

Public Document Pack

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To: Cllr Helen Brown (Chair)

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

29 February 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 6TH MARCH, 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 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING** (Pages 5 - 14)

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.

4 **AUDIT WALES REPORT: HOMELESSNESS SERVICES – FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL** (Pages 15 - 32)

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

Purpose: To share with the Committee the findings of the Audit Wales review into Homeless Prevention at Flintshire Council and seek approval to provide formal Organisational Response to Audit Wales.

5 **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE REPORT AND HOMELESSNESS POLICY** (Pages 33 - 76)

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

Purpose: To provide an annual update on the work ongoing to mitigate Homelessness and support provided to rough sleepers, together with the Homelessness Policy.

6 DYNAMIC RESOURCE SCHEDULING SYSTEM (DRS) UPDATE (Pages 77 - 84)

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

Purpose: To provide an overview and update on the newly procured Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS), the changes that have been made to the service during the testing stages of the pilot along with new measures that have been implemented to improve overall customer satisfaction with regards to the service provided.

7 VOID MANAGEMENT (Pages 85 - 86)

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

Purpose: To provide an update to the Committee on the number of Void properties and the work being undertaken to bring the properties back into use.

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

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 6 th March, 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 & Assets Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Community Housing & Assets 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 & Assets 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 12th June, 2024</p> <p>10am</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 9</p>	<p>Communal Heating Charges 2024/25</p>	<p>To consider the proposed heating charges in council properties with communal heating systems for 2024/25 prior to Cabinet approval.</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)</p>
	<p>Customer Involvement Strategy</p>	<p>To consider the Customer Involvement Strategy.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p>
	<p>Local Housing Market Assessment</p>	<p>To present the outcome of the Local Housing Assessment, to include information on the private rented sector.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager</p>
	<p>Housing Strategy</p>	<p>To present to the Committee the Housing Strategy</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager</p>
	<p>'Together we can' Community resilience and self-reliance</p>	<p>To provide an overview of the Audit Wales report and outline reflection of the content and recommendations made. A proposed response to the recommendations is made for consideration.</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Strategic Executive Officer</p>

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

	Void Management	To provide an update to the Committee on the number of Void properties and the work being undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager – Housing Assets
<p>Wednesday 10th July, 2024</p> <p>10am</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 10</p>	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)
	Council Plan 2023/28: End of Year Performance Monitoring Report for 2023/24	To review progress against the priorities identified within the Council Plan 2023/28	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
	Void Management	To provide an update to the Committee on the number of Void properties and the work being undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager – Housing Assets

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

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	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
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		
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	Letter posted to WG on 23.02.24	Completed

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

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	A copy of the Responsible Pet Ownership Policy was circulated to Members of the Committee via e-mail on 08.02.2024.	Completed
07.02.2024	6. Common Housing Register (Single Access Route to Housing – SARTH)	In response to a question from Cllr Rosetta Dolphin on what stock there was across the Council and including Housing Association partners, Martin Cooil agreed to circulate this information following the meeting.	Martin Cooil	Information circulated to the Committee via e-mail on 19.02.2024.	Completed
07.02.2024	6. Common Housing Register (Single Access Route to Housing – SARTH)	Cllr Dale Selvester referred to the applications by property type in the report, which stated that 30 people were waiting for a 5-bed property but questioned why this figure was shown as 17 at section 1.08 of the report. Martin Cooil agreed to clarify this with the Committee following the meeting.	Martin Cooil	Response provided to the Committee via e-mail on 23.02.2024.	Completed
07.02.2024	6. Common Housing Register (Single Access Route to Housing – SARTH)	Cllr Dave Evans asked in what scenario would the Council allow someone onto the register in Band 4 if they were intentionally homeless or had no local connection. Following a response from Martin Cooil, the Chair suggested that a case study for each of the Bandings 1-4 to better explain the criteria for each banding be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.	Martin Cooil	Case Studies and additional information circulated to the Committee via e-mail on 20.02.2024.	Completed



COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 6 th March 2024
Report Subject	Audit Wales Report - Homelessness
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Audit Wales programme of work for 2023, homelessness was identified as an area of interest. The Council has flagged homelessness and housing needs as high-risk issues through local risk management frameworks and welcomed this review.

The review took place over several months from April 2023 through to September 2023. The final report was issued on the 11th January 2024.

This report outlines the process of the review by Audit Wales and shares the findings and their recommendations for the Council regarding the local approach to homelessness. The report also outlines the Council's response to those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the Audit Wales report into Homelessness Services at Flintshire County Council.
2	To support the suggested responses to the recommendations of Audit Wales.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	PROCESS OF THE AUDIT WALES REVIEW
1.01	<p>The review of Homelessness Services sought to answer the question: In seeking to address homelessness, is the Council effectively adapting its strategic intent to deliver a long-term sustainable preventative approach?</p> <p>In answering the above question, the Audit Wales Team focussed on the following lines of enquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the Council understand the homelessness situation and how it might change over time?• Has the Council set out what it wants to achieve and communicated that intention to its partners within and outside the Council?• Is the Council taking an integrated approach in seeking to deliver its objectives?• Is the Council collaborating effectively with the right partners, within and outside the Council to deliver its approach?• Is the Council allocating resources to deliver better outcomes over the short, medium and long term?• Is the Council monitoring and reviewing progress towards, short, medium and longer-term objectives?
1.02	<p>The audit work involved document reviews, interviews with key senior officers and Elected Members, and focus groups with front line staff directly involved in providing homelessness services.</p> <p>The Wales Audit Team also completed a series of drop-in sessions for residents to attend should they wish to do so and held a focus group with a wide range of partner agencies from the third sector and other public services.</p>
1.03	<p>Initial findings were shared by Audit Wales in November 2023 and the final report (Appendix 1) was issued to the Council on the 11th January 2024.</p>
2.00	REVIEW FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE
2.01	<p>The overall finding of the review by Audit Wales was that: the Council is delivering a high-quality service, but this is unsustainable with the level of current funding.</p> <p>The report also highlights the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council has a good understanding of the current and future situation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council collaborates well with partners but needs to improve awareness of service demands with political partners. • The Council is reviewing how it delivers its service strategically and operationally. • The Council faces difficult decisions to ensure the service is sustainable in the future.
2.02	<p>The Audit Wales Report offers the following three recommendations for the Council following their review of Homelessness Services in Flintshire:</p> <p>R1: To ensure the service is sustainable operationally and strategically, the Council ensures that funding is available to maintain its levels of service or make decisions on service delivery based on funds available.</p> <p>R2: The Council ensures arrangements for evaluating its homelessness activities are applied to all activities so it can provide assurance of its impact on service users and efficiencies.</p> <p>R3: To better understand the needs of residents, the Council should widen its engagement activity with residents to cover the development and evaluation of all services.</p>
2.03	<p>The Council's response to the Audit Wales report and the three recommendations is attached at appendix 2.</p>

3.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
3.01	<p>Recommendation 1 focuses on the financial challenges of managing homelessness in Flintshire. Recommendations 2 and 3 can be absorbed through procedural changes within the commissioning and reviewing function of the Housing Support and Homelessness Service.</p> <p>Detailed below are the resource implications for the delivery of Homeless Services and responding to the Audit Wales Report.</p> <p>Revenue: Statutory Homeless Services are funded through Council Fund. Additional duties placed on Councils and the current demands on services and homeless accommodation results in additional expenditure and budget pressures. Whilst some grant is available for 2024-2025 for emergency housing and other discretionary funding for crisis interventions, this is not sufficient to cover the full scale of the financial risk.</p> <p>Capital: Creating more housing will require significant capital investment and has been flagged early within the Councils Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The Flintshire Housing Prospectus has been approved by Council and shared with our Housing Partners and Social Housing Grant (SHG) supports ambitious plans to increase housing supply at scale and pace.</p>

	Human Resources: Staff are under significant pressure with high levels of homelessness. Homeless officer caseloads are increasing at a time when Council Funds are under significant strain.
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4.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	<p>The following risks along with mitigation will enable the Council to respond to the findings of the Audit Wales Report and ongoing homelessness agenda in Flintshire:</p> <p>Risk: Reputational damage and negative impact to service delivery and Council finances by failing to respond to the findings of the Audit Wales Report.</p> <p>Mitigations: Adopt and deliver the suggested organisational response to the Audit Wales Report as outlined in Appendix 2.</p>
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3.02	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive – Increase in targeted support and alternative delivery methods to ensure services are inclusive for all.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>Prevention – Preventing homelessness through ensuring there is adequate support and accommodation to cater for a range of people’s needs.</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 services so that support is timely, and person centred</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Positive – Increase in targeted support and alternative delivery methods to ensure services are inclusive for all.	Prevention	Prevention – Preventing homelessness through ensuring there is adequate support and accommodation to cater for a range of people’s needs.	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 services so that support is timely, and person centred
Long-term	Positive – Increase in targeted support and alternative delivery methods to ensure services are inclusive for all.										
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3.03	<p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td> <td>Positive – With additional funding more jobs will be created to deliver housing related support on a greater scale within Flintshire.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> <td>Positive – Creating services that are prevention focused and build resilience to avoid households becoming homeless.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td> <td>Positive – Reduction in homelessness, overcoming health inequalities associated</td> </tr> </table>	Prosperous Wales	Positive – With additional funding more jobs will be created to deliver housing related support on a greater scale within Flintshire.	Resilient Wales	Positive – Creating services that are prevention focused and build resilience to avoid households becoming homeless.	Healthier Wales	Positive – Reduction in homelessness, overcoming health inequalities associated
Prosperous Wales	Positive – With additional funding more jobs will be created to deliver housing related support on a greater scale within Flintshire.						
Resilient Wales	Positive – Creating services that are prevention focused and build resilience to avoid households becoming homeless.						
Healthier Wales	Positive – Reduction in homelessness, overcoming health inequalities associated						

		with homelessness and poor housing conditions and best use of resources to increase targeted support for people with housing issues and other complex needs.
	More equal Wales	Positive – Services are delivered in a way that are inclusive for all. Consideration has been given to local and regional gaps in provision for often marginalised communities such as the homeless, those with mental health or substances issues and the LGBTQ+ community.
	Cohesive Wales	No Impact
	Vibrant Wales	No impact
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

5.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
5.01	The Audit Wales Team engaged with residents, front line staff, partners and senior leaders and politicians at the Council as part of their review.
5.02	Recommendation 3 of the Audit Wales report highlights a need to extend consultation and engagement activities associated with homelessness in Flintshire and the Audit Response attached as Appendix 2 outlines the approach that shall be taken to achieve better engagement with residents.

6.00	APPENDICES
6.01	Appendix 1: Audit Wales Report into Homeless Services – Flintshire County Council
6.02	Appendix 2: Flintshire County Council - Organisational Response Action Plan

7.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
7.01	Audit Wales Report – Rough Sleeping in Wales: Everyone’s Problem; No One’s Responsibility

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

9.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
9.01	<p>Audit Wales - Is the trademark of two legal entities, the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office. It's role is to assure the people of Wales that public money is being managed well, as well as explaining how public money is being used and how it meets people's needs.</p> <p>Housing Support Grant (HSG) - The HSG programme brings the historic funding streams for Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention and Rent Smart Wales grants into one single funding stream.</p> <p>Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - The Council is required to keep a HRA to record all income and expenditure relating to the provision of local authority housing. All rental income, including arrears, must be held with a ring fenced HRA account. This means that income can only be used for council housing purposes and not general expenditure. This also allows rental income to be invested locally to help improve and maintain council owned homes and build new council homes.</p>

Homelessness services – Flintshire County Council

Audit year: 2022-2023

Date issued: December 2023

Document reference: 3981A2023

This document has been prepared for the internal use of Flintshire County Council as part of work performed in accordance with Section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, and Section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

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The section 45 Code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales and Audit Wales are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to Audit Wales at info.officer@audit.wales.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document is also available in Welsh.

Summary report

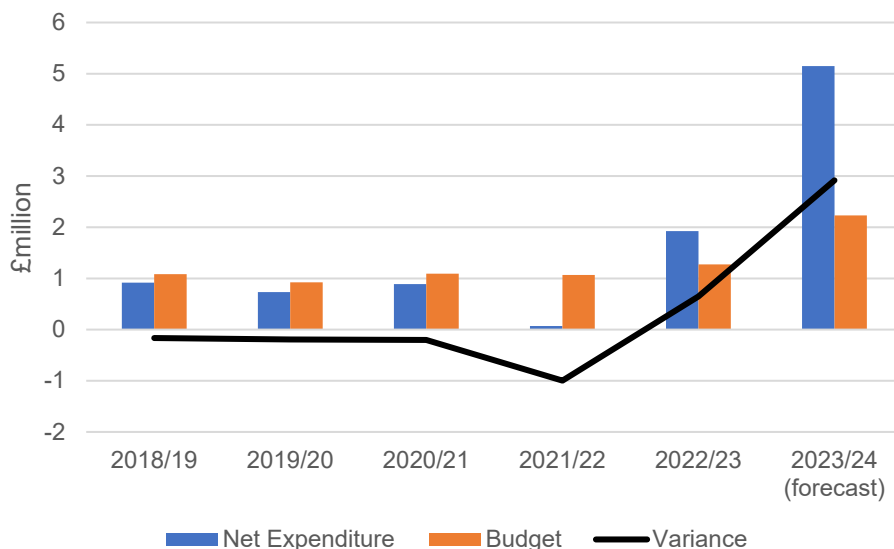
Context

- 1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on each Council in Wales to formulate a homelessness strategy, which should achieve the following objectives:
 - the prevention of homelessness;
 - that suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless; and
 - that satisfactory support is available for who are or may become homeless.
- 2 In 2022, Flintshire County Council (the Council) approved its own Housing Support Programme Strategy, which sets out the strategic direction for homelessness prevention and housing related support services for 2022-2026
- 3 In a 2018 national report, the Auditor General reported that homelessness ‘...is more than a housing problem with much of what of what causes homelessness being outside the control and influence of a council’s homelessness services.’
- 4 One of the recommendations of the report was:
 - ‘We recommend that councils set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly, and all partners’ performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement.’
- 5 Currently, the Council faces several external risks that may potentially increase the number of households seeking support from the homelessness service. Given these factors, it is timely to review the Council’s approach to homelessness prevention.
- 6 We undertook the review during the period April 2023 to October 2023.

