

Public Document Pack

Gareth Owens LL.B Barrister/Bargyfreithiwr
Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



Contact Officer:
Ceri Shotton 01352 702305
ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk

To:

Members of the Community & Housing Overview &
Scrutiny Committee

11 May, 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 17TH MAY, 2023 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Lord Barry Jones Council Chamber, 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 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Purpose: At the Annual Meeting, Council determined that the Independent Group will chair this Committee. The Committee is advised that Councillor Helen Brown is the Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Purpose: To appoint a Vice-Chair for the Committee.

3 APOLOGIES

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

5 MINUTES (Pages 3 - 18)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 8 March and 19 April, 2023.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (Pages 19 - 28)

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.

7 VOID MANAGEMENT (Pages 29 - 30)

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

Purpose: To provide a further update on voids management and delivery.

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

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 8 March 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Helen Brown (Chair)

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

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Mel Buckley (for Ray Hughes)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Marion Bateman, Dave Hughes, Paul Johnson and Billy Mullin attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration); Service Manager – Housing Welfare and Communities; Service Manager – Housing Assets; Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager; Housing Manager; Strategic Finance Manager - Commercial and Housing and Business Manager

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

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

31. MINUTES

Councillor Dale Selvester referred to his request for a breakdown between water rates arrears and rent arrears and said that he had not received this information. The Facilitator explained that due to year end and billing priorities it had not been possible to provide this information ahead of the meeting, but this could be provided in early April. Councillor Selvester confirmed that they would like to receive the information requested in April.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson referred to his concerns on the reduction in opening days for the Connect Office in Buckley. The Facilitator explained that a response to his concern had been provided to the Committee via e-mail ahead of the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were approved as a correct record as moved and seconded by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson and Councillor Dale Selvester.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME & ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration.

The Facilitator outlined the following proposed changes to the items listed in the current forward work programme:-

- Temporary Accommodation Audit Update – suggest move to September to allow for a fuller report;
- Estate Management and Anti-Social Behaviour reports – suggest move to July. The original timeframe for reviewing these policies was to coincide with the implementation of the Renting (Homes) Wales Act and since the implementation was delayed six months the policy review and update would need to fall into the same time pattern.

The Facilitator also outlined the status of the actions arising from the last meeting, which were shown at Appendix 2 of the report.

Councillor Linda Thew referred to the refugee item listed on the forward work programme under 'items to be scheduled' and raised concerns around proposals to convert the Northop Hall Country House Hotel into a facility for asylum-seekers and refugees. It was agreed that Councillor Thew's concerns be feedback to the Chief Executive to ensure consultation with local Members and adjoining ward Members following the meeting.

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

RESOLVED:

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

33. VOID MANAGEMENT

The Service Manager – Housing Assets presented a report to provide a further update on voids management and delivery.

The Service Manager explained that there had been a number of challenges to overcome from the past 24 months, which included the pandemic, Brexit and the war in

the Ukraine, which had increased pressures in securing skilled resources, raw materials and price increases and outlined work being undertaken to meet the key milestones within the Voids Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, which covered the following areas:

- Budget
- Refurbishment
- Workforce
- Oversight & Reporting
- Compliance

The Service Manager also outlined the key activities delivered, adding that the Management Team met regularly to discuss progress and performance on the following areas:

- Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) Funding
- Procurement of new Schedule of Rates (SORs)
- Procurement/tendering of the new framework
- Acquisition of new contractors
- Reallocation of internal resource positions (Team Leaders & Inspectors)
- Training for voids team
- Development of new allocations process.
- Identify any additional funding
- Looking at WHQs2 and de-carbonisation
- Full review of specification to voids standards, to build robust standard surveys
- Ensuring contractors were meeting benchmarks

In response to questions from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin around the average costs to bring a void property back into use and its comparison to neighbouring authorities, the Service Manager explained that neighbouring authorities typically spend between £18,000 to £20,000 on void properties, but the average costs for Flintshire was in the region of around £9,000. He agreed to provide information on how many of the void properties required works costing more than £10,000 to Members of the Committee following the meeting.

