson and seconded by Councillor Kevin Rush.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the proposed actions relating to the feasibility of a car parking permit scheme, following consultation with Contract Holders and Local Members.

64. ALARM SERVICE CHARGES REVIEW

The Service Manager (Housing, Welfare and Communities) introduced a report which provided details of a proposal to increase the service charge to all sheltered residents who were currently using the alarm service and that the service charge would be applied to all sheltered properties at the point they were let in future.

The Service Manager reported that the Council provided a range of services to residents, the community and visitors for which it could apply a fee or charge and

generate income accordingly. Within the Council's housing stock (HRA) there were 2592 sheltered housing accommodation units and following a review of the warden service in 2009 this service was ceased, and the Community Based Accommodation Service (CBASS) was created. The service provided a tenure neutral service for any older person in Flintshire who may need housing related support.

In addition, the service provided a response service for alarm activations. For HRA residents this was a 24-hour service, operating an out of hours service from within the team for outside office hours (evenings, nights and weekends). The proposal outlined within the report was to apply the increased service charge to all sheltered residents who were currently using the alarm service. All new residents in sheltered schemes with an alarm would have the charge applied as per current process at the beginning of their new contract.

The Committee praised the alarm service which they said was an excellent service for contract holders in sheltered accommodation and was highly valued by the contract holders.

Councillor Ted Palmer raised concern around the service charge being applied to all sheltered properties at the point they were let in future given that some contract holders in sheltered accommodation were around the age of 55 and may not require the service. The Committee was reassured that contract holders would be made aware of the service charge ahead of agreeing a let of a sheltered accommodation in the future.

In response to a question around the increase being backdated, the Service Manager advised that the rise would be implemented from 1st April, 2024, therefore there would be no backdated costs added.

It was agreed that the comments and recommendation made by the Committee be feedback to Cabinet.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Ted Palmer and seconded by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support and endorses the proposal to achieve full cost recovery for the housing revenue account alarms service.

65. COST OF LIVING AND WELFARE REFORM

The Service Manager (Housing, Welfare and Communities) introduced a report to provide a combined operational update on the latest welfare response impacts, and the cost-of-living schemes to support residents.

The report provided an update on the impact that welfare reforms continued to have on Flintshire residents and the ongoing work to mitigate this, and support households affected. Vulnerable households were now also being impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and the report provided information around a range of measures

implemented to help those affected by the cost-of-living crisis and the support provided to residents to help mitigate these negative impacts.

The Service Manager provided a detailed update on the following areas outlined within the report:-

- Spare Room Subsidy
- Impact in Flintshire
- Benefit Cap
- Impact in Flintshire
- Energy Bills Support Scheme – Alternative Fund (EBSS-AF)
- Alternative Fuel Payment – Alternative Fund (AFP-AF)
- Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) and Eligibility Free School Meals (eFSM)
- School Essentials Grant (Uniform Grants)
- Welfare Support
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's)
- Future Changes

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin commented on the difficulties around getting parents to sign up for the schemes and asked if there was any information that could be provided to parents to inform them if they applied for certain financial support that they could also apply for other financial support. The Service Manager advised that the Council would continue to work with schools to promote the UPFSM.

Following a request that the information contained within the report be circulated to all Members for information, it was suggested that an information flyer be produced and circulated to all Members of the Council.

Following further comments around encouraging parents to apply for UPFSM, it was suggested that a letter be sent to Welsh Government (WG) to request at a national level they encourage parents to continue to apply for Free School Meals.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, including an additional recommendation that the Committee write to the WG to request that, at a national level, they encourage parents to continue to apply for Free School Meals, were moved by Councillor Ted Palmer and seconded by Councillor David Evans.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the ongoing work to manage the impacts that welfare reform has, and would continue to have, on some of the most vulnerable residents.
- (b) That the support measures implemented via Welsh Government to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis be noted; and
- (c) That the Committee write to Welsh Government to request that, at a national level, they encourage parents to continue to apply for Free School Meals.

66. HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

The Service Manager (Housing, Welfare and Communities) introduced a report to provide an overview of the changes that had been made to the Housing Management Policy and the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

The Service Manager reported that the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, which came into effect from the 1st December 2022 was the biggest change to housing law in Wales for decades. The new legislation had and would change the way all landlords in Wales rent their properties. The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 aims to simplify the process of renting a home in Wales and to provide parties with more information about their rights and obligations. The Act was now partially in force, for the purpose of making regulations and issuing guidance.

In relation to the Housing Management Policy, a summary of the main changes were detailed within the report.

The Service Manager also reported that the Council was committed to tackling anti-social behaviour as it had a devastating impact on the lives of the Council's customers. The policy needed to reflect best practice and protect the rights of contract holders as well as minimising risk to the Council for not complying with appropriate legislation. The aim of the policy was to ensure that effective systems were adopted to prevent and minimise instances of anti-social behaviour and to resolve them as early as possible through timely and appropriate intervention.

Councillor Bernie Attridge requested that procedures for the storage of Scooters be included in the Housing Management Policy. The Senior Manager advised that the Housing Management Policy could not cover everything, as separate policies that dealt with things such as scooters and pets sat under the Housing Management Policy.

Concern was raised around the strength of the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy in dealing with instances of dog attacks. The Committee were advised that the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy had been developed in such a way that all aspects of Anti-Social Behaviour would be covered, and Members were reminded that such instances could fall into criminal charges. It was suggested that a copy of the Pet Policy be circulated to all Members of the Council so that they were clear on the obligations of the Contract Holders in this regard.

Councillor David Evans welcomed the inclusion of Estate Walkabouts within the Policy but questioned how the outcome of actions/issues raised were communicated. It was agreed that officers would pick this up as a procedural issue to improve communication.

It was agreed that the comments and recommendation made by the Committee be feedback to Cabinet.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor David Evans and seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the Housing Management and Anti-Social Behaviour policies.

67. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.59 a.m.)

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Chair

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7 th February, 2024
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?6. Is the issue of public or Member concern?
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Community Housing OSC.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2. Contact Officer: Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Telephone: 01352 702305 E-mail: ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Report Author
<p>Wednesday 6th March, 2024</p> <p>10am</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 19</p>	<p>Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Update Report and Homelessness Policy</p> <p>Dynamic Resource Scheduling System (DRS) Update</p> <p>Void Management</p>	<p>To provide an annual update on the work ongoing to mitigate Homelessness and support provided to rough sleepers, together with the Homelessness Policy.</p> <p>To provide an update on the DRS System</p> <p>To provide a monthly update to the Committee on Void properties and the work being undertaken to bring the properties back into use.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Service Manager – Housing & Prevention</p> <p>Service Manager – Housing Assets</p> <p>Service Manager – Housing Assets</p>
<p>Wednesday 12th June, 2024</p> <p>10am</p>	<p>Communal Heating Charges 2024/25</p> <p>Customer Involvement Strategy</p>	<p>To consider the proposed heating charges in council properties with communal heating systems for 2024/25 prior to Cabinet approval.</p> <p>To consider the Customer Involvement Strategy.</p>	<p>Consultation</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)</p> <p>Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p>