Current situation

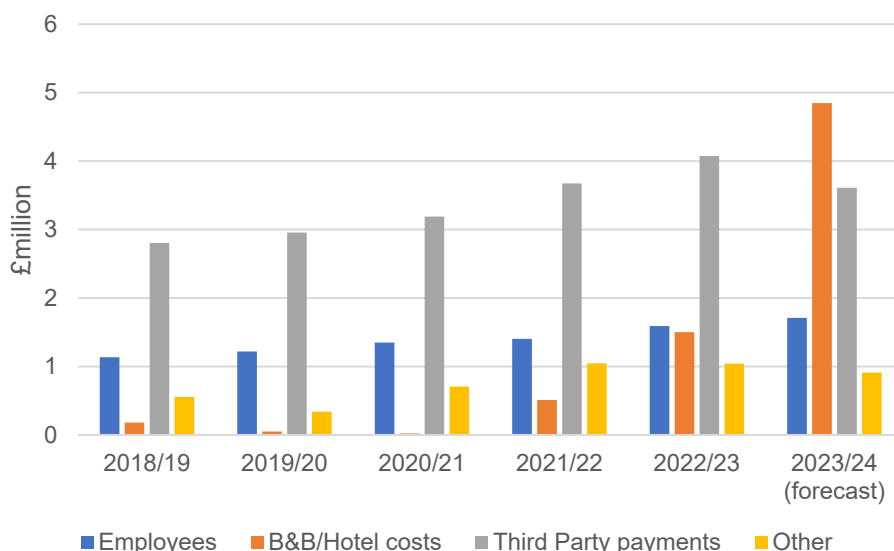
- 7 As at month 5 in the 2023-24 financial year, budget and net expenditure data for Housing Solutions showed some of the pressures facing the service currently. Although the budget has risen since COVID, the forecast net expenditure in 2023-24 is five times higher than pre-COVID levels. The forecast overspend for the service in 2023-24 at that time was £2.9 million.

Exhibit 1: Housing Solutions spend, 2018-2019 to 2023-2024 (forecast)



8 An analysis of net expenditure by area shows that the increase in overall net expenditure is almost wholly accounted for by the increase in bed & breakfast and hotel costs. As at month five of the 2023-24 financial year, the council forecasted a spend of £4.847 million on bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation in 2023-24 compared to £1.503 million in 2022-23.

Exhibit 2: Housing Solutions spend by area, 2018-19 to 2023-24 (forecast)



'Other' includes: premises, transport, transfer payments and supplies and services (excluding B&B/Hotel costs)

9 A Section 62 assessment is completed for every individual or household that applies for access to homelessness services. In 2018/19, there were 1,102 applications in Flintshire. In 2021/22 and

2022-23 there were 671 and 911 respectively. Comparing the data across this period is difficult due to the impact of Covid.

What we found

- 10 Our review sought to answer the question: In seeking to address homelessness, is the Council adapting its strategic intent to deliver a long-term sustainable preventative approach?

We found that: the Council is delivering a high quality service, but this is unsustainable with its current funding

The Council has a good understanding of the current and future situation

- 11 The Council understands the factors impacting on the homelessness situation it currently faces and how these factors are changing over time. It draws on evidence from a range of internal and external sources, including:
- the use of commissioned research to understand the circumstances of households presenting to the service;
 - internal audit review of current housing stock;
 - review of the customer journey through the service to understand their perspective and experience;
 - the sharing of data with external partners; and
 - the development of a new Housing Solutions case management system (database), which will provide improved case management information.
- 12 The Council also draws on a range of evidence to understand future demand, which includes:
- mapping out the impact of increasing rent charges on the affordability of properties for residents;
 - the financial impact of tapering support from Welsh Government to help the Council support asylum seekers and refugees;
 - working with landlords to understand potential reduction in stock as landlords withdraw from the rental market; and
 - mapping the current stock of housing against demand to understand what types of properties will be required to support demand in the future.
- 13 This understanding of the factors impacting on homelessness in Flintshire allows the council to make informed decisions about service provision and identify factors that will impact on the service in the future.
- 14 Currently the Council does not regularly engage with service users to gain their perspective on services. This could lead to the Council providing services that do not meet the need of service users.

The Council collaborates well with partners but needs to improve awareness of service demands with political partners

- 15 The Homelessness service works well with partners and has communicated its strategy and objectives across service areas and with senior leaders and Members.
- 16 Internally, the service ran workshops with Members and officers to publicize the current Housing Support strategy, and the homelessness team continue to work with other service areas, for instance working with planning and housing services to identify and bring back into use empty properties not currently available to meet local housing needs.
- 17 The Homelessness service engages effectively with external partners, including:
 - Citizens Advice Flintshire
 - Shelter Cymru
 - Domestic Abuse Safety Unit
 - The Wallich; and
 - Probation service
- 18 The homelessness service has built an excellent reputation with external partners for its openness and professionalism. Partners told us that they felt that their input and professional judgement was valued and acted on by officers. The council has also run workshops with external partners to identify issues and share good practice.
- 19 The Council uses embedded staff members to improve partnership working. An officer from Shelter Cymru has worked in the Homelessness team for seven years and a Council Homelessness officer now works in the Early Help Hub. These arrangements have resulted in a low number of case reviews and improved collaboration and information sharing with external partners.
- 20 The strategic relationship with Registered Social Landlords is good. This allows the Council to understand the issues faced by landlords, and to find collaborative solutions, particularly around developing supported accommodation.
- 21 The Council interacts with a range of elected members, internal and external, who provide challenge to the service and represent constituents. However, engagement with political partners about individual cases takes up considerable resources within the homelessness service.

The Council is reviewing how it delivers its service strategically and operationally

- 22 The Homelessness service is facing an increase in demand, with presentations becoming more complex and expectations of service users higher than before.
- 23 The planned re-structure of the homelessness service shows that the Council understands the need to increase strategic and operational capacity. This re-structure is key and could provide direction for the service and provide assurance over the future of the service. The re-structure of the service will be funded through use of the Council Fund and Housing Support Grant.
- 24 Some activity carried out by the Homelessness service is aimed at reducing the risk of crisis and making savings in the long term. This activity, such as target hardening to allow families at risk of violence or abuse to stay in their existing property, aims to avoid re-housing families, minimise disruption and the risk of crisis, and reduce costs to the service. The Council currently does not

formally evaluate such projects. Without evaluating such projects, the Council cannot assure itself of the impact or value for money achieved.

The Council faces difficult decisions to ensure the service is sustainable in the future

- 25 As at month five of the 2023-24 financial year, the predicted overspend for housing solution services in 2023-24 is £2.96m. This follows a budget increase from £1.275m in 2022-23 to £2.232m in 2023-24.
- 26 Income to the service is higher than in pre-COVID years but is forecast to drop in 202-24 compared to 2022-23 (£6.285m to £5.93m). Total expenditure continues to rise and has done in every year since 2019-20. The forecast figure for 2023-24 is £11.078m, a potential increase of nearly £3m from 2022-23.
- 27 Net expenditure in 2023-24 is forecast to be £5.148m. This is an increase from the 2022-23 figure of £1.924m.
- 28 The Council is currently trying to provide a service to meet demand on a budget that does not meet this ambition.

Recommendations

- 29 To ensure the service is sustainable operationally and strategically, the Council ensures that funding is available to maintain its levels of service or make decisions on service delivery based on funds available.
- 30 The Council ensures arrangements for evaluating its homelessness activities are applied to all activities so it can provide assurance of its impact on service users and efficiencies.
- 31 To better understand the needs of residents, the Council should widen its engagement activity with residents to cover the development and evaluation of all services.



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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.

Organisational response

Report title: Homelessness services in Flintshire

Completion date: December 2023

Document reference: 3981A2023

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Recommendation	Organisational response	Completion date	Responsible officer (title)
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Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations

Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete

R1	<p>To ensure the service is sustainable operationally and strategically, the Council ensures that funding is available to maintain its levels of service or make decisions on service delivery based on funds available.</p>	<p>Monitoring of revenue budget position against MTFS position and modelling undertaken</p> <p>Implementation of agreed mitigation measures</p> <p>Implementation of service restructure to maximise resources for service delivery</p>	<p>End March 2025</p> <p>End March 2025</p> <p>End June 2024</p>	<p>Chief Officer, Housing and Communities / Strategic Finance Manager</p> <p>Chief Officer, Housing and Communities</p> <p>Housing & Prevention Service Manager</p>
R2 Page 30	<p>The Council ensures arrangements for evaluating its homelessness activities are applied to all activities so it can provide assurance of its impact on service users and efficiencies.</p>	<p>Identify and document all homelessness activities - not limited to Housing Support Grant Commissioned Services.</p> <p>Review the evaluation processes that are currently in place for Housing Support Grant services and develop this further to enhance impact assessments and cost benefit analysis and apply to all the above identified homelessness activities.</p> <p>Develop a rolling programme and local processes for the evaluation for all identified homelessness activities.</p>	<p>End March 2024</p> <p>End June 2024</p> <p>End June 2024</p>	<p>Housing & Prevention Service Manager</p> <p>Commissioning & Reviewing Manager</p> <p>Commissioning & Reviewing Manager</p>

R3

To better understand the needs of residents, the Council should widen its engagement activity with residents to cover the development and evaluation of all services.

Build on existing resident engagement activities and develop a resident engagement framework for homelessness services that includes development and evaluation of services

End Sept 2024

Housing & Prevention Service Manager

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 6 th March 2024
Report Subject	Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Update Report
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness is a statutory service that continues to be under significant strain. External factors associated with the cost-of-living crisis and housing market conditions are increasing the levels of homelessness and the risks associated with homelessness for the people of Flintshire.

The need to offer accommodation and support to everyone who is homeless and at risk of rough sleeping continues to be a significant capacity and financial challenge. The local private sector housing market is seeing significant challenges with fewer properties available each year and many landlords leaving the market, which in turn creates homelessness as properties are being sold and residents are asked to leave, whilst at the same time meaning fewer properties are available to support the relief of homelessness.

Changes to homeless legislation (Housing Wales Act 2014) and specifically the introduction of an eleventh category of Priority Need for Rough Sleeping and those at risk of sleeping rough, sees a sustainment of the “no one left out” approach adopted during the covid pandemic and now firmly establishes the principles of “no one left out” on a legal footing and as standard practice.

As a result, more people have been owed accommodation duties which results in increasing demands on already stretched homeless accommodation, at significant cost to the Council. This paper provides an insight into homelessness and rough sleeping for 2023 and includes the draft Homeless Accommodation Policy for review and approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the report and continue to support the work being undertaken by the Housing and Prevention Service.
2	To approve the draft Homeless Accommodation policy.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE HOMELESSNESS UPDATE REPORT															
1.01	<p>Statutory Homeless Services Local Authorities duties are outlined in the Housing Wales Act 2014 Part 2, with regards to the prevention of homelessness and the management of homelessness when it occurs. Detailed in section 6 of this report is information about the duties within this legislation (Helping Your Understand Housing Wales Act 2014).</p> <p>The core team activities for the Statutory Homeless Team includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Case Management • Homeless Accommodation Management • Homeless Accommodation Costs 															
1.02	<p>Funding Homeless Services Whilst a significant amount of funding is provided for prevention activity through the Housing Support Grant (HSG), statutory services cannot be funded through HSG. Therefore, the Council Fund is the main source of funding for the delivery of statutory homelessness services. This extends to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless Officers and other staff dealing with homeless duties and assessments. • Homeless accommodation costs through lease charges and hotel accommodation expenditure. • Staff costs associated with the management of homeless accommodation. • Other costs associated with duties around homelessness such as storage costs and removals when people become homeless. <p>Budgets in relation to homelessness are summarised below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="312 1420 1385 1760"> <thead> <tr> <th>Budget Purpose</th> <th>Budget Amount</th> <th>Expenditure 23/24 (p10)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Homeless Team Staffing</td> <td>£0.716m</td> <td>£0.576m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rental / Lease for Homeless Accom</td> <td>£0.276m</td> <td>£0.288m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Emergency Accommodation Costs</td> <td>£1.146m</td> <td>£4.250m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Costs</td> <td>£0.070m</td> <td>£0.230m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>To assist with the additional pressures around homelessness and as the Covid Emergency Funding has now ceased, there has been additional grant funding available to Councils in recent years. A breakdown of funding is provided below. We await final confirmation of the funding to be awarded to Councils for 24/25:</p>	Budget Purpose	Budget Amount	Expenditure 23/24 (p10)	Homeless Team Staffing	£0.716m	£0.576m	Rental / Lease for Homeless Accom	£0.276m	£0.288m	Emergency Accommodation Costs	£1.146m	£4.250m	Other Costs	£0.070m	£0.230m
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	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
COVID Hardship Fund	£1.448m	n/a	n/a	n/a
No One Left Out	n/a	£0.520m	£0.382m	TBC
Discretionary Homeless Payment	n/a	£0.111m	£0.255m	TBC

Members have received briefings on the current financial pressures relating to homeless accommodation, and in particular the emergency housing cost pressures, in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

1.03

Demand for Services

Demand for services continues to be high and appendix 1 outlines data relating to:

Homelessness Presentations

Numbers of homeless presentations continues to be high. Homeless presentations account for approximately 55% of all housing enquiries recorded through the Councils Housing Helpline. If any resident has a concern about a homelessness (or risk of homelessness) then they approach the Housing Helpline on 01352 70377. Those enquiries where homelessness is referenced are then referred to the Homeless Team for initial contact.