Councillor Dale Selvester welcomed the detailed report. He also welcomed that that all Team Leaders had returned to the workplace and recruitment exercises have been completed and said that he would like to see what improvement this had on the service. The Service Manager agreed to provide data analysis on the benefits of additional posts in the future update reports.

Councillor Selvester also asked if external contractors were made aware of what their performance targets were and what measures were taken if they were not meeting their target. He also questioned the multiple material and supply issues as outlined within the report and outlined conversations with a local builder who had stated that there were no material supply issues with materials such as windows. The Service Manager explained that external contractors worked to performance targets set, for example, a small contractor would be given 2 void properties and when the property was 75% completed, they would then be allocated additional properties to assist with

workflow and future planning. Any contractor late on completing a property or where there were quality issues would be defaulted and it would affect their allocation of properties going forward. In relation to materials, the report outlined the issues over the last 2 years during the pandemic and most of these issues had been resolved. It was proposed to work closely with local suppliers to start building stock levels up and share forward work programmes going forward.

Councillor Dave Evans asked if homes were regularly inspected in order to identify issues before they became major repairs when vacated. The Service Manager reported that a stock condition survey commenced in 2020 but access was restricted during the pandemic. A high-level stock condition survey to assess tenants' homes would be commencing but any tenant who had previously refused entry into their home as part of the WHQS works, access was gained to ensure the kitchens and bathrooms were safe. Any operative who attends a property where concerns were found, these would be reported as soon as possible. He was confident that robust processes were in place.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Pam Banks on repairs to properties in her ward where the tenants had been waiting a number of years, the Service Manager agreed to pick this up with Councillor Banks following the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Selvester around housing officers reporting safeguarding issues when accessing a property, the Service Manager advised that Housing Officers work closely alongside Children's Services to ensure any concerns were reported as soon as possible.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor David Evans and seconded by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress made in delivering the planned activity previously outlined to the Committee in September 2022, the next steps and key milestones within the Voids Action Plan at attached at Appendix 1 be noted; and
- (b) That the proposals for addressing the challenges identified within the Voids Action Plan be supported.

34. DYNAMIC RESOURCE SCHEDULER (DRS) UPDATE

The Service Manager – Housing Assets and Business Manager jointly presented a report to provide an overview and update on the newly procured Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS), the changes made to the service during the testing stages of the pilot and the new measures implemented to improve our overall customer satisfaction rates with regards to the service provided.

The procurement and investment of the software was seen as a catalyst for delivering a more customer focused housing repairs function. It was also anticipated that the newly procured software provided strong potential for payback which could be

realised through a more productive, efficient, and effective housing repairs service, reduced customer call-backs and reduced travel times for the operatives.

The proposals within the report were fully aligned and complimented the work 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.

Councillor Bernie Attridge asked how many operatives had been involved in the testing phase. He also if the system would work across all trade areas and if tenants called to report a fault how could the size of the job be recognised. The Service Manager advised that 4 operatives had been testing the system as part of the pilot. He confirmed that all trade areas would be able to work through the DRS system and that the size of the job would be identified as part of the pre-inspection phase.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin asked if the DRS system was similar to the system already in place. The Service Manager explained that it was similar to a previous system but was now further enhanced to a digital process rather than the older manual process that was in place.

In response to a question from Councillor Linda Thew around the cost of the DRS System, the Service Manager agreed to provide this information following the meeting.

Councillor Pam Banks commented that some elderly tenants may not be confident with technology and raised concerns around how they would be able to report faults. The Service Manager assured Members that tenants would still be able to report faults manually and someone could contact them non digitally to avoid any technical discomfort issues.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor David Evans and seconded by Councillor Kevin Rush.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee note the next phase of the DRS testing and pilot stages before the Council moved into a fully functional and fully live DRS environment; and
- (b) That the Committee support the Council in promoting the service offer, where tenant could be provided with an appointment for repair and maintenance work requests, in line with the agreed target and attendance times.

35. RESULTS OF THE TENANTS SURVEY & DEVELOPING CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

The Service Manager – Housing Welfare and Communities introduced the outcome of the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR).

