COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Date of Meeting	Tuesday 27th September 2022
Report Subject	Rapid Rehousing
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer, Housing and Communities
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an introduction and overview of principles of Rapid Rehousing. Local Authorities are required to develop Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans in order to demonstrate how they will move towards a new approach to prevention and relieving homelessness. The paper also identifies a number of priority areas that have been identified whilst developing the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan that Flintshire County Council and its partners will need to overcome as it seeks to deliver a transformation in homeless prevention and statutory homelessness services.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	Community, Housing and Assets, Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report and the principles of Rapid Rehousing and provide any comments or observations.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	**EXPLAINING RAPID REHOUSING**
1.01	**Background to Rapid Rehousing** The Welsh Government has recently published its [Ending Homelessness Action Plan](#), which commits to making homelessness rare, brief and non-repeated: • **Rare:** People are prevented from becoming homeless in the first place • **Brief:** People get a quick and effective response if they become homeless • **Non-repeated:** People do not experience multiple episodes of homelessness When delivering on plans for preventing homelessness for as many people in Wales as possible, Welsh Government expect Rapid Rehousing to become the default approach when people do become homeless. Detailed below are illustrations which highlight the potential opportunities of moving to a Rapid Rehousing Model With an increased focus on 1) Early Prevention 2) Access and Supply 3) Better Sustainment, Rapid Rehousing will over time reduce demand on homelessness statutory services and reduce the need for access to temporary housing. When access to temporary housing is required it should be high quality accommodation and for short periods of time. Increasing supply and access to more affordable housing options will enable timely move on from temporary housing for those who do experience homelessness. More support in tenancy will help to avoid repeat homelessness.
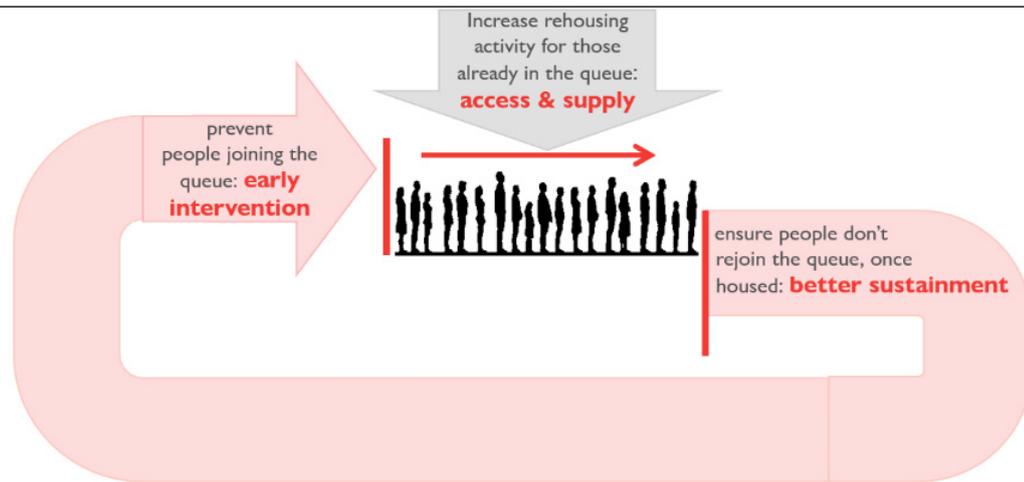
All Councils in Wales are required to develop Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans and Flintshire's is in its development. This paper seeks to outline the principles of Rapid Rehousing along with the vision and priorities that will be captured within Flintshire's Rapid Rehousing Transitions Plan.

The housing crisis has been in the making for decades, therefore the process of change to enable a move to a Rapid Rehousing Model and a clear commitment to ending homelessness needs to be set of solid foundations. The changes needed to deliver on Rapid Rehousing requires significant public sector transformation and will likely take more than 10-15 years to truly have impact. Local Authorities are however required to develop a 5 year plan for 2022-2027.

The first iteration of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which will be taken through the Political process in early Q3 2022-2023 and seeks to lay the foundations needed to embrace the Rapid Rehousing Model and creating the infrastructure and shared approaches required across multiple service areas to make this a truly integrated public services transformation.

1.02	**The principles of Rapid Rehousing in Wales** **What is Rapid Rehousing?** Rapid Rehousing is an internationally recognised approach which ensures that people experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time. **Key elements of Rapid Rehousing** • Everyone is assumed to be 'housing ready' with the right support. • People spend as little time as possible in temporary accommodation. • When people do need temporary accommodation, it is of a high standard. • People are able to access the right home in the right place for them. • For most people, an independent, mainstream home will be the default approach, but others may choose supported accommodation. • People are able to access high quality, multi-agency support, tailored to individual needs, where this is required.