Not all enquiries will progress from initial presentation to formal assessment (s.62 Housing Wales Act 2014). Table 1 shows homeless assessments increased by 35% in 2023 when compared to 2022. This is a result of more people having clearly identified risks of homelessness at the point at which they present. Those who present but are not at statutory risk of homelessness or their homeless is longer term, would not be owed a formal assessment but still receive housing advice under s.60 Housing Wales Act 2014.

The top 5 reasons for homeless presentation continues to be: Loss of private rented sector, relationship breakdown (non violent), relationship breakdown (violent), asked to leave by family and asked to leave by friends or others. This is common across Wales and in keeping with recent years in terms of reasons for homelessness.

Table 2 highlights the level of risk of homelessness by timeframe at the point of assessment. This ranges from homeless on the day, to homeless in the next 6 months (6-month notice periods are now standard for notice periods in Wales). This table demonstrates the very high level of homeless on the day cases (40.9%). Such presentations mean there is minimal opportunity to prevent homelessness other than through immediate crisis intervention (examples: negotiation with friends or family to keep people where they are, or to help people temporarily access support from other friends or family). If these efforts are unsuccessful, it is likely those residents affected would be requiring homeless accommodation.

There has been significant instability within the private rented sector this past year. In part this is due to the introduction of the Renting Homes

Wales Act 2016. This, along with financial pressures for some landlords, has resulted in an increase in notices from the private rented sector. Table 3 outlines the trend of increases in notices served in the run up to the implementation of the 6 month notice period (31st May 2023) for existing contract holders. Notices then reduce, having peaked between February 2023 to June 2023.

With more people triggering assessments as they are homeless or at risk of homelessness, along with fewer opportunities to prevent or relieve homelessness, it is inevitable that homeless caseloads will increase. Table 4 outlines the active caseload of homeless cases managed by the Homeless Team at the end of each month across 2022 and 2023. The table shows an increase of 72% from January 2022 to December 2023.

Every day is different for the Homeless Team and cases are often complex. To highlight this a “day in the life of the homeless team” case study is attached as Appendix 2, to outline the types and the complexity of cases that the Homeless Team regularly deal with on a daily basis.

Out Of Hours Emergency Response

Homelessness services operate 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Flintshire’s “out of hour’s emergency response” is available evenings and weekends as many instances of homelessness occur outside of office hours. Detailed in Table 5 is the number of calls received via the emergency helpline during 2023.

New arrangements have been established during 2023, for staff at the Glanrafon Homeless Hub to deal with all initial contacts for out of hours emergencies. The homeless hub operates 24/7 and the new approach relieves pressure on an already stretched workforce within the Homeless Team. A bank of Homeless Officers are on a duty rota for on call duties, to support homeless hub staff with complex case advice during out of hours and to authorise placements if required. The approach is working well for the Homeless Team with a significant reduction in enquiries working their way through to Duty Officers of an evening and weekend.

Homeless Accommodation

Emergency and temporary accommodation is limited in Flintshire and a lot of positive work is undertaken to help people sustain their housing to avoid the need to access emergency and temporary housing through prevention. However, in the last 18 months, with increases in homelessness and significant barriers to successfully moving people on, there have been more people requiring homeless accommodation and for longer periods. Table 6 outlines the numbers of homeless accommodation placements from April 2023 to January 2024 as a snapshot at the end of each month.

Data is reported to Welsh Government monthly by all Local Authorities for the number of homeless people being assisted within homeless accommodation. This is end of month snapshot data. Table 7 highlights the numbers of people in homeless accommodation across Wales by accommodation setting in October 2023 broken down to the Local Authority level. This data shows that we have notably lower numbers of homeless people than Wrexham, Denbighshire, Conwy and Gwynedd.

	<p>The Link within the notes section of Table 7 provides further breakdown of people in homeless accommodation by accommodation types. It highlights Flintshire's over reliance on hotels as a form of homeless accommodation (56%), with only Gwynedd (62%) having a higher percentage of their homeless people accommodated in hotels in North Wales.</p> <p>This dataset from October 2023 (released end Jan 2024) is the first time Local Authority level data has been publicly available. There will generally be a 3 month delay on release of this monthly data due to validation periods, but this data allows comparison and benchmarking in relation to homeless accommodation pressures across Wales.</p> <p><u>Rough Sleeper Response</u></p> <p>Rough sleeper outreach activities are usually delivered through the Housing First service who are skilled at dealing with the most complex residents. They provide the initial response during office hours and will respond within a few hours of an alert being received. Alerts come in through a wide range of sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetlink Referrals • Calls into the Flintshire Homeless Team • Calls to Flintshire Out of Hours Services • Referrals from partners across FCC and other public services • Referrals from elected members • Referrals from Community Groups and Charities <p>Alerts received outside of office hours are not always responded to immediately but can be channelled through our Out Of Hours service on 01267 224911. Situations are risk assessed in terms of safety for officers to attend and may be actioned at a later stage.</p> <p>Table 8 details the number of rough sleepers in Flintshire at the end of each month from April 2023 to October 2023. Similarly, to the numbers of people in homeless accommodation report referenced above, this data is now released monthly. Rough sleeping is on the increase across many Council areas and is up nationally from April 2023 to October 2023 by 34%. Flintshire's numbers are however decreasing and since November 2023 there were no rough sleepers at the end of each month reported to Welsh Government.</p>
1.04	<p>Positive Homeless Outcomes</p> <p>When managing homelessness under the Housing Wales Act 2014, the primary aim is to prevent homelessness at every opportunity. When it does occur, the intention is that it is rare, brief and non-repeated. Positive outcomes can be achieved through a range of interventions. Detailed below are some examples of the tools or interventions to prevent homelessness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent arrears repayment planning. • Rent rescue payments – arrears payments. • Rent tops ups through Discretionary Housing Payments and other grant funding. • Budgeting support and income maximisation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs and property maintenance support. • Time critical interventions such as tenancy support . • Mediation and negotiation between the contract holder and landlord. • Support for family’s around managing relationships with young people. <p>Prevention activities within the Homeless Team when residents are at risk of homelessness within 56 days (linked to s.66 Housing Wales Act 2014) are crisis interventions. The most effective and sustainable prevention activities are achieved through much earlier interventions and can be achieved across a wide range of services, to avoid people needing to access statutory homelessness services.</p> <p>Relief of homelessness is when people are assisted to exit homelessness. This is often achieved through positive move on from homeless accommodation and is primarily focussed on securing new accommodation or helping people to return home or to another place of safety for a prolonged period. Table 9 details the most common outcomes for successful discharge of homelessness duties in Flintshire.</p>
1.05	<p>National Policy - Homelessness</p> <p>In October 2023 Welsh Government published a White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales with consultation closing on the 16th January 2024. Welsh Government received over 160 formal responses and are now reviewing these responses.</p> <p>A wide range of changes to legislation relating to homelessness are outlined within the White Paper, with the most notable changes outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 66 statutory prevention duty to be triggered at 6 months risk of homelessness, an increase from the current 2 months. • Abolition of the priority need test – all eligible residents / households to be offered full duties. • Merging of the s73 Relief Duty and s75 Full Duty. • Changes to Local Connection Test – variation and additional protections for certain groups of people. • Significant changes to the Intentionality Test principles. • Firming up the Personal Housing Plan (PHP) process on a legal footing and creating statutory review points for PHP’s. • Improved standards in regard to homeless accommodation duties. • Changes to the Allocations Code of Guidance for Social Housing to increase access for homeless households. • Statutory powers for Local Authorities to compel Housing Associations to take homeless nominations. • Extending “partners duties” around homelessness to a wider group of public sector services. • Introducing a “duty to identify and refer” homelessness on a range of public sector services. • Introduction of a Housing Sustainment Duty to support risks of repeat homelessness.

	<p>There is an acknowledgement from Welsh Government that in light of the ambition of the changes suggested, and the current housing pressures across Wales, there will need to be careful consideration to the cost implications of the suggested changes and the timeframes for the roll out of additional duties within any new Act.</p> <p>We expect further information relating to the outcome of the consultation in the Summer 2024. All Local Authorities have responded formally and continue to make representations about the current financial challenges associated with Welsh Governments ambitions around ending homelessness at the present time, and also in light of additional statutory responsibilities outlined within the White Paper.</p>
1.06	<p><u>Housing Support Grant</u></p> <p>The Housing Support Grant (HSG) is a significant grant provided to Local Authorities to deliver a wide range of homeless prevention interventions. The funding cannot be used for statutory services such as homeless case management (homeless team costs) or homeless accommodation, but is available for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt advice and support services • Tenancy / housing related support services • Learning disability services • Domestic abuse services • Wellbeing and independent living services • Supported housing projects • Housing First services <p>Since 2021-2022 Flintshire's annual HSG award has been c.£7.8million, with the same award in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. Recent budget announcements in December 2023 suggest that the HSG award will again be a standstill position for 2024-2025. We await formal confirmation of this when the Budget is finalised and many organisations including Cymorth Cymru, Community Housing Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association, along with Council Leaders, continue to lobby Ministers for an uplift in HSG for Wales.</p> <p>There are significant risks associated with standstill budget position for HSG and these are captured within the risks and mitigations section of this report. Of note is the potential for a lack of bids from housing support providers for new services the Council wishes to commission as limited budget makes service delivery challenging. There are also risks that current services will seek to withdraw from delivery of existing contracts as they are increasingly financially unviable. This has been seen elsewhere in Wales and we continue to monitor the situation closely.</p> <p>As a commissioner of services, the Council acknowledge that service delivery costs are on the increase (staffing costs, utility costs and other operational finances). It is likely we will have to work with some providers to reduce capacity within some services to ensure those services can continue to operate, or we risk notice being given on contracts as they may be financial unsustainable.</p>

A recent survey of Housing Support providers across Wales was completed by Cymorth Cymru as part of their “Housing Matters Wales” campaign. This report highlights feedback nationally on the instability and uncertainty within the housing support and homelessness sector at a time of growing demand.

1.07

Housing Market Challenges

The housing market continues to be challenging. Housing needs recorded on the Flintshire Housing Register (not just homelessness) continue to be significant as reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2024 and availability of social housing is limited. The private rented sector should be an option for people to consider but again demand is greater than supply and this drives up prices.

Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector is increasingly unaffordable for many low-income households however it is encouraging to note the UK Government have increased the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates from 1st April 2024 and this will hopefully make private renting more affordable for some residents, assuming landlords don't increase rental charges significantly.

Local Housing Allowance	Current	From 01/04/24
Shared Room Rate	<i>£87.50</i>	<i>£87.50</i>
1 Bed Rate	<i>£92.05</i>	<i>£103.56</i>
2 Bed Rate	<i>£120.82</i>	<i>£136.93</i>
3 Bed Rate	<i>£136.93</i>	<i>£159.95</i>
4 Bed Rate	<i>£184.11</i>	<i>£212.88</i>

Whilst increases in LHA is much needed and positive, the availability of private rental accommodation is still a challenge. Research commissioned by the Council to help inform the Local Housing Market Assessment, which is due to be refreshed this year, evidences availability in the private rented sector is down approximately 60% in the last 5 years with many landlords having sold their properties or found other uses for them.