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

	Local Housing Market Assessment	To present the outcome of the Local Housing Assessment, to include information on the private rented sector.	Assurance Monitoring	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager
	Housing Strategy	To present to the Committee the Housing Strategy	Consultation	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager
Wednesday 10th July, 2024 10am	Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income	To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement / Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)
Page 20	Council Plan 2023-24 Year-End Performance	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)
	Sheltered Housing Review Update	To provide the Committee with an update on the Sheltered Housing Review	Consultation	Service Manager – Housing Assets
	NEW Homes review	To outline the outcome of the NEW Homes review.	Consultation	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager

Items to be scheduled

- **Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site** - To report to the Committee on a Gypsy and Traveller Transit Site in the County – moved from 17th May meeting to be scheduled to a new date.
- **Food Poverty Update** – moved from 17th May meeting to be scheduled to a new date.
- **Rent Income Pilot Scheme** – As suggested at 12.07.23 meeting
- **De-carbonisation Strategy** – Workshop for Members as discussed at 12.07.2023 meeting

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
Quarterly / Annual	Performance Reporting	To consider performance outturns for improvement targets against directorate indicators.	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Six monthly	Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income	To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.	Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement / Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)
Six monthly	Update on NEW Homes & Property Management	To update Members on the work of the NEW Homes & Property Management	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager
Annually – September 21	WHQS Capital Programme – Delivery review update	To provide an update on progress of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), that the Council is delivering through its Capital Investment Programme. Report to include information around the use of local labour and number of apprentices and school leavers.	Service Manager – Housing Assets
Monthly	Void Management	To provide a detailed update to the Committee on Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Service Manager – Housing Assets

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ACTION TRACKING FOR THE COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
13.09.2023	6. Homelessness Budget Pressures	That the Chair write to the Welsh Government, on behalf of the Committee, to express its concern around the financial implications to the Local Authority following changes to the Housing Wales Act 2014 (HWA 2014) and the need for appropriate levels of resource and support to be provided to the Local Authority.	Ceri Shotton Martin Cooil Cllr Helen Brown	Letter sent to WG on 19 th January, 2023.	Completed.
11.10.2023	4. Budget 2024/25 – Stage 2	Cllr Rosetta Dolphin asked if information on the out of county placements for the previous year could be provided. Sara Dulson suggested that this information be circulated following the meeting.	Sara Dulson	Information circulated to Members of the Committee via e-mail on 26.01.24.	Completed.
10.01.2024	Minutes <u>15.11.2023</u>	Following a query from Cllr Rosetta Dolphin, it was agreed that a copy of the outcome of the garage site review by ward be circulated to Members of the Committee within the next month.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton		
10.01.2024	6. Car Parking Provision – Council Owned Properties	Following questions around future schemes, it was agreed that information on the priority of schemes be shared with Members of the Committee.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton		

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

10.01.2024	7. Alarm Service Charges Review	That the comments and recommendation of the Committee be feedback to Cabinet.	Ceri Shotton	Feedback provided to Cabinet at its meeting on 16.01.24.	Completed.
10.01.2024	8. Cost of Living and Welfare Reform	Following a request that the information contained within the report be circulated to all Members for information, it was suggested that an information flyer be produced and circulated to all Members of the Council.	Jen Griffiths / Ceri Shotton		
10.01.2024	8. Cost of Living and Welfare Reform	As shown in recommendation (c), that the Committee write to Welsh Government to request that, at a national level, they encourage parents to continue to apply for Free School Meals.	Ceri Shotton / Cllr Helen Brown		
10.01.2024	9. Housing Management and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	That the comments and recommendation of the Committee be feedback to Cabinet.	Ceri Shotton	Feedback provided to Cabinet at its meeting on 16.01.24.	Completed.
10.01.2024	9. Housing Management and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	Following a question from Cllr Tina Claydon, it was agreed that a copy of the Pet Policy would be circulated to all Members for information.	Jen Griffiths / Ceri Shotton		



COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7 th February 2024
Report Subject	Council Fund Budget 2024/25
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value & Procurement
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager and Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since last summer Members have received regular updates on the Council's challenging budget position for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement was announced on 20 December 2023 as planned, with responses to the consultation on the settlement invited by the deadline of 2 February 2024. A summary of the key headlines was set out in a report to Cabinet on 16 January. The report also provided an update on the 'remaining gap' of £12.946m which the Council will need to bridge to enable it to set a legal and balanced budget.

As a result of this position, all Portfolios were asked to revisit their cost base to consider potential ways of reducing budgets or removing cost pressures to contribute more to meeting the remaining gap.

The purpose of this report is to provide details of additional proposals for the Housing and Communities portfolio.

The Committee is invited to review and comment on the Portfolio's options to reduce budgets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Review and comment on the Housing and Communities portfolio's options to reduce budgets.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BUDGET POSITION 2024/25														
1.01	Since last summer Members have received regular updates on the Council's challenging budget position for the 2024/25 financial year.														
1.02	<p>The Welsh Local Government Provisional Settlement was announced on 20 December 2023 as planned, with responses to the consultation on the settlement invited by the deadline of 2 February 2024. A summary of the key headlines were set out in a report to Cabinet on 16 January which also updated on the 'remaining gap' of £12.946m which the Council will need to bridge to enable it to set a legal and balanced budget.</p> <p>As a result of this position, all Portfolios were asked to revisit their cost base to consider potential ways of reducing budgets or removing cost pressures to contribute more to meeting the remaining gap.</p>														
1.03	The purpose of this report is to provide details of additional proposals for the Housing and Communities Portfolio that will go towards meeting the gap to enable the Council to set a legal and balanced budget.														
1.04	<p>Housing and Communities Portfolio – Proposals for budget reductions</p> <p>These are set out in the paragraphs which follow.</p>														
1.05	<p><u>Table 1: Housing and Communities – Budget Reductions</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Budget Efficiency Proposals</th> <th>£m</th> <th>RAG</th> <th>Note</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) - use of reserve</td> <td>0.254</td> <td>A</td> <td>1.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>0.254</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Notes:</p> <p>Use of reserves on a one-off basis for 2024/25 only. The reserve funds to be utilised arose from the carry forward of previous year underspends against budget provision for CTRS. This will significantly increase the amount required for 2025/26 which will be further influenced by the level of increase in the Council Tax for 2024/25, potential growth (or reduction) of eligible take-up between now and the end of March 2026, and the level of Council Tax increase for 2025/26.</p>			Budget Efficiency Proposals	£m	RAG	Note	Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) - use of reserve	0.254	A	1.	Total	0.254		
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1.06	<p>Ongoing risks - Homelessness:</p> <p>As previously reported there is an additional amount of £2m in the current 2024/25 budget proposals. Due to continued high and growing demand however,, there is a significant risk that this amount will still be insufficient to meet potential additional costs..</p>														