		Who can benefit from Rapid Rehousing? Everyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness should benefit from rapid rehousing and be helped to find a settled home as quickly as possible. However, different people will require different levels of support to maintain their tenancy. Some people will need no additional support, others might need short-term support, and a small proportion will need higher intensity, multi-agency support (such as Housing First). **What is needed to make Rapid Rehousing a reality in Wales?** - Increased affordable housing – both social housing and private rented housing - A good understanding of the support needs of people experiencing homelessness - Improved access to multi-agency support (such as mental health or substance misuse services) for people who need it **What are the benefits of rapid rehousing?** - Reduces rough sleeping - Reduces repeat homelessness - Reduces public spending on expensive temporary accommodation - Reduces the destabilising and marginalising effects of prolonged homelessness or prolonged stays in emergency or temporary settings - Improves people's quality of life and health outcomes, resulting in savings for public services
1.03		**The vision for Rapid Rehousing in Flintshire** As with any programme of change, a clear vision is required to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the direction of travel. Outlined below is the suggested Vision for Flintshire. *"Working with our partners to transform prevention activity, housing support and homelessness services, to achieve a co-ordinated and significant shift in service delivery to a rapid rehousing model, which ensures homelessness is rare, brief and unrepeated"* This vision builds upon the work undertaken when developing the Housing Support Programme Strategy and re-enforces a commitment to ensuring homelessness is rare brief and un-repeated in keeping with Welsh Governments Ending Homelessness High Level Action Plan and policy direction for the housing support and homelessness agenda.
1.04		**Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Priorities** When developing the draft Transition Plan a number of priority areas have emerged. These areas present initially as challenges and over time the Transition Plan will overcome and seek to address these challenges through a process of change management and public service transformation. The challenges and priority areas demonstrate very clearly that homelessness is not exclusively an issue for housing and homeless services to address and will require significant partnership working alongside increases in housing supply and changes to existing practices.

PRIORITY 1 - Tackling homelessness through robust and effective partnership working

The challenges associated with delivering on this are:

- Public and 3rd sector services are stretched and struggling with frontline service capacity for early intervention – recruitment and retention challenges
- A lack of understanding within some partners around the limitations of the local housing market and pressures on local homelessness services
- We do not have the partnership structures or work streams to join up service delivery and ensure effective partnership working is developed and captured
- Positive partnership working is not consistent across all agencies or at all levels of organisations
- Lack of documented positive practice – partnership working needs to be recorded through formal protocols and joint working arrangements

PRIORITY 2 - Remodelling our approaches to data, systems, policies and service delivery

The challenges associated with delivering on this are:

- Our ability to extract data and use it to inform and monitor service delivery is limited and our IT systems require significant review and enhancement
- Insufficient staff capacity for policy, performance and improvement activities within the Housing & Prevention Service as the workforce is focussed on front line service delivery pressures
- Policies and procedures require a significant review to ensure they align with the move to Rapid Rehousing and staff will require training and support as practices change
- We do not have the necessary infrastructure for delivering co-ordinated activity with our partners and we are collectively unable to ensure data drives delivery

PRIORITY 3 - Ensuring the right type of support is available to everyone who needs it

The challenges associated with delivering on this are:

- People often don't engage with support early enough so opportunities to help are missed leading to more significant problems
- More people need support and people needs are presenting as more complex and significant

- Managing expectations - people who need our services don't understand the limitations of social housing and housing and support options available
- Services need to work more collaboratively to build support plans that bring together a wide range of support services

PRIORITY 4 - Transforming our temporary housing offer

The challenges associated with delivering on this are:

- Our current temporary housing portfolio is heavily reliant on substandard models of housing such as 1) shared housing 2) Porta-kabins 3) hotels
- The shared housing we have is not en-suite as standard, requires investment or disposal and is too densely populated which presents management issues
- Porta-kabins have served a purpose during covid but we aspire to much higher standards of accommodation for people accessing our Homeless Hub services
- Our hotel accommodation is often "out of county" causing disruption to people accessing it and operational challenges for support activity and partner agencies
- Our Temporary Accommodation management requirements improvement and additional capacity with current numbers and likely short term increase in demand

PRIORITY 5 - Increasing the supply of affordable housing and removing barriers to people accessing affordable housing promptly

The challenges associated with delivering on this are:

- Limited land availability to build more homes within areas of high demand for social housing
- Increasing environmental challenges and specifically issues around levels of phosphates locally
- Existing social housing is not aligned to the levels of demand within the homeless cohort – lack of 1 bed general needs housing and over supply of lower demand older persons housing
- Other housing pressures and housing needs other than homelessness which the Local Authority also has a duty to assist with
- An increasingly unaffordable private sector and evidence of landlords leaving the sector

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Developing the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan

The development of the Strategy is driven through the Housing & Prevention Service and this has been a significant challenge due to ever increasing demands around housing and homelessness post covid with all indications that homelessness will increase with the cost of living crisis.