Barriers to securing housing

Many clients have needs in addition to housing. Some of the most significant needs can present additional complexities and barriers to helping people secure housing:

- Young people with no independent living skills
- People with issues around substance misuse
- People with significant mental health issues
- People with criminal offending history
- Register sex offenders

Social Housing Supply

There are significant shortages of social housing when it comes to the homeless cohort. Whilst any household can experience homelessness, a significant proportion of homeless households are single people of working age who require one bed homes. There is very little one bed general needs social housing in Flintshire and c.80% of the homeless cohort

	<p>require one bed general needs housing as they are under the age of 55 (sheltered housing age criteria). Social housing supply does not align with the homeless cohort demand profile.</p> <p><u>Competing Demands on limited housing locally</u> The delivery of resettlement schemes in Flintshire has been successful. Those residents not assisted through the Homes for Ukraine hosting scheme were supported into housing through access to the private rented sector. This does however reduce the supply of private rental homes for other residents. Asylum seeker dispersal operating across the UK also means Home Office contractors are seeking to secure accommodation in Flintshire resulting in an additional pull on already limited housing supply in the private rented sector.</p> <p>With a lack of available housing and competing pressures locally, many people are trapped in homelessness due to limited move on options and the direct costs associated with managing homelessness sit with local authorities.</p>
1.08	<p>Homeless Accommodation Pressures Options A homeless pressures options paper was presented to Scrutiny Committee in November 2023 and an operational working group has been established to progress the options that Members have endorsed. This group is focussed on increasing housing supply for residents to successfully move people on from homeless accommodation, as well as improving the homeless accommodation offer. Further updates on progress of the working group will be shared with Members later in the year.</p>
1.09	<p>Homeless Accommodation Policy In response to an Audit recommendation following the audit of temporary accommodation, a Homeless Accommodation Policy has been developed. The draft policy is attached as Appendix 3 for review.</p> <p>The policy is set within the legal frameworks of the Housing Wales Act 2014 for homelessness legislation and the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 for accommodation management. As outlined within the policy, certain accommodation types (holiday lets, hotel accommodation and homeless hub) are exempt from the Renting Homes Act 2016 regulations, and in those settings, a reduced security of tenure is in place through License Agreement arrangements.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Detailed below are the cost implications associated with the delivery of Homelessness and Rough Sleeper activity in Flintshire:</p> <p>Revenue: Statutory homeless services are funded through Council Fund. Additional duties placed on Councils and the current demands on services and emergency housing is resulting in additional expenditure and budget pressures, when the Council is already facing significant financial challenges. Whilst some grant is available for 2024-2025 for emergency</p>

	<p>housing and other discretionary funding, this is not yet confirmed and will not be sufficient to cover the full scale of the financial risk.</p> <p>Capital: Increasing housing supply will require significant capital investment and has been flagged early within the Council’s Capital Programme. The Flintshire Housing Prospectus has been approved by Council and shared with our Housing Partners. Delivery of the Social Housing Grant supports the Council’s ambitious plans to increase housing supply at scale and pace. The Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) grant regime also supports the purchase and redevelopment of accommodation for the purpose of move on accommodation or additional homeless accommodation.</p> <p>Human Resources: The Homeless Team has seen a significant amount of staff turnover in recent years. Further recruitment as part of the Housing and Prevention Service restructure is required and is costed through Council Fund and HSG. Levels of sickness and work-related stress is closely monitored within this high demand service. Vicarious trauma because of difficult cases is managed through a range of additional support activities in addition to the Council’s Corporate Employee Assistance Programme (Vivup).</p>
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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: Insufficient turnover and move on from emergency and temporary housing creates blockages and insufficient capacity to meet future demand and increasing financial pressures</p> <p>Mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the 50% nominations process to support move on from homeless accommodation into social housing. • Continue to maximise discretionary homeless funding and spend to save budgets to support rent in advance and deposits to help people secure private rental accommodation. • Progress the homeless accommodation pressures options and increase move on options and the supply of homeless accommodation. <p>Risk: Failure to recruit or retain staff within statutory homeless services and in HSG funded services local homelessness and housing support needs.</p> <p>Mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise communications and engagement opportunities for all recruitment activities. • Ensure packages of training and development opportunities to attract, develop and retain appropriately skilled workforce. • Ensure officers internally and through commissioned services are paid a good wage for the services they deliver.

Risk: Failure to utilise all available grants including “no one left out”, Discretionary Homeless Payment, and Housing Support Grant

Mitigations:

- Maximise spend against individual grant eligibility criteria.
- Financial monitoring and control for various grant regimes.
- A robust delivery plan aligned to the Housing Support Programme and needs assessments.
- Prompt commissioning and variation of services as required to meet local needs within budget.
- Maximise communications and engagement opportunities for all recruitment activities.

Risk: Reduction or continued standstill position in grants in future years as a result of budget cuts at Welsh Government

Mitigations:

- Ensure new tender exercises accurately reflect operational running costs and ensure the HSG Spend Plan is robust.
- Work with partners and internal services to address financial stability of HSG funded services.
- Lobby Welsh Government on the importance of existing grants.

3.02

Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact

Long-term	Positive – Increase in targeted support and alternative delivery methods to ensure services are inclusive for all.
Prevention	Prevention - Preventing homelessness through ensuring there is adequate support and accommodation to cater for a range of people’s needs.
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 services so that support is timely, and person centred.

3.03

Well-being Goals Impact

Prosperous Wales	Positive – With additional funding more jobs will be created to deliver housing related support on a greater scale within Flintshire. Opportunities to support the labour market through training and development opportunities are being
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		considered in conjunction with colleagues from Communities for Work.
	Resilient Wales	Positive – Creating services that are prevention focused and build resilience to avoid households becoming homeless.
	Healthier Wales	Positive – Reduction in rough sleeping, overcoming health inequalities associated with homelessness and poor housing conditions and investment to increase targeted support for people with housing issues and mental ill-health.
	More equal Wales	Positive – Services are delivered in a way that are inclusive for all. Consideration has been given to local and regional gaps in provision for often marginalised communities such as the homeless, those with mental health or substances issues and the LGBTQ+ community.
	Cohesive Wales	No Impact
	Vibrant Wales	No impact
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Consultation with housing support providers to ensure sustainability of services for those people who need them.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Homeless Data 2023
5.02	Appendix 2: A day in the life of the Homeless Team Case Study
5.03	Appendix 3: Homeless Accommodation Policy

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Helping you understand the Housing Wales Act 2014
6.02	Cymorth Cymru Report: Housing Matters, Wales Budget 24/25

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

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Rough Sleeper A person who is homeless and who sleeps without adequate shelter, typically on the streets of a town or city. Includes people living in sheds, outbuildings etc.</p> <p>Housing Support Grant This is an early intervention housing related support programme targeted at people in housing need and at increased risk of homelessness. The HSG programme brings the historic funding streams for Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention and Rent Smart Wales grants into 1 single funding stream.</p> <p>Housing First A housing and support approach which gives people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives. Provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open-ended.</p> <p>Priority Need Categories of people who are protected the most when assisting people under the Housing Wales Act 2014 homeless legislation. Those in Priority Need are owed accommodation duties and when homelessness is not prevented or relieved within 56 days, they will be owed full homeless duties.</p> <p>Cymorth Cymru Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of homelessness, housing and support services in Wales. They act as the voice of the sector, influencing the development and implementation of policy, legislation and practice that affects members organisations and the people they support.</p> <p>Streetlink StreetLink is a platform that connects people rough sleeping in England and Wales to support provided by local authorities and charities. This includes anyone who is sleeping outside, preparing to bed down, or sleeping somewhere not designed for habitation, such as a car.</p> <p>Local Housing Allowance Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. Local Housing</p>

Allowance (LHA) rates are decided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) using information provided by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).
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Appendix 1 - DATA FOR HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER REPORT

TABLE 1 – s.62 Homeless Assessments

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2022	52	53	63	58	85	84	83	48	99	79	49	71	824
2023	76	81	135	108	80	123	92	83	99	93	82	59	1111



NOTE: s.62 Homeless Assessments are conducted where a risk of homelessness is identified and the household approaching the service is an eligible household as per Housing Wales Act 2014.

TABLE 2 – Timeframe of Homeless Risk

HOMELESS RISK AT POINT OF s.62 ASSESSMENT	Percentage
At risk of homelessness within the next 56 days	24.9%
At risk of homelessness within the next 6 months	11.3%
Homeless in the next 48 hours	8.4%
Homeless in the next 7 days	14.4%
Homeless on the day	40.9%

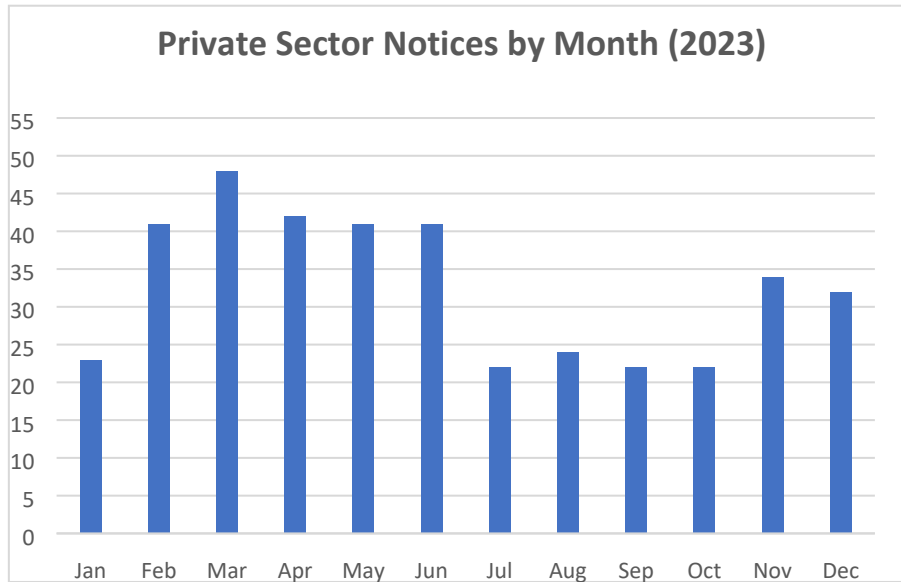


NOTE: Following upgrades to the Homeless Teams data management systems, additional reports are now in place to monitor and interrogate data to provide greater insight and understanding of the scale and nature of homelessness in Flintshire.

This data has been routinely collected since July 2023 and demonstrates the significant challenge of homeless prevention, when a high proportion of homelessness occurs on the day or within 48 hours from presentation. This highlights the crisis management nature of homeless services.

TABLE 3 – Private Sector Notices in 2023 (Reason for Homeless Presentation)

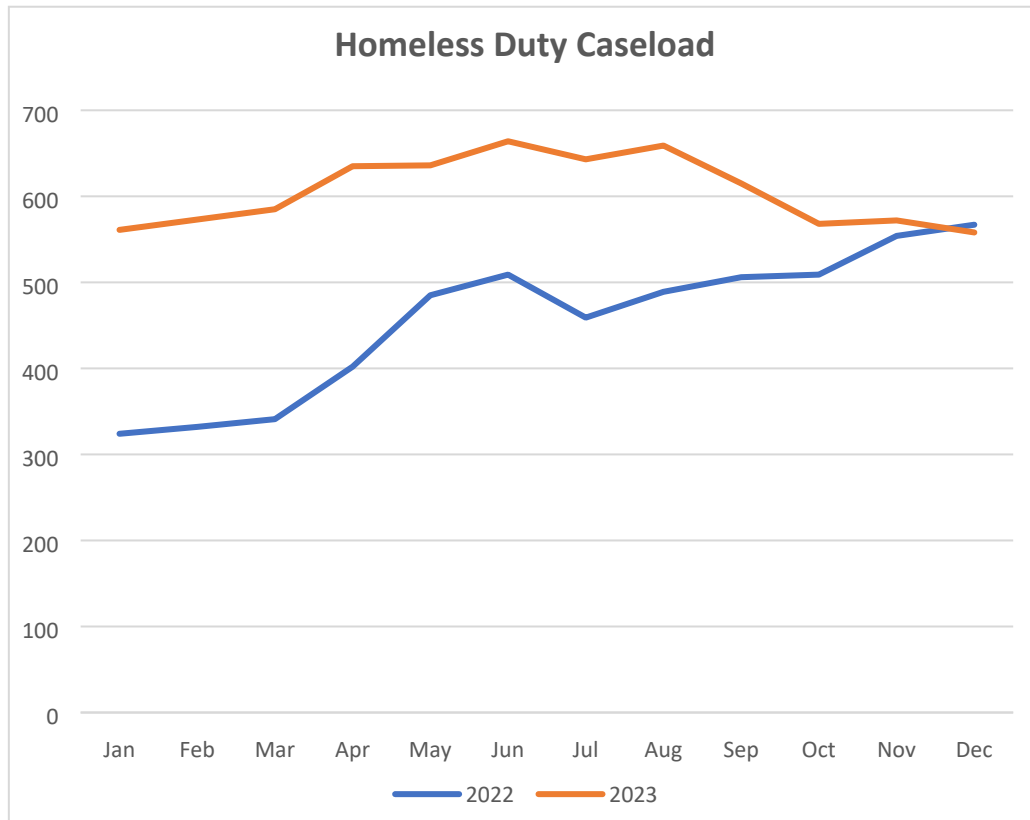
REASON FOR HOMELESSNESS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Loss of Private Rental (Notice)	23	41	48	42	41	41	22	24	22	22	34	32



NOTE: There has been significant instability within the Private Rental Sector in recent years. This table evidences the number of households who have presented as at risk of homelessness following the issuing of a notice by their landlord. Legal changes around the issuing of notices for existing tenants were implemented from 31st May 2023 and this accounts in part to the higher levels of notices between February and June.