	<p>This is despite the adoption and ongoing implementation of a range of mitigation measures intended to increase the supply of available social housing with a view to reducing the number of rooms of emergency accommodation needed to accommodate homeless persons and families.</p> <p>This area will therefore need to remain as a significant open risk with sufficient reserves set aside as a safeguard.</p>								
1.07	<p>Budget Timeline</p> <p>An outline of the local budget timeline at this stage is set out in the table below:</p> <p><u>Table 2: Budget Timeline</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Event</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 to 9 February 2024</td> <td>Overview and Scrutiny Committees</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 February 2024</td> <td>Cabinet and Council – Final Budget Setting</td> </tr> <tr> <td>27 February 2024</td> <td>WG Final Budget/Settlement</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Event	1 to 9 February 2024	Overview and Scrutiny Committees	20 February 2024	Cabinet and Council – Final Budget Setting	27 February 2024	WG Final Budget/Settlement
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: the revenue implications for the 2024/25 budget are set out in the report.</p> <p>Capital: there are no new implications for the approved capital programme for either the current financial year or for future financial years – the capital programme will be subject to a separate report.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Member Budget Briefings July and October 2023 • Specific Overview and Scrutiny Committees • Corporate Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	As set out in the report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTFS and Budget 2024/25 Cabinet Report July 2023 • MTFS and Budget 2024/25 Cabinet Report September 2023 • Member Briefing Slides • Cabinet Report December 2023 • Cabinet Report January 2024 • Member Briefings January 2024

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day to day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Budget Requirement: The amount of resource required to meet the Councils financial priorities in a financial year.</p> <p>Forecast: An estimate of the level of resource needed in the future based on a set of demands or priorities.</p> <p>Capital: Expenditure on the acquisition of non-current assets or expenditure which extends the useful life of an existing asset.</p> <p>Revenue Support Grant: the annual amount of money the Council receives from Welsh Government to fund what it does alongside the Council Tax and other income the Council raises locally. Councils can decide how to use this grant across services although their freedom to allocate according to local choice can be limited by guidelines set by Government.</p> <p>Specific Grants: An award of funding from a grant provider (e.g. Welsh Government) which must be used for a pre-defined purpose.</p> <p>Welsh Local Government Association: the representative body for unitary councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks authorities in Wales.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>Local Government Funding Formula: The system through which the annual funding needs of each council is assessed at a national level and under which</p>

each council's Aggregate External Finance (AEF) is set. The revenue support grant is distributed according to that formula.

Aggregate External Finance (AEF): The support for local revenue spending from the Welsh Government and is made up of formula grant including the revenue support grant and the distributable part of non-domestic rates.

Provisional Local Government Settlement: The Provisional Settlement is the draft budget for local government published by the Welsh Government for consultation. The Final Local Government Settlement is set following the consultation.

Funding Floor: a guaranteed level of funding for councils who come under the all-Wales average change in the annual Settlement. A floor has been a feature of the Settlement for many years.

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 7 th February 2024
Report Subject	Common Housing Register (Single Access Route to Housing – SARTH)
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) is a partnership between all the major providers of social housing in North Wales, covering the local authority areas of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

The Council manages the housing register on behalf of Flintshire's Social Housing Partners (Flintshire County Council, Clwyd Alyn Housing, Wales and West Housing, Grwp Cynefin and Adra Housing Association) and a single Common Housing Register provides the list of all eligible applicants for social housing. Housing partners allocate their empty properties from the Common Housing Register but have discretion to also apply a small number of 'management moves', as they see fit, in line with principles of 'best use of stock'.

The service to applicants includes the housing triage assessment, housing solutions triage, for those who present as homeless or at risk of homelessness, and a wide range of housing options advice. The service also manages all the applicants accepted onto the Common Housing Register once a clearly evidenced housing need has been identified. Only those applicants with a housing need are accepted onto the Housing Register, but all applicants benefit from housing options advice.

The number of applicants accepted onto the Common Housing Register has grown significantly over the past four years. This is putting increasing pressure on the administrative burden and management of the register and is also leading to increased waiting times for the limited amount of social housing that is available each year.

The report will outline the current levels of housing need across the County and the disparity with the availability of social housing which is not increasing at the same rate as the levels of housing needs that are prevalent within our communities.

An annual customer satisfaction survey is now undertaken to gauge customer experience, satisfaction with service delivery and opportunities for service improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the current levels of housing need across the county and the growing pressures regarding social housing which is not aligned with the supply of available homes locally.
2	To note the applicant feedback following the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey results for the Common Housing Register and Housing Advice function.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMON HOUSING REGISTER
1.01	<p><u>Background to the Single Access Route To Housing Partnership (SARTH)</u></p> <p>SARTH is a partnership between all the major social landlords covering the local authority areas of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire. Conwy is not a stock holding authority but both Denbighshire and Flintshire have social housing available through their Council Housing Departments.</p> <p>In addition to the above Councils, the partnership also includes Housing Associations; Cartrefi Conwy, Clwyd Alyn, Grwp Cynefin, North Wales Housing, Wales and West Housing and Adra. The SARTH partnership has been in place for over 10 years and is recognised as a strong partnership by all partners involved and externally by Welsh Government and other housing sector and public sector peers.</p> <p>A SARTH operational panel meets monthly, with the primary purpose to ensure consistency in the application of the policy across the three counties and to review complaints and appeals from applicants. The panel has been instrumental in addressing wider topics than the register such as approaches to changes in legislation and issues arising from welfare reform, Covid and more recently elements of the introduction of the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016. The panel considers lessons learnt from appeals, complaints and identifies policy challenges. Issues are escalated as required for consideration of the SARTH steering group which operates as the board for the partnership.</p> <p>The SARTH steering group includes senior officers from all partner organisations across all three counties. The group meets on a quarterly basis to serve as an escalation point for strategic issues arising out of the operational panel along with emerging regional and national sector wide risk and policy issues.</p>

1.02	<p>The Common Allocations Policy and Common Housing Register</p> <p>All partners work within the framework of the Common Allocations Policy. This policy identifies the main principles of the eligibility and prioritisation of applicants seeking social housing, as well as the allocation of social housing across the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire. Applicants who approach the Council applying for social housing are assessed through a housing triage. Only those applicants with a housing need are accepted onto the register, but all applicants will receive housing options advice. Where it is possible to do so, housing help will be offered to overcome housing problems.</p> <p>The policy recognises that there is a high demand for social homes and too few vacant properties to meet demand. That was true when the policy was first developed, and now even more so, as evidenced in the charts within the housing needs data found within Appendix 1 of this report.</p> <p>The numbers of eligible applicants with a wide range of qualifying housing need continues to be significant, but the number of applicants on the register has reduced from 2,424 on the 31st March 2023 to 1,983 on 31st December 2023 (down 18.2%). Whilst this may suggest the need for social housing is reducing, this is not the case, and is a reflection of better-quality applicant data and the improved performance of register administration.</p> <p>Following the decision by Denbighshire Council to return administration of the Common Housing Register within the Council on 31st March 2023, operational staff have had more time to focus on data accuracy and routine maintenance of the register. This has resulted in a significant increase in periodic reviews of applicant data. As a result, the register data is cleaner and more accurate, with a number of dormant applications now cancelled.</p>
1.03	<p>Housing Options Advice</p> <p>The Housing Register Team provide the most useful, consistent, and accessible advice and information to everyone presenting with a housing problem. This person centred and problem specific response ensures people are helped to explore all their housing options.</p> <p>It is intended that where possible resolving housing problems is the priority, to avoid the need for a move. Issues such as disrepair, financial problems, neighbour disputes may be addressed through advice and support and referrals to appropriately placed support services. This avoids disruption for households and reduces demand for the limited social housing that is available in the county.</p> <p>When a move is required, applicants are accepted onto the Common Housing Register and their housing application is prioritised in line with the Common Allocations Policy banding. Housing options advice is still offered, enabling customers to make the most informed choice about how to find a home to meet their needs. This advice covers a whole range of affordable housing options, including social housing options and locations, private rented accommodation, supported housing, extra care, home ownership and other affordable housing alternatives as appropriate.</p>