In 2022 a full census survey of all tenants was undertaken to gauge current opinions across the range of services Housing provided. This included asking them to rate their neighbourhood, the safety of their homes, the repair and maintenance service and how they could get involved and have their say on digital use. The survey received a 25% response rate with the key themes outlined in the report.

The Service Manager reported that the former Tenant Engagement Strategy expired in 2021 and the Council had been operating an interim strategy whilst the new draft strategy was being developed and the STAR survey was being concluded. This was to ensure the results of the STAR survey informed the development of a new strategy and it was aligned with the priorities and feedback from tenants.

Councillor Bernie Attridge asked how the Council were intending to make sure all tenants engaged with the STAR survey going forward and raised concerns around the Tenants Federation which he did feel represented the views of all tenants across Flintshire and fed into the Customer Involvement Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration said that it was important to consider how to improve engagement with all tenants and referred to the roadshows being held across Flintshire for tenants in order to inform them of the changes as part of the Renting (Homes) Wales Act. The Service Manager explained that the survey would be carried out bi-annually in the future in order to track tenants' satisfactions/concerns and the survey would be sent to every tenant across Flintshire. Initial consultation with tenants would focus on how the Customer Involvement Strategy would be developed.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Selvester around the data by ward it was explained that the wards detailed in the report were shown prior to the boundary changes and would be updated in future reports.

Councillor Dave Evans commented on the amount of work needed to ensure improvements were made and suggested that a workshop be arranged for all Members in order to highlight the strategy and work needed to be carried out to improve the current position.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Dale Selvester and seconded by Councillor Linda Thew.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the results of the STAR survey and the draft strategy aims, and objectives be noted; and
- (b) That a presentation on the draft strategy aims and objectives be given at a future all Member workshop.

36. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Facilitator introduced a report to seek the Committees consideration on setting up a Task & Finish Group.

During the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 February 2023, whilst considering the Sheltered Housing Review report, a number of questions were raised around how the review would progress and consultation than ad been undertaken so far.

It was suggested that the Task & Finish Group be made up of 6 Members of the Committee and that the Facilitator contact Members following the meeting to request their nomination.

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

RESOLVED:

That a Sheltered Housing Review Task & Finish Group be established.

37. NORTH EAST WALES (NEW) HOMES BUSINESS PLAN 2023/2052

The Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager introduced the North East Wales (NEW) Homes Business Plan 2023/2052 following approval of the Plan by NEW Homes Board as a strategic planning document at its meeting on the 12 January 2023.

Following questions from Members and answers provided by the Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager it was suggested that a report on the viability of NEW Homes be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Linda Thew and seconded by Councillor Kevin Rush.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the NEW Homes Business Plan 2023/2052.

38. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.40 a m)

.....
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19 APRIL 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 19 April 2023

PRESENT:

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

SUBSTITUTION: Councillors: Glyn Banks (for Helen Brown) and Ted Palmer (for Ray Hughes)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Paul Johnson, Dave Hughes, Allan Marshall and Billy Mullin attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration); Chief Executive; Service Manager Housing Assets; Housing & Prevention Senior Manager and Business Manager

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

39. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator reported that the Chair and Vice-Chair had given apologies for the meeting and sought a nomination for a Chair for the meeting.

Councillor David Evans proposed Councillor Ted Palmer as Chair of the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Tina Claydon. No further nominations were made.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Ted Palmer be appointed as Chair for the meeting

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

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

41. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME & ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration and advised that following a request from the Chair a regular update on Void Management had been added to the Forward Work Programme for all future meetings.

The Facilitator advised on the actions arising from previous meetings, as shown at Appendix 2 of the report and said that information on the breakdown of categories for the Housing Support Grant, information on the number of void properties which would

cost in excess of £10,000 to bring back into use and the cost of the automated DRS system would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

In relation to the Sheltered Housing Review Task & Finish Group, the Facilitator reported that she had received 4 nominations from the Committee and would be liaising with officers to find a suitable date for the first meeting.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor David Evans and seconded by Councillor Gillian Brockley.