TABLE 4 – Homeless Duty Caseloads Comparison 2022-2023

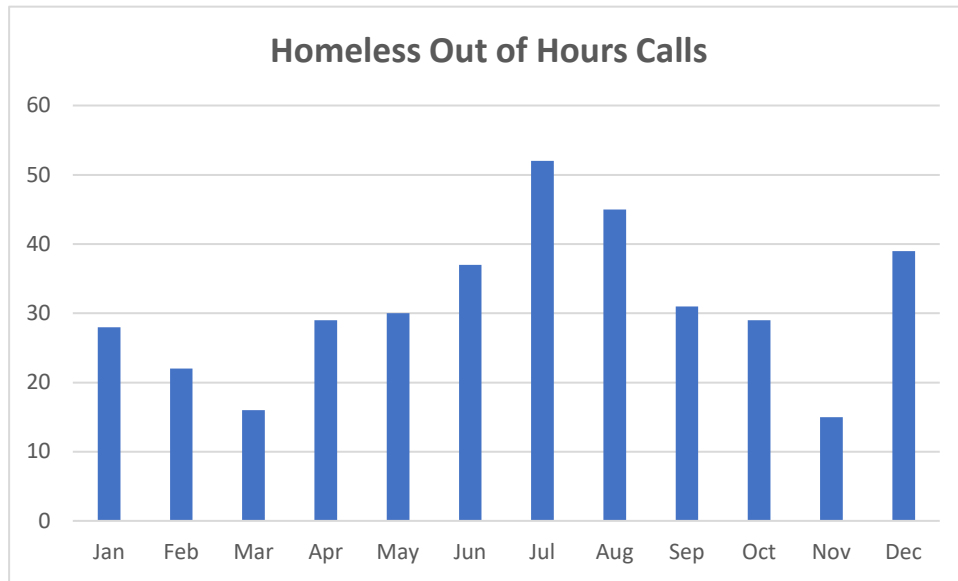
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2022	324	332	341	402	485	509	459	489	506	509	554	567
2023	561	573	585	635	636	664	643	659	615	568	572	558



NOTE: This table shows the number of live homeless cases open and managed by the Homeless Service at the end of each month over a 2-year period (2022-2023). The table demonstrates a significant increase of approx. 73% in the levels of homeless cases managed by the Homeless Service and reflects the position of a challenging housing market, increasing housing homeless presentations, limited options to prevent and relieve homelessness and more people being eligible for assistance under homelessness legislation.

TABLE 5 – Out of Hours Homeless Emergency Calls

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Homeless Out of Hours Calls	28	22	16	29	30	37
Month	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Homeless Out of Hours Calls	52	45	31	29	15	39

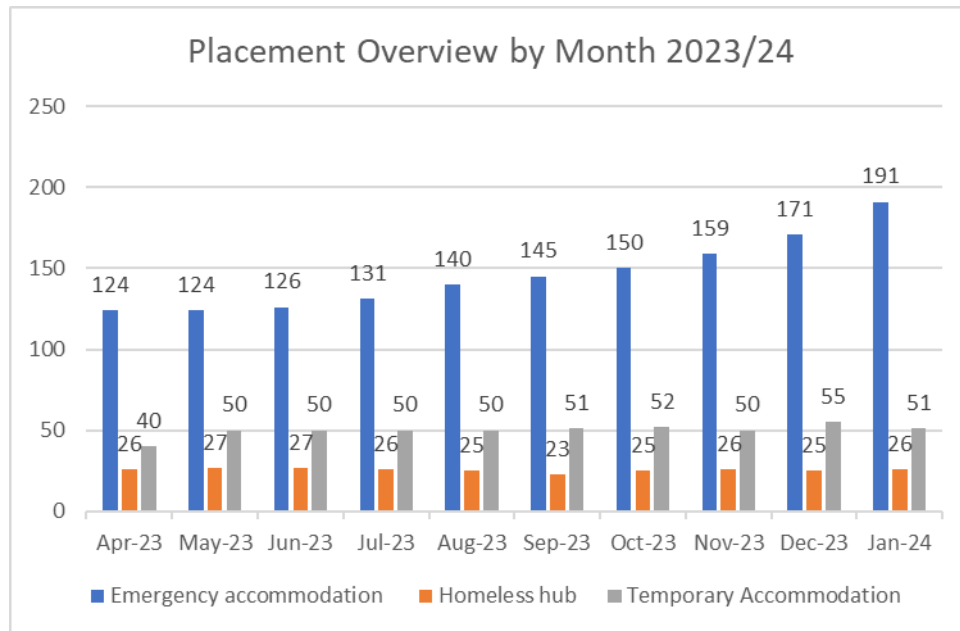


NOTE: This table provides a snapshot of the total number of calls received by the Council’s out of hours emergency service that relate to homelessness. Homelessness is a 24/7 issue and requires a 24/7 response. There were a total of 373 calls to the Homeless emergency line during 2023 which is an increase of c.30% on the previous year.

Most cases handled during evenings and weekends relate to relationship breakdowns, family or friends asking people to leave, or incidents and disturbances at Flintshire addresses where Police have supported residents to access the Homeless Service. There are also instances of rough sleeper alerts and extreme weather issues relating to flooding etc, but these are small in scale as an overall proportion of emergency calls.

TABLE 6 – Homeless Accommodation Placements by Type

Accommodation type	Total Placements	Total People
Emergency accommodation	191	255
Homeless hub	26	27
Temporary Accommodation	51	72
Overall Total	268	354



NOTE: This table details the number of homeless accommodation placements by type as snapshot report at the end of each month from April 2023 – January 2024. This evidences the significant growth in the need for emergency housing and an over reliance on hotels, holiday lets and caravans which is recorded as 'emergency accommodation'.

TABLE 7 – Homeless People Accommodated Across Wales – LA Level Split

	Total at end of October 2023	
	Total	Of which: Aged under 16 (dependent children)
Wales	11273	3403
Isle of Anglesey	98	25
Gwynedd	437	97
Conwy	607	208
Denbighshire	594	183
Flintshire	300	44
Wrexham	483	150
Powys	409	95
Ceredigion	140	43
Pembrokeshire	534	114
Carmarthenshire	374	70
Swansea	358	53
Neath Port Talbot	467	105
Bridgend	553	183
Vale of Glamorgan	437	132
Cardiff	3313	1154
Rhondda Cynon Taf	215	29
Merthyr Tydfil	134	10
Caerphilly	467	108
Blaenau Gwent	57	5
Torfaen	148	35
Monmouthshire	314	84
Newport	834	476

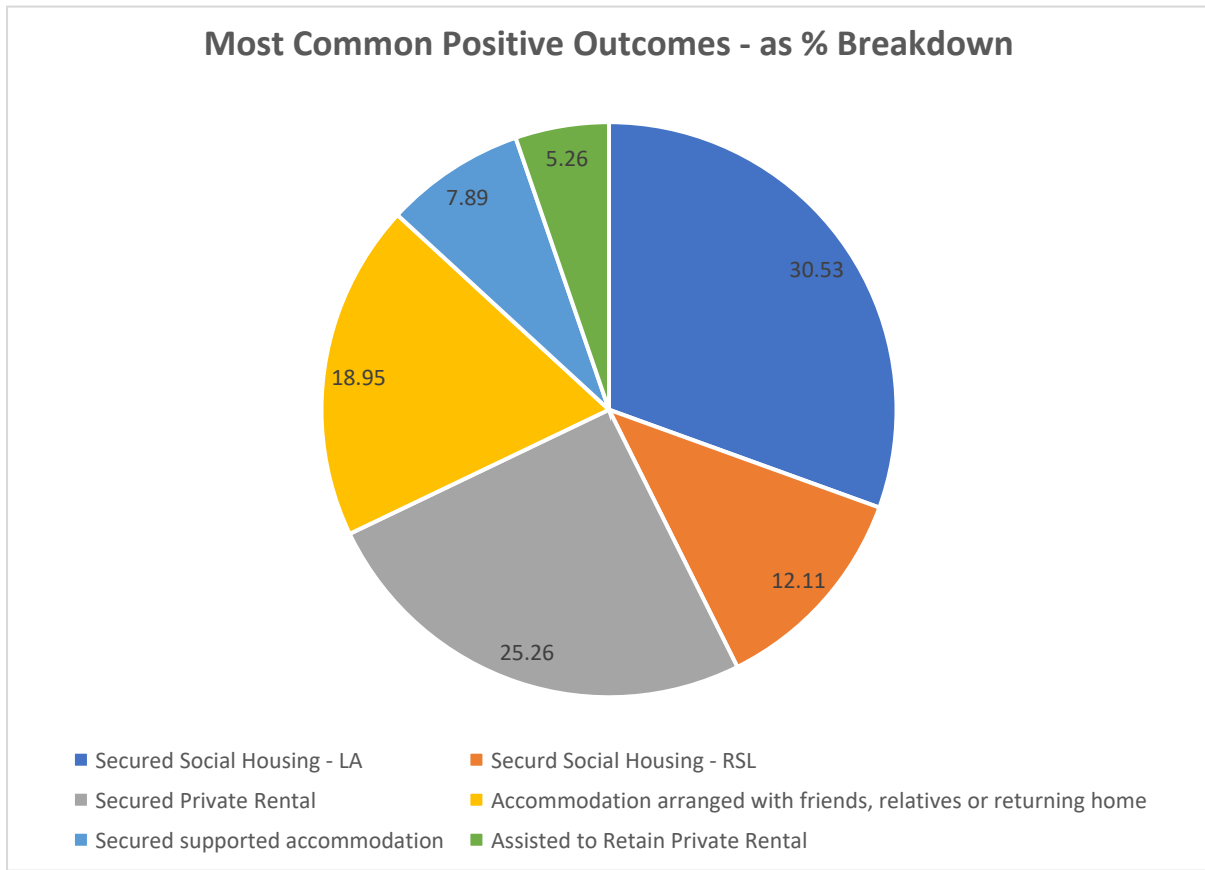
NOTE: This table is the number of people accommodated in homeless accommodation across Wales and broken down to the Local Authority Level. This information is now published monthly and was first released end January 2024. The period for this dataset is the end of October 2023. A link to the website where this data is published can be found [HERE](#) and this also details the placements of people across the various homeless accommodation types.

TABLE 8 – Rough Sleeper Data for Wales – LA Level Split

ALL WALES ROUGH SLEEPER DATA BY LOCAL AUTHORITY - APRIL 2023 - OCTOBER 2023							
	2023 Apr	2023 May	2023 Jun	2023 Jul	2023 Aug	2023 Sep	2023 Oct
ALL WALES	126	154	173	174	167	144	169
Isle of Anglesey	1	2	1	4	1	2	3
Gwynedd	8	9	13	14	10	8	7
Conwy	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Denbighshire	4	2	7	6	5	5	3
Flintshire	2	2	2	4	3	3	1
Wrexham	3	2	2	3	3	3	2
Powys	2	1	1	2	1	1	1
Ceredigion	9	10	13	12	13	11	8
Pembrokeshire	16	24	27	24	18	14	10
Carmarthenshire	4	6	4	6	6	3	5
Swansea	10	10	16	15	10	8	10
Neath Port Talbot	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bridgend	10	10	9	6	5	5	8
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
Cardiff	20	28	34	33	43	30	43
Rhondda Cynon Taf	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	0	0	3	3	2	1	3
Caerphilly	6	4	5	4	6	4	5
Blaenau Gwent	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Torfaen	1	2	0	3	1	1	13
Monmouthshire	6	9	5	10	9	9	9
Newport	23	31	29	25	31	35	37

NOTE: This data shows levels of rough sleeping across Wales broken down to the local level. These are known rough sleepers at the end of each reporting period. The data will now be published every month to allow comparison and benchmarking across Wales.

TABLE 9 – Most Common Positive Homeless Outcomes



NOTE: This table provides an overview of the most common reasons for positive homeless outcomes. The data is presented as a percentage share and is for outcomes recorded during the full year 2023.

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Appendix 2 - Day in the life of the Homeless Team (June 2023)

At 9.30am a male was brought in to the Connects Office by the Police heavily under the influence (UTI). This followed removal from his home address which he shares with his on/off partner. They seemingly have a very difficult relationship (domestic violence against each other routinely) and the couple are generating significant demand for Police with repeat disturbances at home. This is not the first time the individual has been brought in or tried to access homeless services following removal from his home by Police. He was too intoxicated for us to assess him and was advised to go away and sober up and come back for further help later in the day. (NOTE – By end of day no further contact with male but was potential to come through via the out of hours service).

Morning progressed with a one hours' notice hospital discharge for a homeless individual who FCC had placed in a hotel earlier in the week. Having secured a hotel, he was then admitted to hospital a few days later following a significant mental health episode and major incident of self-harm. Hospital says his medical issues have been addressed, he is fit for discharge from hospital and his mental health can be managed within the community and "he just needs accommodation". He is accommodated in a hotel again, however due to his behaviour causing alarm and distress to other guests and staff the original hotel would not have him back. No friends or family were willing to accommodate him due to his behaviours and vulnerabilities (priority need – mental health).

There have been two cases come through as 'homeless on the day' after the residents have been asked to leave by family, but staff managed to settle things down for the weekend. However, with cases like these things could flare up again soon. In this case they would then be "at risk" of rough sleeping triggering a priority need and may require homeless accommodation.

Throughout the day there have been seven presentations from private rented tenants who have been issued notice in the last few weeks. Landlords know that the timeframes for notices changed from Wednesday 31st May 2023 and are now 6-month notice periods so there's been a flurry of PRS notices in recent weeks. Seven presentations in a day is one of the highest counts the team have experienced. The team have assessed the validity of the notices and a couple are invalid, allowing more time to work with the families. Invalid notices will need to be re-issued with 6-months offered. The other notices are valid 2-month notices and will be followed up as Landlords intend to sell. This scenario offers no opportunity to prevent homelessness by keeping the residents where they are.

Between 4pm and 5pm there were two further presentations for homelessness and both required accommodation. Staff have explored all options to negotiate with family and friends to find alternatives to avoid placements within hotels but were unsuccessful.

- One was a female who was rough sleeping having spent a week in a tent in a friend's garden following relationship breakdown. Female not known to homeless service but known to other local services who have verified the situation and supported her to access Homeless Team (Rough sleeper - priority need triggered).
- One was a care leaver who had moved in with extended family, but relationship has now broken down and asked to leave. We had been offering mediation and support

for several weeks to avoid placement in hotel, but for the last week the young person has been sofa surfing. Whilst staying on "friends" sofa he has been assaulted. He has exhausted all his friends and family options so must be accommodated in hotel. (Care leaver - priority need triggered).