	<p>It is acknowledged that finding affordable private rented housing is a challenge, but advice and assistance is still offered and financial help, by way of deposit and rent in advance, will be offered if required. Other low-cost housing options are available via the Tai Teg Affordable Housing Register Service, which is a North Wales wide service hosted by Grwp Cynefin Housing Association.</p>
1.04	<p>Policy Development</p> <p>The Common Allocation Policy is principally governed by The Housing Act 1996 and the Code of Guidance for Homelessness and Allocations 2016 and Welsh Statutory Instruments 2014 No. 2603 (w. 257) – Housing Wales – The Allocation of Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014. Other relevant legislation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom of Information Act 2000 • Equalities Act 2010 • Social Care and Well Being Act 2014 • Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 • Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 • Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 <p>In recent years and as a direct response to the Covid pandemic and significant pressures on homelessness services following the ‘no one left out’ directive from Welsh Government, a variation to the Common Allocations Policy by way of 50% nominations to homeless households was introduced. Take up of the 50% quota for homeless households has always been well below 50%. Appendix 1 provides analysis of the offers made to homeless households through the homeless nominations process.</p> <p>The policy variation is intended to free up the limited resource of emergency and temporary housing and ensure local authorities can still fulfil their statutory duties through the provision of interim housing (s.68 Housing Wales Act 2014). The table in Appendix 1 outlines lettings data over a 3¾ year period from April 2019 to December 2023 by offer category and shows the increase of offers to the homeless cohort via Homeless Direct Lets.</p> <p>Without this policy variation, the Council’s expenditure on emergency and temporary housing would be far greater. However, whilst this variation in policy has assisted with the homeless pressures, it is of significant concern that when looking at the needs of households who are homeless or imminently homeless, single people and couples under the age of 55 account for approximately 80% of the current homeless cohort in emergency or temporary housing offered by Flintshire County Council Homeless Team.</p> <p>With more families and older people (over 55s) experiencing homelessness in recent years, the take up on the homeless nominations has naturally increased since first being implemented in 2020-2021 resulting in these households having significantly reduced periods of homelessness.</p> <p>This disconnect between supply of social housing and the local homeless cohort profile is what accounts for the lower than permitted take up on the 50% homeless quota. The homeless pressures options paper presented to</p>

	<p>Scrutiny Committee in November 2023 outlines a number of proposed actions to support greater take up of social housing to ease current homeless pressures and further updates on progress will be shared later in the year.</p>
1.05	<p>Future Policy Direction for Social Housing Allocations</p> <p>It is anticipated that there will be significant changes with regards to the guidance relating to the allocation of social housing on the back of Welsh Governments ambitions to end homelessness and adopt a Rapid Rehousing approach.</p> <p>When people experience homelessness, assisting them to secure safe suitable housing as quickly as possible is key to the Rapid Rehousing approach. It is expected that the future changes to allocations guidance will further strengthen the links between homelessness and social housing as a significant tool within the prevention and relief of homelessness. Such an approach would support efforts to ensure homelessness is brief within the context of Welsh Governments aspiration for 'homelessness to be rare, brief and unrepeatable'.</p> <p>Consultation on a White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales has recently closed. When specifically looking at allocations and social housing application the White Paper has considered a piece of research '<i>Allocations: Understanding more, in the context of homelessness in Wales</i>' which sought to understand the performance of social housing allocations in relation to the prevention and relief of homelessness.</p> <p>The report found that across Wales there are significant variances in the rate of allocations to homeless households through local housing allocation schemes. The data from several 'spotlight areas' found that allocations to homeless households ranged from 23% - 60% during the financial year 2021-2022.</p> <p>Flintshire was one of the spotlight areas within the research and reported the lowest figure of 23% of all social housing allocations going to homeless households. The figure of 23% was a combination of the Homeless Direct Lets (10.4%) and other offers to homeless households via the SARTH Banding process (12.6%).</p>
1.06	<p>Housing Need</p> <p>All applicants accessing the Common Housing Register have clearly evidenced housing needs. They either have no current settled housing due to homelessness or their existing housing is unsuitable. This is clearly different to wanting a move so housing need data is a more appropriate title as opposed to demand data.</p> <p>The numbers on the social housing register are increasing and as such waiting times for properties are becoming longer. There were 1,816 households on the Common Housing Register at the end of Q1 in the 2020/2021 period. As evidenced in the chart below demand has grown in the following years and the current number of eligible households on the</p>

Common Housing Register at the end of Q3 2023/2024 was 1,983 as at December 2023. The breakdown of data can be found in Appendix 1

The chart below shows the breakdown of all the eligible applicants on the register by band as the end of Q3 of 2023/2024 reporting period.

REGISTER BREAKDOWN	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS
BAND 1	120
BAND 2	1614
BAND 3	1
BAND 4	248
TOTAL	1983

Further data relating to the Common Housing Register can be found within Appendix 1 of this report, including data on housing triages, applicants housing needs and property requirements.

1.07 Social Housing Supply

When looking at the supply of social housing across all social housing providers operating in Flintshire it is noted there has been a significant slowdown following Covid in the numbers of available homes. This downward trend of supply alongside the upward trend in housing need as evidenced by the numbers of applicants accepted on the social housing register is a significant concern. This is not unique to Flintshire. (Appendix 1 Housing Register Data).

1.08 Specialist Housing Needs

Most applicants' housing need can be met from the available housing stock, although not quickly. However, some applicants require properties to meet needs arising from disability and properties need to accommodate wheelchairs, bed hoists, stair lifts and accessible bathing rooms. Such housing is in particularly short supply within the social housing stock and these requirements would not necessarily be met within an acceptable timescale or within existing stock without significant adaptations or other property specific interventions (purchase or repurpose existing stock).

In Flintshire presently, the current specialist housing register has 46 applicants awaiting significantly adapted properties and the applicant's priority banding is detailed below:

REGISTER BAND	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS
BAND 1	19
BAND 2	25
BAND 3	0

BAND 4	2
TOTAL	46

A significant lack of larger homes (5 bedrooms plus) is also noted across Flintshire. There are currently 17 applications on the Common Housing Register for families requiring larger properties (5 bedrooms plus). Of these, the applicants can be broken down into the following bands:

REGISTER BAND	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS REQUIRING LARGER PROPERTIES
BAND 1	0
BAND 2	15
BAND 3	0
BAND 4	2
TOTAL	17

1.09 Specialist Housing Needs Supply

Over the last 3 years and 9 months there have been a total of 45 households with significant specialist housing requirements (major adaptations) who have benefited from the support of the specialist housing process.

PERIOD	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS
April 2020 – March 2021	17
April 2021 – March 2022	11
April 2022 – March 2023	10
April 2023 – Dec 2023	7

Specialist housing needs are met through a range of significant adaptations to existing homes, purchase of properties and further investment to bring these homes to the standards and specifications required for disabled household members, or through the creation of purpose-built new build homes funded through the Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme.

Sourcing suitable accommodation for applicants with specialist need, and identifying properties that are suitable for complex adaptation work within our housing stock is difficult and budget constraints makes this even more challenging as many of our existing homes that become available each year are not suitable for major adaptations.