RESOLVED:

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

42. VOID MANAGEMENT

The Service Manager Housing Assets reported that a request had been made by the Chair of the Committee for regular update reports on void management and delivery to be provided at all future meetings. Following consultation with the Chair, he proposed that future reports focus on the following areas: -

- The number of properties terminated resulting in new void properties
- Number of void allocations
- Reasons for the void property
- Type of void properties
- Identify those properties in high demand and low demand
- How many void properties are general need and how many are sheltered

The Service Manager Housing Assets reported on the key activities undertaken, as detailed within the action plan, previously presented to the Committee. He advised that the contract framework had been re-tendered, and he had recently met with the newly commissioned contractors. Work had commenced on the stock condition surveys which would inform future works and a training co-ordinator post had been procured to provide detailed trainings to inspectors and surveyors over the next 12 months.

The next steps, as outlined in the action plan, would include continued engagement with the Welsh Government through grant funding with the Council having been successful in obtaining £207,000 of grant funding towards void properties last year. A further bid would be submitted later in the year.

Finally, consideration had been given to the prioritisation of voids and where resources should be allocated. A panel had been established which would meet to

consider which void properties should be classed as urgent. The report being presented to the Committee at the next meeting would capture all the information previously outlined, provide information on the current positions, what was the allocation numbers and what were the next steps against the current action plan.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin asked that the update report provided to the Committee at the next meeting be in written format. She also raised concerns around voids being allocated to tenants prior to works being completed on the properties and the long waiting times being experienced by tenants. The Service Manager Housing Assets confirmed that the update report which would be presented at the next meeting would be in written format. In relation to the allocations process, he advised that concerns had been raised around this at the recent Member workshop and, as a result, changes had been made to the allocation process to ensure that the allocation began when the property was becoming available.

Following a suggestion from Councillor David Evans, the Service Manager Housing Assets agreed to provide information on the previous months data on allocation figures and number of voids in the report being presented to the next meeting. He also said that Members should see the backlog of voids reduce following the increase in the number of contractors and reported that each contractor was allocated 5 properties each within the last week and progress on works would continue to be tracked.

Councillor Glyn Banks echoed the comments previously made by Members. He said that he had previously requested a regular update report for the Committee on void properties but had been told that it would not be possible. He said that he had similar concerns to other Members around the number of void properties but felt that positive improvements were being made. The Service Manager Housing Assets responded that it had been important that officers were given the time and opportunity to work through the actions as outlined in the action plan, previously presented to the Committee, in order for improvements to the number of void properties to be made and fuller update reports to be made to the Committee.

Following a question from Councillor Dennis Hutchinson, The Service Manager Housing Assets agreed to provide information on the budget for bringing voids back into use in the report being presented to the next meeting. He clarified that when speaking of available resources, he had been referring to staff resources.

Councillor Dale Selvester said that following the end of the Covid pandemic, this could not be used as a reason for void properties going forward. He welcomed the increase in Team Leaders and said that, with the actions taken, he hoped to see void properties brought back into use at a quicker pace. The Service Manager Housing Assets said that the Covid pandemic had had a significant impact on the increase in the number of void properties and whilst there was an improvement on the position there remained legacy issues which continued to be addressed.

The Chief Executive advised that the Covid pandemic had not ended and that during the pandemic work on void properties had slowed considerably across all Local Authorities but had not stopped completely across Flintshire. He said that he was confident that the actions taken by the Service Manager Housing Assets and his team

would lead to significant improvements and hoped that the update gave Member's confidence in the work being taken forward.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration said that all Members shared the frustration on the number of void properties and that this issue was currently being faced by all Local Authorities. Whilst he agreed in some vain with the comments made by Councillor Selvester, he said that the reductions in the number of trade operatives accessing a property during the Covid pandemic had had a negative effect on the number of void properties. He gave an assurance that reducing the number of void properties was a priority and whilst he appreciated Members wanting regular update reports, he did not want any resources diverted from dealing with the issue spent on writing reports. He said that the update from the Service Manager Housing Assets had been appropriate, and he was confident that Members would see a reduction in the number of voids over the next few months.