Homeless Accommodation Policy



HOUSING & COMMUNITIES

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2. Eligibility for Homeless Accommodation
3. Homeless Accommodation Types
4. Occupying Homeless Accommodation
5. Accommodation Charges and Income Management
6. Routine Inspections
7. Repairs & Maintenance
8. Communal Areas
9. Ending Accommodation
10. Void Turnaround
11. Homeless Hub Cabin Turnaround
12. Hotel and Holiday Lets and Caravan Turnaround
13. Equality and Diversity
14. Performance Management
15. Policy Review
16. Responsibility

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Date Policy approved by FCC Cabinet / Scrutiny	To go to Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for approval in March 2024
Replacing / Updating	---
Next Review Date	---
Drafted By:	Martin Cooil
Responsible Senior Officer	Vicky Clark
Circulation list	Available to all FCC staff via Shared Drive

HOUSING & COMMUNITIES

1. Policy Statement

Flintshire County Council (otherwise referred to as “the Council”) is committed to providing an effective and efficient Homeless Accommodation Management service that reflects best practice, complies with legislation, and protects the rights of those who experience homelessness and are owed ‘interim accommodation’ duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

The Council’s Housing Support and Homelessness Service is committed to supporting people experiencing homelessness with offers of accommodation and housing related support as required, based on legislative requirements and the needs of those residents.

Homeless accommodation is to be offered as a last resort, as all efforts will be made to sustain housing and to avoid homelessness. Where appropriate the Council will support residents to remain where they are, if safe and appropriate, whilst continuing to assist them under homeless legislation.

The Council is committed to ensuring homelessness is ‘**rare, brief and unrepeated**’, through all of its housing support and homelessness activities, as outlined in its Housing Support Programme Strategy. When considering the use of homeless accommodation, the Council are committed to occupation of homeless accommodation and periods of homelessness being brief:

RARE	Prevent homelessness so as few people have to experience the trauma and distress of being homeless in the first place
BRIEF	When people are homeless and placed in “homeless accommodation”, they should be supported to exit homelessness as quickly as possible, through increased supply of affordable housing and the removal of barriers to accessing affordable housing.
UN-REPEATED	Follow on support should be put in place to reduce the likelihood of repeat instances of homelessness and avoid people coming back through and experiencing the trauma of homelessness again in their lifetime

A full suite of procedures have been developed to support delivery of this Policy, along with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in respect of the Housing Homeless Accommodation Management to measure effectiveness of service delivery.

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Residents accessing homeless accommodation will be provided with the appropriate legal documentation for their occupation of their accommodation along with information about service standards, their rights and their responsibilities, so they know what level of service they can expect from the Council and what the Council requires in return.

When providing homeless accommodation, the Council will ensure every effort will be made to ensure that housing sustainment is a shared activity to avoid people experiencing homeless, becoming roofless. Homelessness is everyone's responsibility at the Council.

Evictions from homeless accommodation should be rare and an action of last resort but will be considered and actioned for issues relating to serious anti-social behaviour, aggression towards staff or providers of homeless accommodation and support services, as well as for high levels of homeless accommodation related debts.

2. Eligibility for Homeless Accommodation

Homeless accommodation will be offered to those residents and households who are eligible and homeless, and the household has met one or more of the priority need triggers as outlined within the Housing Wales Act 2014 (NOTE: "reason to believe" homeless, is the legal threshold for homeless assistance). Priority needs categories as per the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 are listed below:

- A pregnant woman
- People responsible for dependent children
- Vulnerable as a result of some special reason
- People made homeless by fire, flood or other disaster
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Young people aged 16 or 17
- People aged 18 – 20 who are at particular risk
- People aged 18-20 who have spent time in care
- Armed forces personnel
- Vulnerable as a result of time in prison
- People sleeping rough

Homeless Officers will assess residents' personal circumstances to consider eligibility and need for homeless accommodation. Consideration must be given to all possible alternatives other than homeless accommodation and when a placement is required this will be requested by Homeless Officers and authorised by senior staff within the service (Senior Homeless Officers, or Departmental Management Team).

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Consideration will be given to 1) need for and 2) suitability of placements within the limited availability of the Council's homeless accommodation. Homeless Officers will liaise with the Homefinder Team to identify suitable accommodation. Risk information will be a key part of the placement process and statutory partners involved in managing people within the community will be consulted and notified of placement details as required (most notably Probation and Public Protection Services).

All efforts will be made to provide homeless accommodation that is in County and meets the needs of residents placed. The Council is aware it can be challenged on issues of 'suitability' of any accommodation offered and will work within guidance. Every effort will be made to keep out of county placements to a minimum and when they are required, appropriate notification will be made to relevant public sector partners in line with out of county placement protocols.

Homeless duties for accommodation will be extended to those residents placed and they will be notified in writing of the duties extended to them along with specific address and location of their placement. Accommodation can be provided to residents by way of 'reasonable steps' under the Housing Wales Act 2014 where appropriate.

3. Homeless Accommodation Types

The Council will utilise a range of accommodation for people who are experiencing homelessness. The property types and how they are procured are detailed below:

Accommodation Type:	Secured through:
Private Rented Properties	Secured with local landlords by way of Lease Agreement
Housing Partner Properties	Secured by way of Memorandum of Understanding
Homeless Hub Cabins	Secured through a contract with the provider
Hotels & B&Bs	Block bookings and then rooms via spot purchase based on demand
Holiday Lets	Spot purchase
Caravans	Spot purchase

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3.1 Private Sector Leased Properties

When securing properties on the Lease Agreement from private landlords, officers will undertake a number of checks in relation to the landlord's ability to enter a lease agreement with the Council. Landlords must have evidence that they own their property outright, or that they have written consent from a mortgage provider or lender to be able to enter into a Lease Agreement with the Council.

Consideration will also be given to the suitability of a landlord and / or property owner entering a lease Agreement with the Council, akin to a 'fit and proper person' test. This test will be as a minimum aligned to Rentsmart Wales regulations.

The property will also be fully inspected and only taken onto the leased portfolio if the property meets the required standards expected by the Housing Support and Homelessness Service aligned to the Homes Fit for Human Habitation requirements as outlined within the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 and necessary checks completed or validated by Housing Enforcement Team.

Properties are only to be accepted onto the leased portfolio upon completion of all necessary background checks and with all evidence in place. Officers, having gathered all relevant information, will then submit a formal request to the Homefinder Manager or Service Manager for approval and sign off.

Target lease fees agreed with landlords or property owners should be at 90% of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate based on property size but can be negotiated to reflect local market conditions. Management will outline the range of negotiation and budget accordingly with consideration to value for money, market rates and service needs.

Once properties are signed up to the Lease Agreement, rents will be paid quarterly in advance at the agreed rate and landlords will invoice in line with the Council's financial regulations. The terms of the Lease Agreement identifies, for the all parties to the Lease Agreement, the roles and responsibilities in relation to management and maintenance of the property as well as the Lease Agreement duration period and exit clauses.

3.2 Council Housing Properties

When securing Council Housing properties all the same property checks will be required to ensure accommodation standards as outlined in Section 3.1 of this policy. The fit and proper person element of the property take on process is not required as the Council and Housing Partners meet the necessary requirements.

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The Housing Department will put forward properties for use as homeless accommodation, with consideration given to any local sensitivities, and provide full disclosure of any property or community specific issues or concerns to the Housing Support and Homelessness Service. This will inform the decision making process for accepting or rejecting the property offer.

The Homefinder Team will identify target property types and areas based on homeless cohort data and local need. This arrangement is not to the detriment of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) financially and demonstrates a significant commitment from the HRA to support the homelessness challenges in Flintshire and will be reflected within the HRA Business Plan.

Councillors will not be informed of Council properties in their Wards that are used as homeless accommodation, but the local Housing Officer will be notified as joint working will be required for responding to community or housing management issues as they arise. Information relating to occupants in these properties will be shared with the Housing Department for purposes of transparency, property matching and risk management.

3.3 Homeless Hub

The Glanrafon Homeless Hub operates 24/7, every day of the year as a supported housing service. The main building provides space for communal activities, washing facilities, communal kitchen and office space for staff from The Wallich. There are also three indoor bedrooms with their own toilet and washing facilities in the main building.

The Wallich is engaged by the Council through Housing Support Grant (HSG) to deliver support to residents in the Homeless Hub along with site management. This service is regularly reviewed by the HSG Commissioning and Reviewing Team.

There are also twenty-three cabins located within the grounds of the Homeless Hub. These cabins provide self-contained accommodation for single people, with private toilet, wash hand basin, shower, desk, bed, wardrobe and TV. Microwave and kettle are also provided. The cabins are secured by way of a contract with the cabin provider.

The Homeless Team and Homefinder Team make referrals to the Homeless Hub, disclosing all risk information and support needs of the nominated resident. Every effort will be made by The Wallich to accept referrals, but it is accepted that there will be times when referrals may be refused based on not only risk or support needs of the resident, but also when considering the dynamics and status of the Homeless Hub at the time of the referral.

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The Wallich as site manager are responsible for identifying and reporting all issues of property condition and Health and Safety relating to accommodation for the Council and notifying the Homefinder Team for further action.

3.4 Hotels

When capacity is reached within private sector properties, Council properties and the Homeless Hub, or these settings are not deemed appropriate for the residents needs, hotel accommodation will be explored to ensure accommodation duties are fulfilled to those people who experience homelessness.

Where it is possible to secure block bookings to guarantee capacity within a specific establishment, a process of block bookings will be completed for a period of 6 months and contracts exchanged for this service. Any additional capacity will be purchased through one-off spot purchase bookings and invoiced through the Councils Finance Systems or, in exceptional circumstances, credit cards or pre-pay Cards.

Where possible hotel accommodation should be secured within County but in times of high demand, hotel accommodation beyond Flintshire may be necessary.

Hoteliers are responsible for all aspects of Health and Safety in line with the local licensing conditions and property compliance standards within their local authority area. Compliance and licensing information must be available upon request of the Council.

A list of those hotels used by the Council will be held by the Homefinder Team along with relevant supporting documents for contracts and compliance and licensing requirements.

3.5 Holiday Lets and Caravans

In instances where no other available or suitable accommodation is available, the Council will consider the short-term use of holiday lets and caravans. Such arrangements will be booked through resources such as Airbnb, Booking.com and other recognised holiday accommodation services.

Bookings will be kept to a minimum and booking confirmation details will be held on file as required. In some instances, deposits will also be required against these properties. Where possible these services should be paid for through the Councils financial systems, but this may not always be possible so Managers credit cards or Duty Officer pre-paid cards will be required.

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4. Occupying Homeless Accommodation

When placing residents into accommodation, they will be issued with the relevant legal documentation based on the type of accommodation they occupy, and the homelessness duties they are owed. As people progress within legal duties, they will be issued updated occupation documentation as required. Occupation documentation will be issued to residents as outlined below:

Accommodation Type	Reasonable steps	Section 73 HWA 2014	Section 75 HWA 2014
Leased Properties	License Agreement	License Agreement	Occupation Contract
Council Properties	License Agreement	License Agreement	Occupation Contract
Homeless Hub Cabins	License Agreement	License Agreement	License Agreement
Hotels & B&Bs	License Agreement	License Agreement	License Agreement
Holiday Lets	License Agreement	License Agreement	License Agreement
Caravans	License Agreement	License Agreement	License Agreement

License Agreements are issued across all forms of homeless accommodation until the point at which a resident is owed the Full Homeless Duty under Section 75 of the Housing Wales Act 2014.

Only those residents occupying private sector leased accommodation or Flintshire County Council accommodation are to be issued Standard Occupation Contract Holder rights in line with Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 (homeless accommodation exemption applied) from the day that a Section 75 duty is owed. Hotels, holiday lets, caravans and the Homeless Hub are exempt from the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.

Eligible residents must be issued their Occupation Contracts, RHW1 Form and RHW2 Form within 14 days of the Section 75 Homeless Duty being accepted. Residents will also be issued with copies of a current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), a current Gas Safety Certificate, if gas supply in place, and a current Electric Safety Certificate as required under Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 regulations.

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5. Accommodation Charges and Income Management

Weekly rent charges are applied on a Monday and if signing up for accommodation on another day of the week, the first weekly charge is apportioned based on days occupied before the first Monday. Rent charges to occupants are applied in line with 'Interim Accommodation' Housing Benefit Eligible Rates and a breakdown of these charges can be found in the table below:

Property Type	Rental Charge
House Share	£81.00
1 bed	£87.34
2 bed	£100.73
3 bed	£117.99

Property Type	Rental Charge
Hotel FCC	£90.00
Hotel DCC	£80.00
Hotel CWAC	£103.85
Cabins	£81.00

Where service charges are applied this is a contribution to costs associated with services such as communal cleaning, window cleaning, utilities and other operational costs. Service charges are not Housing Benefit eligible and must therefore be paid in full by the resident.

Those residents placed in accommodation will be assisted to claim housing benefit to cover their accommodation charges or a contribution towards them. Any outstanding accommodation charges not covered through Housing Benefit are for the resident to pay themselves and appropriate invoicing of these charges will be completed by the Homefinder Team.

The Homefinder Team will be responsible for charging and collection of accommodation charges and Homeless Officers and Support Officers will assist with this through offers of support, reminders and clearly documenting within Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) the responsibility of the resident to ensure accommodation costs covered in full.

