

**COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**1 FEBRUARY 2017**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 1st February, 2017

**PRESENT: Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)**

Councillors: David Cox, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Rosetta Dolphin, Ian Dunbar, Ray Hughes, Gareth Roberts and David Roney

**SUBSTITUTES:** Councillors: Andy Dunbobbin (for Ron Davies), David Healey (for Mike Reece) and Hilary McGuill (for Sara Parker)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Hilary Isherwood and Councillor Derek Butler, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Bernie Attridge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment; Councillor Helen Brown, Cabinet Member for Housing; Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise); and Service Manager, Customer Support

Service Manager, Housing Programmes and Ms. Jan Lysett, Independent Director of NEW Homes (for minute number 47)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Community and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

**45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

As a Board Member of North East Wales (NEW) Homes, Councillor Hilary McGuill declared a personal interest on agenda item 4, NEW Homes Business Plan 2016-21.

**46. VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman indicated that there would be a slight change in the order of business to bring forward agenda item 4 to enable a representative to speak. The remainder of the items would be considered in the order shown on the agenda.

**47. NEW HOMES BUSINESS PLAN 2016-21**

The Committee welcomed Ms. Jan Lysett who was one of the independent Directors of North East Wales (NEW) Homes. She gave a brief summary of the core activities of the company. She spoke about the progress of The Walks development in Flint as part of the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP) and explained that her participation in the SHARP Board meetings would give an insight into other opportunities for delivering future schemes. A systematic approach had been established to effectively manage the housing units and was supported by ongoing work to change the performance management framework. The Board had agreed to review the over 55s lease

offer scheme following targeted consultation with local groups and positive outcomes were reported on the Rent Smart Wales scheme in helping to identify quality accommodation. A projected surplus of £15.8K for 2016/17 was a reduction from the previous year, however additional expertise and resources acquired during the year, particularly those to support the financial viability of the company, were legitimate spend to benefit future schemes.

Councillor David Roney referred to the one property currently available within the over 55s lease scheme and asked whether more could be done to speed up the legal process. The Service Manager, Housing Programmes said that despite high demand for smaller properties, the take-up levels for this scheme had been lower than expected. A key priority was to address any delays in the system whilst working within housing legislation regulations and a report on this would shortly be considered by the Board. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) explained that the careful development of a model lease was now in place, which meant that any legal delays were not related to the Council and may be due to individual homeowners' legal representation. The Service Manager agreed to a request to provide updated figures on the number of landlords registered on the Smart Rent Wales scheme.

Councillor Bernie Attridge said that the targeted group consultation had helped to provide detailed explanation of the process for the over 55s offer which enabled individuals to reach an informed decision.

Councillor Helen Brown added that the consultation sought to encourage trust on the offer, as some people were hesitant about leasing their properties.

Councillor Ian Dunbar thanked all those involved with the NEW Homes Board for the success in exceeding expectations.

On the over 55s offer, Councillor Hilary McGuill felt that the level of interest may have been affected by tax liability implications of leasing a property and the cost of bringing a property up to an appropriate standard for leasing.

In response to comments from Councillor Gareth Roberts, the Service Manager, Customer Support felt that participation levels on the over 55s scheme should not be viewed as a failure due to the complexities involved in matching individuals to properties and meeting individual expectations. The Chief Officer explained that criteria on capital assets held by individuals affected their position on the Affordable Housing Register and therefore the lease offer had been developed as an alternative option.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee notes the progress made by NEW Homes to date against its Business Plan and the future growth strategy projections and proposals.

**48. UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SARTH**

The Service Manager, Customer Support presented the update report on the implementation of the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) project across the North Wales sub-region.

Explanation was given on the three workstreams. The establishment of a regional steering group was helping to ensure a consistent approach, along with the sharing of good practice and working together to resolve challenges. The Council's successful bid to develop, host and manage the register for Denbighshire Council was due to go live in April 2017 and would provide an additional income stream. The Service Manager gave a brief summary of statistics from the latest performance monitoring report which indicated a significant demand in the service and positive impact of the triage approach. After 18 months, the policy would be reviewed and any changes progressed through the steering group before seeking Cabinet approval.

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) reminded Members that the constant movement of the common register was due to individuals being taken off and new applicants added, which reinforced the need for affordable housing.

In response to remarks from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin on the approach to allocations, the Chief Officer agreed to a follow-up discussion outside the meeting. The Service Manager clarified that there was a clear system for allocating properties with priority based on bandings and matched accordingly. Any allocations outside this approach required the necessary reason to be recorded which was subject to audit.

Councillor Hilary McGuill questioned why a property in the Mold area was not being leased through NEW Homes. The Service Manager spoke about close working between the Council and the company, and the aim of NEW Homes in targeting more individuals and matching expectations and affordability. Following a request, she agreed to share information on the number of young people on the common register who were 'sofa surfing' together with a breakdown of the circumstances involved.

Councillor David Healey welcomed the outcomes achieved within a short period. He asked if it was possible to ascertain the number of cases where homelessness had been prevented and the length of time that individuals in Band 1 (in most serious need) had waited for accommodation. The Service Manager referred to information on waiting times in section 1.05 of the report and agreed to provide a breakdown for the Committee.

Councillor Bernie Attridge spoke about the significant progress made by the team in reducing use of bed and breakfast accommodation. This was acknowledged by the Chairman.

Councillor Helen Brown commented that homelessness appeared to be less evident in Flintshire than some other areas, and that there was significant demand for single person's accommodation nationwide.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee notes the implementation of the policy, common register and regional collaboration developments.

**49. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

In considering the Forward Work Programme, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held at County Hall in Mold to include a video showing progress of The Walks development. Members were able to decide at a future point whether a site visit was needed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be amended; and
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.

**50. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

There was one member of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 10.55 am)

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**Chairman**