Councillor David Evans moved that the verbal update be noted and this was seconded by Councillor Tina Claydon.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

43. HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE REPORT

The Chief Executive introduced an update report which outlined the work being carried out by the Housing & Prevention Service.

The Housing & Prevention Senior Manager provided a detailed report on the following areas, as detailed within the report:-

- Statutory Homeless Services
- Funding Homeless Services
- Demand for Services
- Positive Homeless Outcomes
- National Policy – Homelessness
- Priority Need – Rough Sleepers
- Use of Homeless Accommodation
- Challenging Housing Market Conditions

Councillor Glyn Banks thanked the Housing & Prevention Senior Manager for an excellent report which he said had been well presented. He also thanked the Chief Executive for his dedication to the issues around homelessness which had been evident over a number of years. He said that the Council were dealing with people who were at their lowest ebb and said that the Council dealt with this well and provided an example of where assistance had been provided to a tenant within his ward.

In response to Councillor Bank's concerns around private landlords evicting tenants, the Housing & Prevention Senior Manager advised that this issue was dealt with on a daily basis and said that often, once a tenant had received an eviction notice, the trust between them was negatively affected. Whilst the Council did not want to add

any additional pressure to the situation it was important that tenants were clear on what their legal rights were.

Councillor David Evans said that the Service Manager Housing Assets and Housing & Prevention Senior Manager were excellent officers who had provided excellent reports to the Committee. He referred to the reasons for homeless presentation, shown at Appendix 2 of the report, and asked why the number for prison leavers was high as he believed the Council would be informed if a prisoner was to be released. He asked what the 'Others' category referred to and whether any data was held for people with a military service background. The Housing & Prevention Senior Manager explained that the data for the reasons for homeless presentations was currently unvalidated due to systems and also a person could present with one reason and once officers look into the case it could be established that there were other needs as well. Work on the back-office data system for housing support and homelessness was being carried out to ensure better clarity on data in the future.

The Housing & Prevention Senior Manager reported that the Council do see some veterans presenting as homeless, but this was a small number. The Armed Forces Covenant and Common Allocation Policy does extend additional duties to veterans. He also reported that there were currently 2 dedicated prison leaver liaison officers who worked closely with prisons. Where a notice has been issued, the Council seek to treat prison leavers the same as everyone else. Notification is sent to the Council if a prison leaver has no home to go to and an assessment would be completed within 56 days of when they were due to be homeless. Notifications of release were not as prompt as they used to be, and the Council were finding some short notice on release dates.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration thanked the Housing & Prevention Senior Manager and his team for the excellent support provided to people across Flintshire. He said that this was a challenging and difficult service area with homelessness being one of the most traumatic experience a person could experience in their lives. He said that years of housing policy failure had made the situation worse and that it was only recently that as a Local Authority we were allowed to build Council houses. During that time the demand for social housing had continued to grow. He said that the difficulties with the private rented sector were acute with local housing allowance not keeping pace with the market and no single property in Flintshire currently meeting the local housing allowance threshold. This required national action for the housing allowance to be raised in line with the increase in rents.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor David Evans and seconded by Councillor Tina Claydon.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee support the work being undertaken by the Housing and Prevention Service.

44. DISREPAIR UPDATE

The Chief Executive introduced a report to provide an update on the Council's current position relation to disrepair and the number of disrepair claims received, settled and successfully defended.

The Service Manager Housing Assets reported that the Housing Assets Service was responsible for ensuring all stock was complaint with the various housing standards and regulations and the report provided an update on the measures the Council had in place to ensure all repairs were completed in a timely manner and that the work associated with any disrepair claims the Council may receive are completed effectively and efficiently.

He also outlined the disrepair statistical data, as outlined in the report, and reported that the Housing Assets service team hold weekly meetings relating to active disrepair claims and hold monthly management meetings to report progress and discuss any trends or concerns that may have been identified.