The Homefinder Team will regularly review payments for accommodation charges and residents will be provided an accommodation charge statements every 3 months for their personal records.

Non-payment of accommodation charges will be dealt with promptly and offers of support around income maximisation, including help with claiming benefits and budgeting support will be extended to all residents as required. When occupants fall into arrears, repayment plans can be agreed to avoid ending accommodation but must be honoured by the occupant.

Instances of continued non-payment, where there is a lack of engagement and where offers of support can be clearly evidenced by the Council, will be tackled robustly with

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consideration given to ending accommodation for significant debt levels. Significant debt for the purposes of accommodation and / or service charges is any debt above 12 weeks in value.

6. Routine Inspections

Routine inspections of properties will be completed by the Homefinder Team and Homeless Officer or Support Officer where required. These visits will act as 1) a welfare check for the resident, 2) an inspection of the property to ensure it is being used and looked after by the resident, 3) an opportunity to identify and review support needs, 4) an opportunity to review the Personal Housing Plan and 5) to identify repairs.

- 1) Welfare checks are to ensure that the resident is safe, in good health and provides an opportunity to answer any general enquiries about the homeless accommodation and move on options.
- 2) Inspection of property to ensure the property is being used, ensuring the limited resource of homeless accommodation is used appropriately as a primary home during a period of homelessness, and that only the agreed occupants are using the property for its intended purpose – homeless accommodation.
- 3) At each routine inspection, officers will engage with the residents to understand if they have any unmet support needs. This should focus on those support needs, which if unmet could increase risks of housing instability and housing failure. Appropriate referrals to Housing Support Gateway or other services should be offered and actioned at the earliest opportunity as required.
- 4) Routine inspection provides the opportunity to review the residents Personal Housing Plan. This may be to gather updated information or changes in circumstances and to re-iterate to the occupant the actions that they must undertake in their Personal Housing Plan. Information should then be fed back to the allocated Homeless Officer if they are not in attendance.
- 5) Routine inspections provide an opportunity to identify issues of repairs and maintenance. Repairs identified should be those of fair wear and tear, or those as a result of tenant damage. More information regarding the actioning of repairs can be found in Section 7. Repairs & Maintenance.

Routine inspections of houses of multiple occupation will usually be conducted at least fortnightly and self-contained housing will usually be inspected quarterly. Hotels,

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holiday lets and caravans will usually be inspected monthly. The Homefinder Team will co-ordinate and lead on the routine inspections process and advance notice of inspections will be provided to residents.

Where issues of concern are highlighted during routine inspections or in advance of placing someone in homeless accommodation, a risk-based approach will be applied to the frequency of inspections. The more risk, the greater the frequency of inspections. Where actions are agreed with the resident to address issues of concern, follow up inspections will be completed.

A record of routine inspections will be made during each visit and placed on record. Issues of repairs, damage, poor housekeeping or other such issues of concern, should be documented through photographs (if safe to do so) and these will also be placed on record and actioned proportionately through warnings. Continued breaches or severe breaches of occupation or license agreement conditions may result in homeless accommodation being ended.

7. Repairs & Maintenance

Reporting issues of repairs and maintenance is primarily the responsibility of the occupant but will also be identified at routine inspections as detailed above. Repairs relating to hotels should be reported to hotel reception services. Repairs within the Homeless Hub should be reported to staff from The Wallich. Repairs for holiday lets, caravans, and all other forms of accommodation should be reported to the Homefinder Team.

Where repairs and maintenance work is required due to occupants causing damage or neglecting to report repairs, consideration will be given to applying a recharge for the works. Acceptable use of property, repairs obligations and residents' responsibilities in relation to maintenance and reporting of repairs are clearly documented within both the license agreement and occupation contract. Staff will establish the nature of the repair; the cause of the repair (fair wear and tear or damage) and the repair will be completed by the Council with consideration of a recharge cost for the works if caused as a result of occupant damage or neglect.

Repairs and maintenance work for private sector leased accommodation will be actioned in line with the Lease Agreement. Detailed within the Lease Agreement are the repairs that landlord or property owner would reasonably be expected to undertake. All other repairs would be actioned by the Council. Where a landlord or property owner fails to fulfil their repairs responsibilities, the works will be completed for them by the Council, and they will be recharged.

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Routine and maintenance work for Council properties will be actioned in line with the Memorandum of Understanding. Detailed within the Memorandum of Understanding are the repairs that the Housing Department would reasonably be expected to undertake. All other repairs would be actioned by the Housing Support and Homelessness Service.

The Housing Support and Homelessness Service will usually engage the services of the Councils Housing Assets Service to complete repairs and maintenance works and a Service Level Agreement (SLA) is in place. Quarterly SLA Review Meetings will take place to monitor delivery of services against the SLA.

Residents must allow access for repairs and notification of appointments will be provided in advance. As per the terms of their license agreement or occupation contract, entry to the property can be forced in order to complete urgent repairs, or where a resident has failed to provide access on a number of occasions for routine works. Failure to allow repairs to be completed constitutes a breach of occupation conditions and will be actioned proportionately. In extreme circumstances, ending accommodation is a potential consequence.

8. Communal Areas

Health and safety guidance and appropriate signage will be clearly displayed within communal areas along with notification of CCTV coverage where such equipment is in place. Additional notices relating to general building related advice and guidance will also be available within communal areas along with Fire Safety information for housing staff, emergency services and security staff where necessary.

Within HMO settings, regular cleaning services will be delivered within all communal spaces including hallways, stairwells, shared bathrooms and kitchens. Residents are required to clean their own accommodation and any issues of poor housekeeping will be addressed during routine inspections.

Within house share settings, residents are required to clean their own rooms and communal areas. Support will be provided to facilitate cleaning rotas where required and conditions will be monitored through the routine inspection process.

Where there are concerns regarding cleanliness within any communal areas, additional cleans may be initiated and consideration will be given to recharges to residents. All residents should be cleaning up after themselves and their responsibilities are outlined within their license agreement or occupation contract.

9. Ending Accommodation

When accommodation is ended due to a resident moving out with a successful homeless outcome, residents are required to keep the Homefinder Team updated on their expected day of vacating their property. Efforts will be made to complete a resident check out visit, but a formal time bound notice is not required and residents will not be held to a set notice period to enable efficient property turnaround processes. Keys must be returned to the Homefinder team promptly on the day of vacation. Delays in returning keys may result in additional housing costs even though the property is not occupied.

When accommodation is ended due to abandonment or failing to use the accommodation, a risk-based approach will be applied to bringing the accommodation duty to an end and ending the license agreement or occupation contract. This will be based on both the legislative framework that the accommodation was issued to the occupant and the intelligence available to evidence the abandonment. A member of the Departmental Management Team must approve the ending of duties and accommodation on grounds of abandonment.

When seeking to end accommodation for significant breach of occupation conditions the appropriate legal actions must be taken to bring accommodation to an end in line with homelessness and housing law. This will depend on the homeless duties owed to the residents and the legal requirements relevant to the resident's security of tenure. Action to end accommodation must always be proportionate to the breach of the license or the occupation contract conditions. Where necessary those residents with Homeless Occupation Standard Contract Holder Rights under the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016, property repossession actions should progress through the courts.

Managing occupant's personal items and possessions left in the property following vacation will involve an inventory of items being logged along with photographic evidence. Items should be stored for a period of 28 days and a notice of tort issued in relation to the items. Upon expiration of the notice of tort items may be disposed of. Costs incurred for managing items left within homeless accommodation may be recharged to the outgoing residents.

Where consent is provided by the vacating occupant, named contacts may collect items to avoid their disposal but such requests should be put in writing. Where this is not possible consent can be issued verbally by the vacating occupant or designated professionals such as Support Staff, Social Workers, Prison Liaison Officers, who will clearly document the resident's instructions. Costs incurred for managing items left within homeless accommodation may be recharged to the outgoing residents.

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Upon the ending of accommodation and final rent statement will be produced and efforts made to pursue outstanding housing costs (rent charges and service charges). Unsuccessful collection of outstanding housing costs post occupation will be considered for write off by the Homefinder Manager.

10. Void Turnaround

The Housing Support and Homelessness Service will usually engage the services of the Councils Housing Assets Service to complete voids maintenance works and a Service Level Agreement is in place. Quarterly SLA Review Meetings will take place to monitor delivery of services against the SLA.

Upon a resident vacating their property a resident check-out visit should be completed where possible. This will provide opportunity to identify issues of disrepair due to damage and where possible residents will be provided opportunity to make good on these repairs in advance of their vacation. Due to the nature and the speed of some terminations this will not always be possible.

Void properties must be refurbished to the Lettable Standard for the relevant homeless accommodation type. Once works are completed to achieve the relevant Lettable Standard an inventory of the property condition including photos should also be completed ahead of occupation.

All self-contained housing will require gas and electric checks upon each change in occupation and all compliance documentation should be kept on file and will be available for the named license or issued to the contract holder as per Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 requirements along with EPC documentation.

Shared housing settings will adhere to the relevant time bound health and safety compliance standards and all compliance documentation should be kept on file and will be available for the named license or will be issued to the contract holder as per Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 requirements along with EPC documentation.

11. Homeless Hub Cabin Turnaround

When a cabin becomes available within the Homeless Hub, The Wallich as site manager, will be responsible for turning around the cabin for occupation by the next resident and they will ensure the cabin meets the Lettable Standard. Significant damages will be considered for recharge to the outgoing resident and must be supported by a record of cabin condition and damage clearly recorded through

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photographic evidence. The Council will then consider issuing recharges and make arrangement to pursue these costs.

12. Hotel and Holiday Lets and Caravan Turnaround

When a room becomes vacant within hotels, holiday lets, or caravans, the hotelier or property owner will be notified and their turnaround process will commence. This is an opportunity for issues of damage to be identified and where deposits have been provided, they may be drawn upon or recharges may be issued to the Council, who will then consider recharge to the outgoing occupant. Photographic evidence of damage or visual inspection is required to verify any such claims.

13. Equality and Diversity

The Council recognise that we operate in a community where there is wide customer diversity. We aim to value that diversity and shape our services around the needs of our customers.

Through the management of our homeless accommodation the Council aim to treat all residents fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status. We will gather information on the diverse needs of our customers to ensure our services meet their needs and are consequently more efficient and effective.

To enable all residents to have clear information and equal access to our available properties, we will publish information in a range of appropriate languages and formats and through a range of media on request. Feedback is also promoted and accepted through a variety of different routes to reflect individual resident's preferences or needs.

14. Performance Management

We will monitor customer satisfaction within our homeless accommodation services and the results will inform our monitoring and review processes. We will establish a range of key performance indicators for our services and report progress against these at monthly managers meetings and through measures linked to the Councils Corporate Plan.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the Council's Policy Review Framework. The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or in response to changes in legislations and supporting guidance. In line with the Council's continuous improvement strategy the

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policy review will incorporate an assessment of key internal and external influencers to ensure the policy reflects best practice together with all legal and statutory requirements.

16. Responsibility

The Housing Support and Homelessness Service Manager has overall responsibility for the successful delivery of the policy.

The Homefinder Team Manager will ensure that all staff within the Homefinder, Homelessness and Housing Support Teams are fully trained on their operational responsibilities in respect of homeless accommodation management.

A full set of operational procedures will be available to support the delivery of this policy, and these will be version controlled and easily available to staff for reference.

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 6 th March 2024
Report Subject	Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) - Update
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview and update on the Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) software, the changes made to the service during the pilot testing stages and the new measures implemented to improve our overall customer satisfaction rates with regards to the service we provide.

The procurement and investment of this software was seen as a catalyst for delivering a more customer focused housing repairs function which provides strong potential for payback.





The work outlined in this report is fully aligned and complementary to the work presently being undertaken to improve the online offer from the housing service, to make it easier and simpler for customers to diagnose faults and report repairs and support the preference from customers for a convenient appointments service to complete outstanding works.