The desire to build more specialist and larger homes is therefore appropriately recorded as a desired outcome within the Councils Housing Prospectus, and both the Council and Housing Association partners intend

	to explore solutions to adapt or extend existing social housing to meet these needs.
1.10	<p>Customer Satisfaction Survey</p> <p>An annual satisfaction survey is now completed for the Common Housing Register Service. Attached as Appendix 2 are the headline findings of the survey. All applicants were invited to engage in the survey and a total of 210 responses were received.</p> <p>Headline satisfaction data confirms that when first approaching the Housing Register & Advice Team 51% of applicants felt the service offered was excellent (17%) or good (34%). 34% of residents were satisfied with the service offered and 15% of residents were dissatisfied with the service offered (11% poor and 4% very poor).</p> <p>Follow up survey work will be completed over the coming months to better understand reasons for dissatisfaction with services offered by the Housing Register and Advice Team and to further develop customer satisfaction monitoring and feedback to inform service delivery.</p> <p>Work to digitise elements of applicant engagement and move to a self-service model for uploading information as part of the applicant verification and review process is programmed into the IT service work schedule for later in 2024.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Detailed below are the cost implications associated with the delivery of Common Housing Register, housing advice services and meeting housing needs in Flintshire:</p> <p>Revenue: The cost of delivering Flintshire’s Common Housing Register is in the region of £248,055 for 2023/2024 with most cost relating to staff in Customer Services and Housing Register Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of the cost is apportioned to the Council Fund as the local authority has a statutory duty to hold a register. A contribution from the Councils Housing Support Grant award is accessed and relates to housing advice and housing related support activities. • 50% is apportioned to Housing Partners on an equitable split based on their stock levels in the County. <p>Capital: Whilst administering the Common Housing Register is a revenue cost, there are implications for capital expenditure if we are to meet the housing needs of the people of Flintshire. Housing needs data as identified through the Common Housing Register informs the build programmes of both Flintshire Council and our Housing Partners. Flintshire’s Housing Prospectus, which has been approved by Council and shared with our Housing Partners, focusses current and future</p>

	developments around the increased supply of social housing and specific areas of unmet or growing needs.
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The following risks and mitigations have been identified by way of control measures:</p> <p>Risk: Failure to meet the needs of applicants for social housing resulting in excessive waiting times for social housing and prolonged impact on levels of homelessness and other forms of housing hardships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Build more social housing at scale and pace in line with current and projected demand. • Mitigation: Continue to support people to explore all their housing options including renting privately, supported housing, as well as other affordable housing products such as low-cost home ownership, shared equity housing and intermediate rentals. <p>Risk: Emergency housing costs continue to increase at a greater rate due to more households becoming homeless at significant revenue cost to the local authority on the Council fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Sustain the 50% nominations approach as we transition to the Rapid Rehousing model longer term as outlined in the Councils Rapid Rehousing Transition Action Plan. • Mitigation: Successfully deliver on the Homeless Pressures Options Paper approved by Members in November 2023. • Mitigation: Build more homes that meet the needs of the homeless cohort such as one-bed general needs housing, of which there is a significant shortage. • Mitigation: Support the Sheltered Housing Review process to better meet the wants and the needs of older people and explore opportunities to address disparities in the local housing supply. • Mitigation: Develop more specialist housing to avoid those with significant and complex housing needs becoming homeless <p>Risk: Satisfaction levels for those residents accessing the Housing Register services drops due to a failure to respond to opportunities to modernise service delivery and embrace elements of digital self-service or lack of staffing resource.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Review staffing levels for the register service and methods of service delivery in light of budget pressures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation: Continue to develop online services and self-help tools to enable people to access more modern and dynamic Housing Register service with a full range of housing options advice. 														
3.02	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive – Increase supply of high-quality sustainable homes and make best use of the housing stock.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>Prevention - Preventing homelessness and housing hardships through positive interventions that relieve pressures on an already strained housing market.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> <td>Positive – Increased integration between services and partner organisations</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> <td>Positive – Increased collaboration between services, partner organisations and service users</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> <td>Positive – Service user involvement to help shape effective housing and services so that access to homes and housing advice and support is timely and person centred.</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Positive – Increase supply of high-quality sustainable homes and make best use of the housing stock.	Prevention	Prevention - Preventing homelessness and housing hardships through positive interventions that relieve pressures on an already strained housing market.	Integration	Positive – Increased integration between services and partner organisations	Collaboration	Positive – Increased collaboration between services, partner organisations and service users	Involvement	Positive – Service user involvement to help shape effective housing and services so that access to homes and housing advice and support is timely and person centred.				
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Common Housing Register Data.
5.02	Appendix 2: Customer Satisfaction Data.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Research Report: Allocations – Understanding more in the context of homelessness of Wales</p> <p>https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-10/allocations-understanding-more-context-homelessness.pdf</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Martin Cooil – Housing & Prevention Service Manager Telephone: 07880 423234 E-mail: martin.cooil@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) – the project that enabled the development of the Common Allocations Policy and the label for the Housing Options and Housing Register Partnership.
8.02	Housing Triage – the initial discussion with residents about their circumstances and their housing needs.
8.03	Housing Solutions Triage – the initial discussion with residents about their circumstances and their housing needs where homelessness or a risk of homelessness is identified.
8.04	Common Allocations Policy – the shared policy that Local Authority and Housing Partners have signed up to in regard to the eligibility and prioritisation of housing applications for social housing in Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire
8.05	Rapid Rehousing - an internationally recognised approach which ensures that anyone experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.

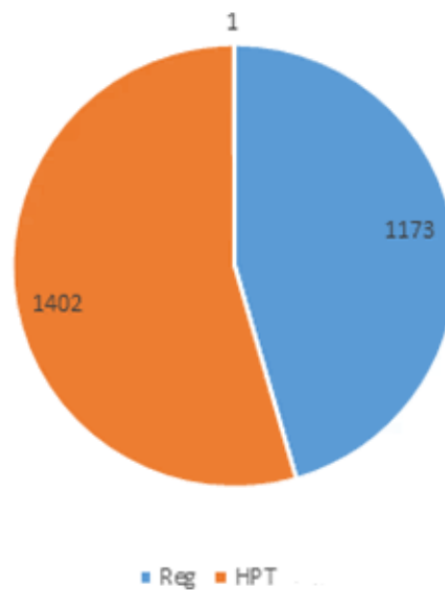
8.06	Flintshire's Housing Prospectus – the strategic document that clearly highlights the housing needs and aspirations of the local authorities social housing build programme linked to the Social Housing Grant
8.07	Social Housing Grant – Capital funding from Welsh Government to enable the development of social housing to meet local needs.
8.08	Housing Support Grant – Revenue funding from Welsh Government for the provision of a wide range of housing related support services, to meet local needs.