The Service Manager Housing Assets concluded that the team encourage all tenants to work with the Council. The majority of resources committed to defending all disrepair claims were in-hose, with only the appointed solicitors external to the Council.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson praised the team and the work carried out as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) in terms of replacement windows, kitchens and bathrooms etc. but asked whether tenants could refuse works to be completed to their property. The Service Manager Housing Assets advised that a tenants had the right to refuse elements of works but only after a full assessment had been carried out to ensure the safety of the tenants. Tenants were not allowed to refuse works on boilers or gas elements.

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

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee support the Housing Assets service to continue to manage the Housing Disrepair (HDR) protocol on behalf of the Council, ensuring the obligations placed upon the Council were met.

45. COUNCIL PLAN 2023-2028 DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive presented a report on the refreshed priorities, sub-priorities, and well-being objectives within the Council Plan for 2023-28 which reflected a long-term view of recovery, projects and ambitions over the period. Part 2 of the Council Plan was being considered by Overview & Scrutiny committees to ensure full coverage of Part 1 and its respective measures and targets, prior to adoption by County Council.

Councillor Dave Evans referred to the Social Housing priority and the comment 'ensuring increase in stock capacity meets the identified needs and demands by March

2028'. He asked whether this was realistic. The Chief Executive said that this was an aspiration and if stock capacity could be increased further then this would assist in addressing the issues outlined to the Committee in previous reports. Issues to be mindful of were around availability of land and new requirements around phosphate but the Council was focused and determined to achieve the target.

Councillor Dennis Hutchinson asked how the new requirements around phosphate would affect existing housing stock. The Chief Executive explained that it was not retrospective so did not apply to existing stock. He said that the basis of new requirements was right and proper with everyone wanting high levels of water quality unpolluted rivers but there would be difficulties around building if phosphate had not been considered as part of the building solutions.

Councillor Glyn Banks asked if any baseline data could be provided to show that projects were moving in the right direction. The Chief Executive explained that there was a plan in place to map out the delivery of projects and he would take this comment back to ensure that updates on the delivery of projects were being effectively reported to Members going forward.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the Council Plan 2023-28 Part 1 and Part 2 documents that outline the actions, measures and risks that underpin the Priorities, Sub-Priorities and Well-being objectives of the Council Plan 2023-28.

46. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.44 a m)

.....
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank



COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 th May, 2023
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.

This page is intentionally left blank

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME
CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Report Author
Wednesday 14th June, 2023 2pm Page 23	Communal Heating Charges 2023/24 Council Plan 2022-23 Year-End Performance Void Management	To consider the proposed heating charges in council properties with communal heating systems for 2023/24 prior to Cabinet approval. To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan. To provide a further update on voids management and delivery.	Consultation Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Corporate Finance – Accountant Chief Officer (Housing & Communities) Service Manager – Housing Assets
Wednesday 12th July, 2023 10am	Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income Estate Management Anti-Social behaviour Void Management	To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them. To consider Estate Management and work being undertaken by the Council and the impact this has on tenants. To update Members on the Policy and to outline any proposed changes to the Policy. To provide a further update on voids management and delivery.	Assurance Monitoring Consultation / Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement / Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities) Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities Service Manager – Housing Assets

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Items to be scheduled

- **Refugees Update** - To provide an update on the settlement of Refugees across Flintshire. This item was on the FWP for November, 2022 but will be moved to an appropriate date in due course.
- **Temporary Accommodation Audit Update** - To provide a progress report on the action plan for service improvement following the audit of the Temporary Accommodation (To be presented in September 2023)
- **NEW Homes** – Report to be presented to a future meeting as agreed at the March 2023 meeting.
- **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.