The report focuses on what has been delivered to date and outlines the next phases of the DRS pilot.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the pilot stages and next phase of the DRS testing before the Council moves into a fully functional and fully live DRS environment.
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REPORT DETAILS

<p>1.00</p>	<p>DYNAMIC RESOURCE SCHEDULER (DRS) SOFTWARE</p>			
<p>1.01</p>	<p>Overview of DRS</p> <p>The Council is implementing a customer centric ‘digital first’ approach which will provide a more focused and convenient way to access the services it provides.</p> <p>In procuring the DRS software, the Council have remained focused in its aims and objectives of the digital strategy and shall provide for a step change in the quality of service provided to its customers.</p> <p>The DRS system has a number of benefits for customers and our operatives, along with the Council, which can be summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A faster repairs service enabling the service to significantly increase the number of jobs completed each day. • An enhanced customer experience through an appointment service and enabling follow-up works to be scheduled and completed more easily. • Supporting and enabling customer independence through linking into self-serve and ‘self-appointing’ of responsive repair requests. • Reduced traveling times for operatives. • Reduced operational costs. <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Appointment at F.P.O.C. Slot time to suit me Short wait/fix time Operative on time First time fix Pro-active alert Emergencies accommodated Channel flexibility on-line?</p> </td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">  </td> <td style="width: 40%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Optimised working day Efficient slot Reduce no accesses Minimise travel time First time fix Lower administration costs Manage emergencies and problems Reduce call centre dependency</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>A key benefit of implementing a DRS system is the opportunity to shift the focus of the Repair Team Leaders to monitoring the quality of work undertaken, utilising performance reporting to improve the productivity and efficiency of the service, championing and improving customer care across the service. This will provide greater capacity for the Team Leaders to undertake a more proactive approach, focus on post-inspection of completed works and facilitate customer feedback to address areas of under-performance.</p>	<p>Appointment at F.P.O.C. Slot time to suit me Short wait/fix time Operative on time First time fix Pro-active alert Emergencies accommodated Channel flexibility on-line?</p>		<p>Optimised working day Efficient slot Reduce no accesses Minimise travel time First time fix Lower administration costs Manage emergencies and problems Reduce call centre dependency</p>
<p>Appointment at F.P.O.C. Slot time to suit me Short wait/fix time Operative on time First time fix Pro-active alert Emergencies accommodated Channel flexibility on-line?</p>		<p>Optimised working day Efficient slot Reduce no accesses Minimise travel time First time fix Lower administration costs Manage emergencies and problems Reduce call centre dependency</p>		

	<p>The introduction of a text messaging service, which will notify customers when a job has been ordered, provide a reminder to them the day before the job is to be completed, and send a text message immediately following the repair in order to ascertain the customer’s feedback on works undertaken, will help to improve the customer experience and overall customer satisfaction of the service the Council provides.</p> <p>Performance improvement will be achieved through utilising the detailed analytics and performance reports provided by the software (the system can generate over 100 different reports relating to performance and planning activities). This provides the service with the ability to drill down into significant detail the performance of the repair team member and the jobs which are being generated.</p> <p>Health and safety will be improved by raising awareness, undertaking spot checks and updating processes and practices. By spending more time out on site, checking works, ensuring that repair team members are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and adhering to risk assessments, the supervisors shall ensure operatives are complying with safe systems of work.</p> <p>Promoting digital inclusion shall be supported through encouraging and facilitating the use of online options to report a repair and arrange an appointment for the repair to be completed.</p>
1.02	<p>Planning Team and Customer Contact Centre</p> <p>A new planning team has been established within the Business Performance Service. The resourcing in the team was determined using historic data including the number of repairs completed each year and number of operatives available through the scheduling system. The resource of the team will be reviewed following full implementation and analysis of intelligence provided by the system.</p> <p>It was critical to have the lead job planner in post to work with colleagues in the Contact Centre and responsive repairs team ahead of UAT (user acceptance testing) and delivery of the training programme to ensure the successful implementation and utilisation of the dynamic resource scheduling system.</p> <p>Vigorous testing and training to gain a clear understanding of the system has been undertaken and included a wider range of staff including the call centre team, planners, administration, system auditors, team leaders and operatives from the responsive repair team. The training and testing allowed live scenarios to be tested before implementation.</p> <p>The system has been uploaded with key data to ensure it has the required intelligence on the workforce, i.e., home addresses, skill sets, working patterns and Flintshire’s social housing stock. This allows the system to identify the most efficient geographical work areas and routes to enable the first and last job of the day to be scheduled as close to the operative’s home address as possible.</p>

	<p>Currently the primary route for repairs reporting and logging is via telephone through the call centre and, as such, it is vital the lead job planner and call centre team leader meet regularly to identify any concerns in respect of business rules.</p> <p>The description of the job logged, and schedule of rates (SORs) used, defines the priority of the job, time, trade and materials required to complete. The scheduling system indicates the most efficient operative for allocation.</p> <p>The job planners can schedule and reschedule to different operatives throughout the day to ensure improved productivity of workforce and customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Review meetings have taken place with the lead planner and the operatives currently working on the pilot. This has provided an opportunity to receive feedback on areas that have worked well and areas that require further improvements. This feedback has proved vital during the pilot.</p> <p>Good working relationships between the planning team and the call centre have been crucial to support the pilot and highlight any additional training requirements.</p>
1.03	<p>The Assets Service overview - Repairs & Maintenance Dept.</p> <p>The Housing Assets Service is responsible for ensuring our Council homes and related assets are in good condition, free from disrepair and comply with the various standards, regulation and guidelines.</p> <p>The service is a multi-disciplined technical service for responsive repairs and planned maintenance works.</p> <p>The objective of the service is to continue to keep the Council's housing stock and related assets in good, maintainable condition and state of repair by planning maintenance to those assets and components efficiently and effectively based upon robust stock condition surveys which identify need, priority, efficiency and cost, offering a more customer focused approach to delivery.</p> <p>The system will assist us to schedule and coordinate our repairs service in an efficient manner and to further develop our specific policies and strategies such as our tenancy contracts, communication strategies, compliance policies along with our home energy conservation and fuel poverty strategies designed to conserve energy usage for our tenant's homes.</p> <p>The implementation of the DRS system will assist the service in delivering its aims and objectives with regards to efficiently and effectively allocating work to our operatives and offering an appointment-based service for our contract holders / customers.</p> <p>Moving forwards the DRS software will also enable the Council to schedule our day-to-day inspections and other planned repair and</p>

maintenance works in real-time, allowing us to optimise our resources as the working day evolves.

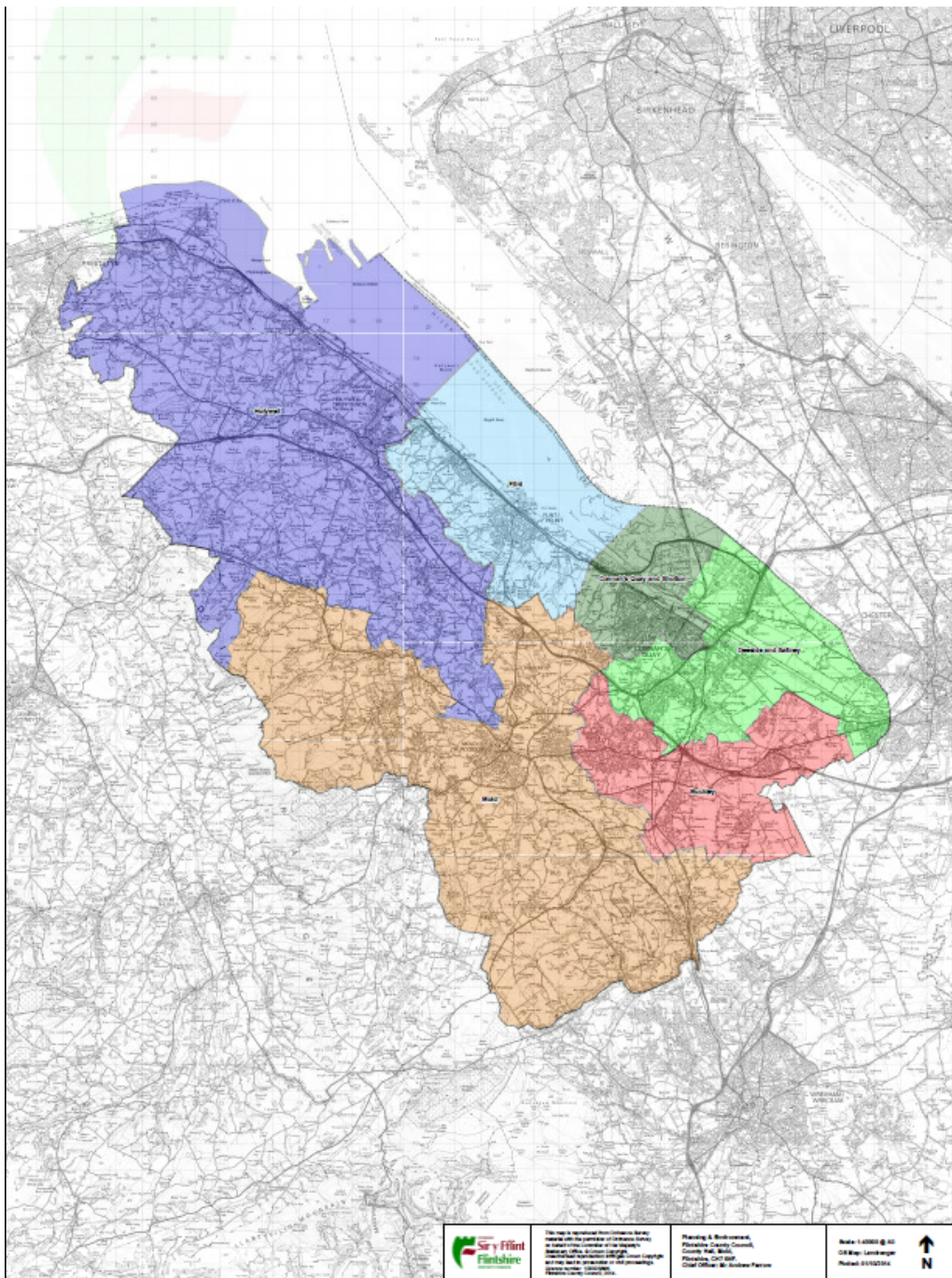
We have progressed with the pilot, working on any barriers or system issues in the background that have arisen.

There have been many operational changes made relating to the way works are logged and delivered, and testing is still underway.

1.06

DRS District Sectors

The map below identifies the sectors / areas the DRS software utilises in order to plan the work requests before allocating to an operative.



1.07	<p>Milestones achieved and Next Steps of the Pilot</p> <p>The Council will be progressing with the next steps of the pilot before the system is placed into a fully live environment / position.</p> <p>The pilot is currently running in two district sectors with the third due to go live imminently. This will allow us to ascertain if the DRS system works effectively and specific processes and reports can be tested and reviewed.</p> <p>The next step of the plan is to open up further sectors of the County and to integrate these sectors into the pilot until all sectors and all operatives are allocated and utilising the DRS software.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Staff Support</p> <p>There are concerns about the retention of staff to support delivery of the project. IT support is critical alongside staff in key support and delivery teams (Planning Team, Customer Contact Centre and Repairs).</p> <p>The Asset Service Team have made changes to the structure of the team to increase resilience, succession planning and robustness to the delivery model and departments risk register. Other teams have similar resilience plans in place.</p>
2.02	<p>Ongoing and early engagement with the IT department has ensured that the internal IT resource requirements beyond the Housing team can be built into resource plans as part of the Councils broader Digital Strategy.</p> <p>The associated costs will be funded from the HRA.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The Council is looking to utilise a tried and tested system with a track record of delivering efficiencies and new technologies as it has done over many years.</p> <p>There is a risk that should the Council fail to fully implement the DRS software, then it shall lose the opportunity to secure significant efficiency savings and to transform its approach to improving our customer focus, productivity, performance and health and safety.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>Prior to the DRS going live, the service consulted with all operatives via a workshop with invitations to Trade Union representatives.</p> <p>The service also consulted separately with the Trade Unions, teams across the service and portfolio along with the Tenants Federation.</p>

	The portfolio held a Member workshop, where the service presented a report covering DRS and some of the challenges it was working through in late 2022.
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	N/A

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Sean O'Donnell, Service Manager - Housing Assets Telephone: 01352 701642 E-mail: Sean.O'Donnell@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS): DRS is a scheduling software solution which allows the client to seamlessly integrate appointed, planned and responsive, last-minute work across a field-based workforce. It will enable the Council to meet its commitments, deliver excellent customer service, reduce travel time and costs, and ensure more tasks are completed in a single day.</p> <p>Information Technology (IT): An IT organisation (information technology) is the department within a company that is charged with establishing, monitoring and maintaining information technology systems and services.</p> <p>Capita OPEN: The Council's Housing System utilised to record assets, repairs, tenant details etc.</p> <p>HRA: The Housing Revenue Account</p> <p>RAMS: Risk and Method Statements used in construction works to enable a Contractor to safely plan and identify how any risks will be mitigated or complied with.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April</p> <p>PDA Solution: Mobile hand held device used for capturing stock data directly linked to our asset database.</p>

<p>Schedule of Rates (SORs): is a list of staff, labour and plant hire rates that a company or department will use for pricing cost reimbursable instructed day-work or work tasks.</p>
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**Communities and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 Voids Management Update
 Reporting period: February 2024**

Key figures			J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F
Number of new void properties in reporting period			20	20	26	26	46	20	39	25
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			39	33	28	29	40	24	33	35
Number of allocation offers accepted			-	-	-	29	40	24	33	31
Number of lettings			-	-	-	32	38	21	34	30
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	134	107	101	100	84	-	90	101
		Minor voids	53	45	34	35	44	-	63	51
		TBC	55	82	97	94	107	-	84	75
	Housing Management	High Demand	165	153	129	127	115	-	134	143
		In Progress	77	79	101	102	90	-	73	57
		Low Demand	-	-	-	-	28	-	30	27
		TBC	0	2	2	2	2	-	0	0
Property Type	General Needs		109	113	120	116	117	-	105	103
	Sheltered		133	121	112	115	118	-	132	124
Property Type	1 bed		87	77	72	74	70	-	77	73
	2 bed		92	89	91	84	89	-	95	83
	3 bed		57	61	63	65	69	-	65	65
	4 bed		5	6	5	5	6	-	5	5
	4 bed plus		1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1
Capital District Areas	Buckley		25	26	24	28	27	-	29	27
	C'Quay & Shotton		58	57	54	47	45	-	37	34
	Deeside & Saltney		32	33	34	35	36	-	33	31
	Flint		49	43	45	45	48	-	61	62
	Holywell		47	48	49	51	59	-	56	53
	Mold		31	27	26	23	20	-	21	20
Total voids			242	234	232	229	235	231	237	227

Additional information

Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Top reasons for terminations:

- *February*
 - *Deceased (6)*
 - *Residential Care (5)*
 - *Moved to alternative accommodation (3)*

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 90 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.