APPENDIX 1: HOUSING REGISTER DATA

Housing Applications made to Flintshire Council April 2023 – December 2023

Housing Application Triage Data April 23 - Dec 2023	
Total Requests for Triage	2583
Triages Completed	2575
Referred to Housing Register	1173
Referred to Homeless Assessment	1402

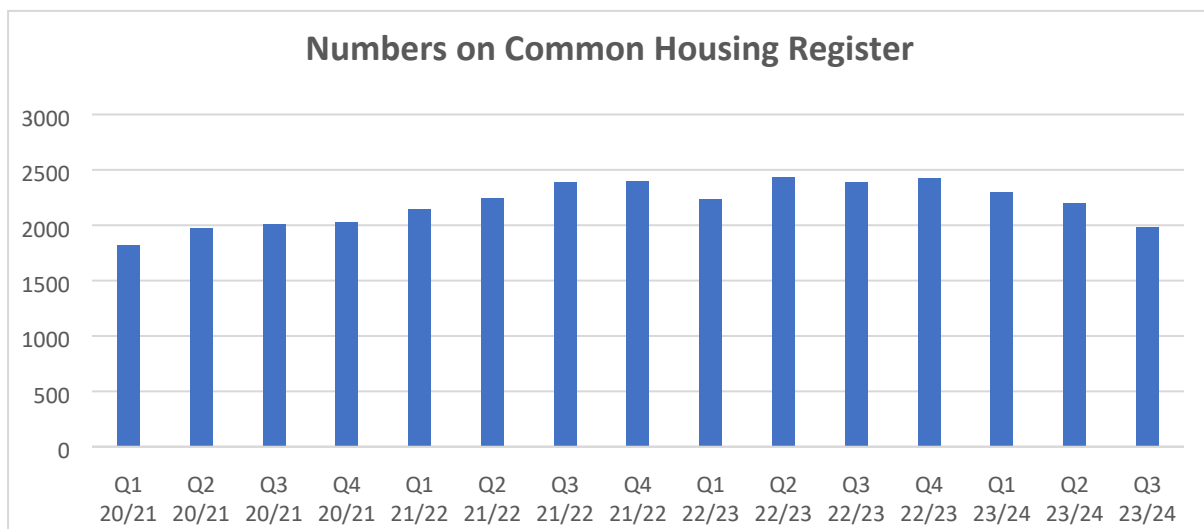
Triage Referrals Apr - Dec 2023



NOTE: This table shows the total number of enquiries for the current financial year (quarter 1 – quarter 3) where residents have applied for housing help and their triage has been completed. Once a triage assessment is completed applicants will either be referred to the Register Team for only a housing application; or they are referred to homeless team as a risk of homelessness has been identified during triage assessment.

Numbers on Common Housing Register

Period	Number of Live Applications
Q1 20/21	1816
Q2 20/21	1973
Q3 20/21	2009
Q4 20/21	2030
Q1 21/22	2148
Q2 21/22	2243
Q3 21/22	2392
Q4 21/22	2401
Q1 22/23	2238
Q2 22/23	2438
Q3 22/23	2387
Q4 22/23	2424
Q1 23/24	2297
Q2 23/24	2197
Q3 23/24	1983



NOTE: As referenced in the report, the numbers of applicants coming down is not a reflection on reductions in housing needs. This relates to improved performance within the Housing Register Team now that the Denbighshire Register has been handed back and staff can spend more time on data quality and improved housing options advice.

Applications By Property Types

Social Housing Applications by Property Type		
Type	Type	Applicants
Bungalow	1	219
	2	120
	3	56
	4	19
	5	1
Flat	1	617
	2	285
	3	65
House	1	102
	2	472
	3	216
	4	129
	5	30
	6	2
Maisonette	1	239
	2	167
	3	52
	4	18
Mini Group Bungalow	1	506
	2	70
	3	11
	4	3
Mini Group Flat	1	289
	2	28
	3	5
	4	2
Sheltered Bungalow	1	446
	2	55
	3	9
	4	4
Sheltered Flat	1	233
	2	19
	3	5
	4	2

NOTE: Applicants have needs-based eligibility for property sizes based on their household size but choice of property type is down to applicants choice and eligibility on age criteria for mini group (50yrs+) and Sheltered (55yrs+).

Applications Cancelled between April 2023 and December 2023

	Await Info *	Change of Circs **	Duplicate Apps	No Reasonable Preference	Failed Review Response	Reasonable Offers Refused	Rehoused via SARTH	Other **
April	38	37	24	28	185	4	39	3
May	32	28	17	30	120	4	46	17
June	68	39	32	77	114	8	43	14
July	44	30	14	28	246	7	34	14
August	58	17	14	37	104	4	54	10
September	89	19	14	43	63	2	61	6
October	56	42	16	32	111	2	50	14
November	67	34	16	37	146	2	39	17
December	53	36	14	35	73	2	42	11
TOTAL	505	282	161	347	1162	35	408	106

* Includes those applicants where application is cancelled following initial suspension to verify the applicants' circumstances and failed to provide proof of housing need, bank statements, ID etc.

** Includes change of circumstances and no longer needs rehousing, gone into residential home, mutual exchange, privately renting a property, purchased a property and rehoused by other Housing Provider (not SARTH)

*** Includes applicant request, common travel area, excluded from the register, letter returned via royal mail and subject to immigration

Breakdown of All Applicants 'lead housing need'

Housing Need	FCC
Condition of Property	1
Financial Hardship	86
Homeless	495
Lack of Essential Facilities	2
Management Move	2
Medical	306
Move On from Supported	15
Overcrowding	268
Sharing Essential Facilities	382
Ukraine Application	16
Under occupation	110
Welfare	300
Total	1983

NOTE: Applicants may have a number of qualifying housing needs, but the system records the applicants lead need at the point of application.

Applications Summary by Choice Area (table shows the top 5 areas choices)

Area	Applicants
Mold & Mynydd Issa	752
Buckley	698
Connahs Quay	685
Shotton	631
Flint	611

NOTE: Applicants can choose a wide range of areas. There are 59 areas for allocations across Flintshire. Those applicants who have wider area choices tend to be rehoused quicker. All applicants are encouraged to push the boundaries for their property search areas as part of their housing options advice.

Social Housing Lettings Data 19/20 – end Q3 23/24



Period	All Social Housing Lettings
2019/2020	744
2020/2021	650
2021/2022	625
2022/2023	534
2023/2024	386

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2019 and 31/03/2020

By Category Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	79	10.62%
	Flintshire CC	497	66.80%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	28	3.76%
	Wales And West Housing Association	67	9.01%
	Total	671	90.19%
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	10	1.34%
	Flintshire CC	48	6.45%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	2	0.27%
	Wales And West Housing Association	13	1.75%
	Total	73	9.81%
Total		744	

NOTE: This first data set is before the Homeless Direct Lets policy variation was implemented in Summer 2020.