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
Quarterly / Annual	Performance Reporting	To consider performance outturns for improvement targets against directorate indicators.	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Six monthly	Welfare Reform Update – including Universal Credit	To update Members on the impact of Welfare Reform and the cost to the Council.	Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities
Six monthly	Update on North East Wales Homes & Property Management	To update Members on the work of the North East Wales Homes & Property Management	Housing Strategy 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.	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Six monthly	Update on Housing Rent Income	To provide an update on rent collection and current arrear levels	Revenues Manager

This page is intentionally left blank

ACTION TRACKING FOR THE COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
11.01.2023	5. Housing Rent Income and Welfare Response	As shown at recommendation (c) that a letter be written to the DWP on behalf of the Committee.	Jen Griffiths / Ceri Shotton	Awaiting response from DWP. Letter sent on behalf of the Committee on 20.02.23.	On-going.
08.02.2023	5. Housing Support Grant	In response to questions raised by Cllr Bernie Attridge, the following was agreed:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice would be sought on what level of detail within the breakdown of the spend plan 2022/23 categories could be provided to the Committee Members. 	Martin Cooil	A breakdown of the spend plan 2022/23 categories e-mailed to Committee Members on 24.04.23.	Completed.
08.03.2023	5. Void Management	Cllr Rosetta Dolphin how many of the void properties would cost in excess of £10,000 to bring up to standard. Sean O'Donnell agreed to provide this information following the meeting.	Sean O'Donnell	Information circulated to Committee Members via e-mail on 24.04.2023.	Completed.
08.03.2023	6. Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) Update	In response to a question from Cllr Linda Thew on the cost of the automated system, Sean O'Donnell agreed to provide this information following the meeting.	Sean O'Donnell	Information circulated to Committee Members via e-mail on 24.04.2023.	Completed.

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

08.03.2023	7. Results of the Tenants Survey and Developing our Customer Involvement Strategy	In line with recommendation (b) that a workshop for all Members be arranged to highlight the draft strategy aim and objectives and highlight work needed to improve the current position.	Ceri Shotton	Discussions ongoing to confirm a date for the workshop.	Ongoing
19.04.2023	4. Void Management	Following a suggestion from Cllr Dave Evans, Sean O'Donnell agreed to provide information on the previous months data on allocation figures and number of voids in the report being presented to the next meeting.	Sean O'Donnell	Information included in report presented to the Committee on 17.05.23.	Completed.
19.04.2023	4. Void Management	Following a question from Cllr Dennis Hutchinson, Sean O'Donnell agreed to provide information on the budget for bringing voids back into use in the report being presented to the next meeting.	Sean O'Donnell	Information included in report presented to the Committee on 17.05.23.	Completed.



**Communities and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 Voids Management Update
 Reporting period: April 2023**

Key figures			M	A	M	J	J	A
Number of new void properties in reporting period			26	24				
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			23	18				
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	129	137				
		Minor voids	57	50				
		TBC	73	81				
	Housing Management	Demand	158	173				
		Low demand	93	90				
		TBC	8	5				
Property Type	General Needs		118	125				
	Sheltered		141	143				
Total voids			259	268				
Key activity against void action plan								
<i>Bullet point list of activity against action plan in reporting period</i>								
B1 – re-tendering to procure additional contractors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with all newly commissioned contractors • 6 out of 6 pre-contract meetings undertaken with new contractors • Signing of contracts nearing completion 								
B4 – undertake stock condition surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenced in October 2022 • Additional resource allocated to undertake surveys 								
C4 – provision of required training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training Coordinator in post • Coordinator scheduling all required core training for next 12 months 								
Next steps								
<i>Bullet point list of activity planned against action plan in next reporting period</i>								
A1 – identification of additional funding streams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with Welsh Government with regards to further funding streams for 2023/24 i.e., TACP 								

B1 – re-tendering to procure additional contractors:

- Allocation of work to newly commissioned contractors in line with their capacity to deliver
- Progress meetings scheduled over the next 12 months to monitor performance and quality

D2 – establish panel to prioritise demand

- Panel established to prioritise void works in line with demand

Any other information

Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Allocated Budget for this year:

- *£4.6m Overall Total Voids Budget*

Void properties require major investment:

- *Approximately 70%*

Top 3 reasons for terminations:

- *March*
 - *Transfer to another FCC property (10)*
 - *Move to residential care (8)*
 - *Deceased (5)*
- *April*
 - *Transfer to another FCC property (7)*
 - *Deceased (6)*
 - *Move to residential care (3)*