The need to balance planning service transformation and sustaining front line services is an on-going concern, but investing time to plan will help ease pressures and deliver the changes needed to improve services over time. |
| 2.02 | Delivering on the Rapid Rehousing Agenda

Detailed below are the resource implications associated with the delivery of Rapid Rehousing. Further scoping and detail in relation to resource implications will be captured within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan:

Revenue: Housing Support Grant is the primary source of funding for the delivery of housing related support services. Additional funding has been made available in recent years, but the Grant was underspent last year due to challenges with recruitment and service mobilisation. The Council Fund is used for statutory services such as the Homeless Case management work within Housing Wales Act 2014, including costs associated with temporary housing.

Capital: There are implications for Capital expenditure with the need to build more homes requiring significant investment. This is enabled through the Social Housing Grant programme which Welsh Government have enhanced in order to enable new build and development of social housing at scale and pace.

Human Resources: Additional funding from Welsh Government provides an opportunity to increase staff capacity across a range of services and some of this additional capacity will be focussed on development of further work to deliver Rapid Rehousing. There is however a shortage of appropriately skilled people within the local labour market so recruitment is an on-going challenge. |

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The following risks and mitigations have been identified by way of control measures:

Risk: Failure to deliver the changes needed to ensure homelessness is a shared challenge across a wide range of public services and not solely the job of Homelessness Services

Mitigation: Capture the change needed through the Transition Plan and ensure there is robust engagement strategy linked to the delivery of Rapid |

| | | Rehousing and shared responsibilities identified and clear commitments from internal and external partners as to how they assist

Risk: Fail to gain political or partner support around the principles of Rapid Rehousing and the direction of travel for housing support and homelessness services

Mitigation: Engage members through reports to appropriate Scrutiny Committees and Workshops and partners through a range of engagement events around housing need and homelessness

Risk: Failure to have enough homes for people who need them when they experience homelessness and in order to exit it in a timely manner

Mitigations: Deliver the Social Housing Grant Programme and priority actions outlined within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan linked to increasing the supply of affordable housing and removing barriers to people accessing affordable housing promptly through Policy changes linked to Social Housing Allocations |
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| 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 peoples' 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

Well-being Goals Impact

Prosperous Wales	Positive – More jobs will be created to deliver housing related support and prevention activities on a greater scale within Flintshire.
Resilient Wales	Positive – Creating services that are prevention focused and build resilience to avoid households becoming homeless and

		helping people exit homelessness promptly, with support to reduce risks of repeat homelessness.
	Healthier Wales	Positive – Reduction in rough sleeping, less homelessness and shorter stays in temporary housing when homelessness does occur help with overcoming health inequalities associated with homelessness (physical health and mental health and wellbeing outcomes)
	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 who experience homelessness.
	Cohesive Wales	No Impact
	Vibrant Wales	No impact
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Service User Engagement
	A standardised consultation activity including questionnaire has been used across North Wales Local Authorities to inform the Housing Support Programme Strategy and ensure service user's insight informs strategic priorities. This insight will inform the local Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
	Further work will be done to engage service users as the work associated with service change develops to ensure that people who use and rely on our services are at the heart of the process and policies we develop to respond to Rapid Rehousing.
4.02	Service Provider Feedback
	Again the engagement undertaken to inform the development of the Housing Support Programme is being used to inform the development of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
	Further work will be done to engage service provider as the work associated with service change develops to ensure that partners can help inform the process of change associated with the move to Rapid Rehousing.

5.00	**APPENDICES**
5.01	Appendix 1: Rapid Rehousing in Wales FAQs

6.00	**LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**
6.01	Flintshire's Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2027 Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26 (flintshire.gov.uk) Welsh Government Programme for government https://gov.wales/programme-for-government-2021-to-2026-hml Housing Support Grant Guidance https://gov.wales/housing-support-grant-practice-guidance

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

8.00	**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**
8.01	**Housing Support Programme Strategy** - the single strategic document on housing support and homelessness prevention. **Rapid Rehousing** - Rapid rehousing is about taking a housing-led approach for rehousing people that have experienced homelessness, making sure they reach a settled housing option as quickly as possible rather than staying in temporary accommodation for too long. **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan** – the document that will outline how Flintshire and its partners will deliver on the Rapid Rehousing Agenda and lay the foundations for service transformation in regards to housing support and homeless prevention. **Housing First** – is 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. Places no conditions on individuals; however, they should desire to have a tenancy.