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2020 and 31/03/2021

By Category Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	72	11.08%
	Flintshire CC	381	58.62%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	3	0.46%
	Wales And West Housing Association	34	5.23%
	Total	490	75.38%
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	28	4.31%
	Flintshire CC	71	10.92%
	Wales And West Housing Association	13	2.00%
	Total	112	17.23%
SARTH Homeless Direct Let	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	11	1.69%
	Flintshire CC	22	3.38%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	1	0.15%
	Wales And West Housing Association	14	2.15%
	Total	48	7.38%
Total		650	

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2021 and 31/03/2022

By Category Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Adra	2	0.32%
	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	62	9.92%
	Flintshire CC	333	53.28%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	7	1.12%
	Wales And West Housing Association	61	9.76%
	Total		465
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	24	3.84%
	Flintshire CC	54	8.64%
	Wales And West Housing Association	17	2.72%
	Total		95
SARTH Homeless Direct Let	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	15	2.40%
	Flintshire CC	39	6.24%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	1	0.16%
	Wales And West Housing Association	10	1.60%
	Total		65
Total		625	

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2022 and 31/03/2023

By Landlord	Category Offer Code	Number	Percentage
Adra	SARTH Banding Offer	4	0.71%
	Total	4	0.71%
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	SARTH Banding Offer	43	7.65%
	SARTH Management Offer	11	1.96%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	21	3.74%
	Total	75	13.35%
Flintshire CC	SARTH Banding Offer	259	46.09%
	SARTH Management Offer	37	6.58%
	SARTH Relationship Breakdown-Direct Let	3	0.53%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	81	14.41%
	SARTH Hard To Let Property (Direct Let)	1	0.18%
	Total	381	67.79%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	SARTH Banding Offer	3
SARTH Homeless Direct Let		1	0.18%
Total		4	0.71%
Wales And West Housing Association	SARTH Banding Offer	62	11.03%
	SARTH Management Offer	24	4.27%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	12	2.14%
	Total	98	17.44%
Total		562	

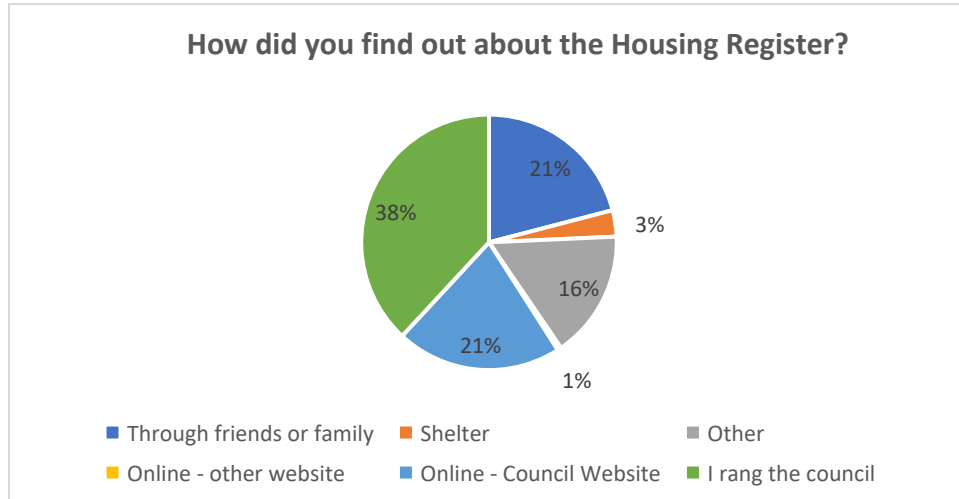
Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2023 and 27/12/2023

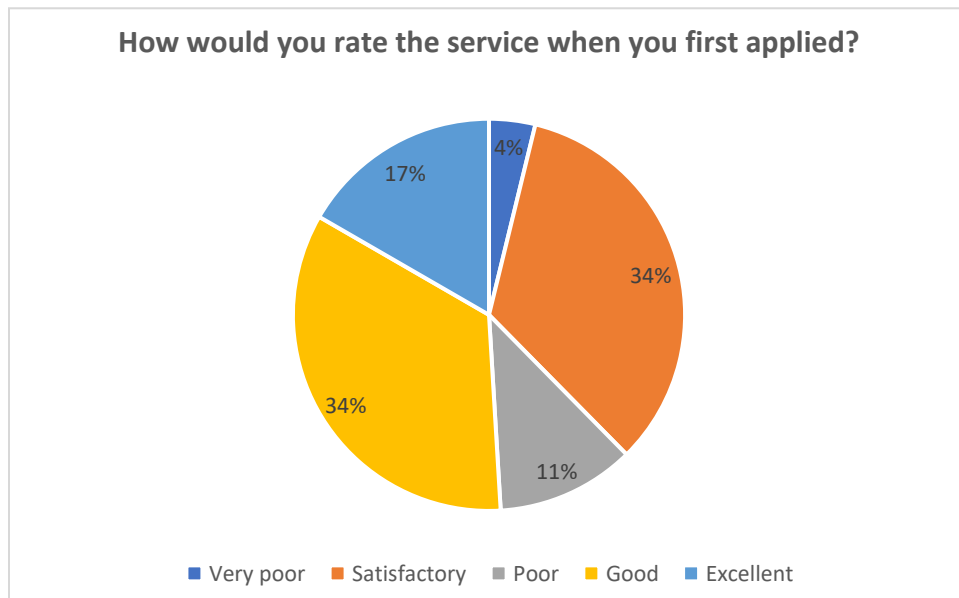
By Landlord	Category Offer Code	Number	Percentage
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	SARTH Banding Offer	22	5.70%
	SARTH Management Offer	1	0.26%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	12	3.11%
	Total	35	9.07%
Flintshire CC	SARTH Banding Offer	227	58.81%
	SARTH Management Offer	26	6.74%
	SARTH Relationship Breakdown-Direct Let	1	0.26%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	63	16.32%
	Total	317	82.12%
Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	SARTH Banding Offer	4	1.04%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	1	0.26%
	Total	5	1.30%
Wales And West Housing Association	SARTH Banding Offer	21	5.44%
	SARTH Management Offer	4	1.04%
	SARTH Homeless Direct Let	4	1.04%
	Total	29	7.51%
Total		386	

Customer Survey Results 2023/2024

The latest set of customer satisfaction and insight data from 2023/2024 survey is shown below. All applicants were approached and invited to take part in the survey. 210 responses were received.

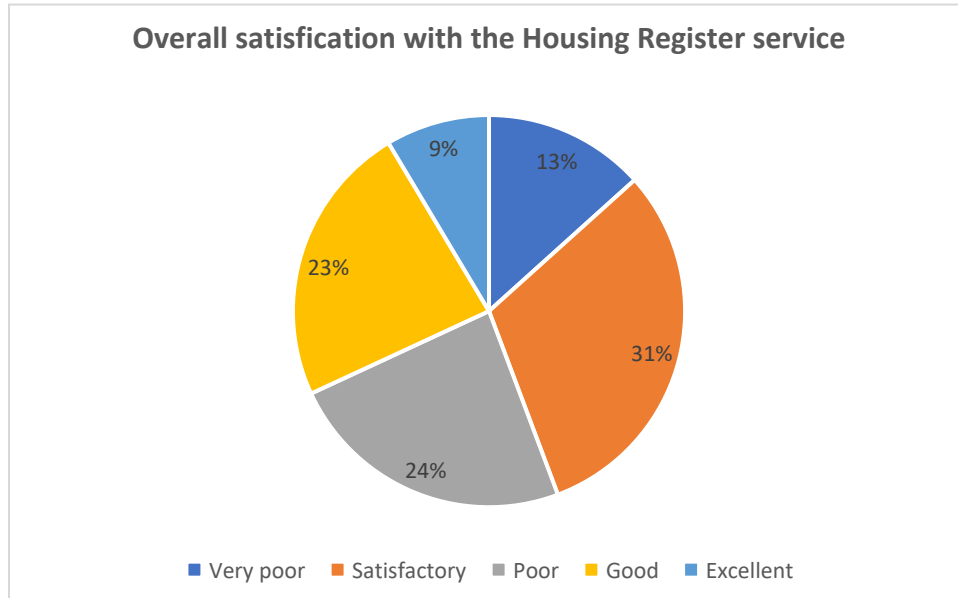


Respondents were asked to rate the standard of service when they first approached the Housing Register for housing advice and help.

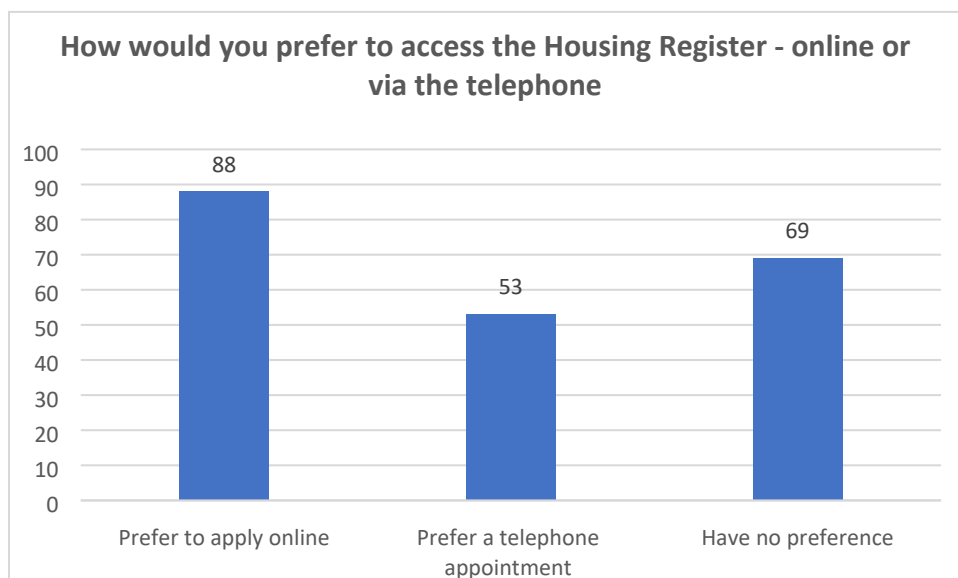


When first approaching the Housing Register Service, 50% of applicants stated the service received was Excellent or Good. It is however noted in the following table that satisfaction drops when later asked to rate the 'Overall satisfaction with the Housing Register Service' where the response of Excellent or Good drops to 32%. This likely accounts for the fact that:

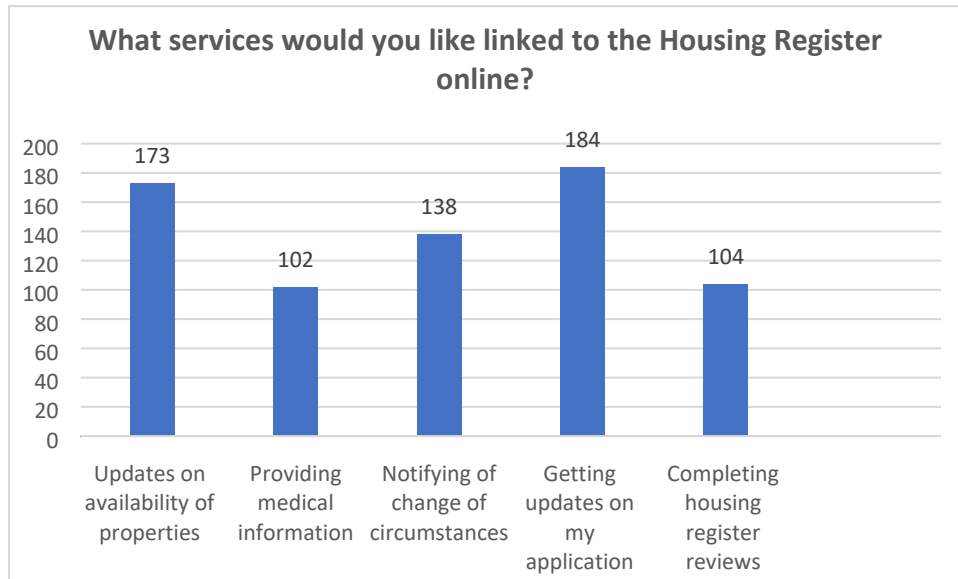
- 1) Residents are experiencing increased waiting times for social housing which creates general dissatisfaction with the services and assistance offered.
- 2) Changes being implemented to enable more digital access are yet to be fully rolled out.



Although not offered as a preference for communication channels, few if any, applicants ever request their contact to be in person, however, this offer is available through our Flintshire Connects Offices.



Residents were asked to identify what services or functions they would like to access digitally. Applicants could provide multiple choice responses to this question to capture all the functions they would like to access online.



The survey will be routinely delivered each year to track progression on customer satisfaction. The survey will be further developed to monitor the impact and satisfaction of the digital enhancements to be implemented over the next 12 months.

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**Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Voids Management Update
Reporting period: January 2023**

Key figures			J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J
Number of new void properties in reporting period			28	20	20	26	26	46	20	39
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			30	39	33	28	29	40	24	33
Number of allocation offers accepted			-	-	-	-	29	40	24	33
Number of lettings			-	-	-	-	32	38	21	34
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	142	134	107	101	100	84	-	90
		Minor voids	60	53	45	34	35	44	-	63
		TBC	59	55	82	97	94	107	-	84
	Housing Management	High Demand	171	165	153	129	127	115	-	134
		In Progress	90	77	79	101	102	90	-	73
		Low Demand	-	-	-	-	-	28	-	30
		TBC	0	0	2	2	2	2	-	0
Property Type	General Needs		122	109	113	120	116	117	-	105
	Sheltered		139	133	121	112	115	118	-	132
Property Type	1 bed		91	87	77	72	74	70	-	77
	2 bed		96	92	89	91	84	89	-	95
	3 bed		69	57	61	63	65	69	-	65
	4 bed		4	5	6	5	5	6	-	5
	4 bed plus		1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1
Capital District Areas	Buckley		29	25	26	24	28	27	-	29
	C'Quay & Shotton		60	58	57	54	47	45	-	37
	Deeside & Saltney		31	32	33	34	35	36	-	33
	Flint		51	49	43	45	45	48	-	61
	Holywell		55	47	48	49	51	59	-	56
	Mold		35	31	27	26	23	20	-	21
Total voids			261	242	234	232	229	235	231	237

Additional information

Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Top reasons for terminations:

- *December*
 - *Deceased (11)*
 - *Residential Care (1)*
 - *Abandoned (1)*

In-house DLO Team - Work Allocation

Number of operatives within the DLO team

- *32 operatives (working on approximately 25-30 Voids)*

Number of Team Leaders who manage the DLO

- *2 Team Leaders*

Contractor - Work Allocation

Number of Contractors

- *6 Contractors (working on approximately 65 Voids)*

Number of Team Leaders who manage contractors

- *2 Team Leaders*

Number of Capital Works Surveyors who manage contractors

- *2 Surveyors*

Low Demand assets

- **Bolingbroke Heights 2-Bed**
- **Castle Heights 2-Bed**
- **Richard Heights 2-Bed**

Reasons – Due to desirability concerns relating to the communal areas and open spaces, along with the existing service offer. Also relating to the bedroom tax applied to those persons under the age of 66.

- **Llwyn Aled**
- **Llwyn Beuno**

Reasons – Due to access and egress issues. Existing tenants (contract holders) along with any applicants who have refused an allocation offer, have expressed difficulties and or concerns with regards to the number of steps/ internal staircases.

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