

# Public Document Pack

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Contact Officer:  
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To: Cllr Helen Brown (Chair)

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

8 June, 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

**NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING**  
**COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**WEDNESDAY, 14TH JUNE, 2023 at 2.00 PM**

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 **APOLOGIES**

**Purpose:** To receive any apologies.

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

**Purpose:** To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

### 3 **MINUTES** (Pages 3 - 8)

**Purpose:** To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May, 2023.

### 4 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING** (Pages 9 - 20)

Report of Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

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

### 5 **COMMUNAL HEATING CHARGES 2023/24** (Pages 21 - 26)

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

**Purpose:** To consider the proposed heating charges in council properties with communal heating systems for 2023/24 prior to Cabinet approval.

### 6 **VOID MANAGEMENT** (Pages 27 - 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 17 MAY 2023**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday 17 May 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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Marion Bateman, Paul Johnson and Allan Marshall attended as observers

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration); Chief Officer (Housing & Communities); Service Manager – Housing Assets and Service Manager – Housing, Welfare & Communities

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

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Committee stood in a minute silence to remember the late Tony Sharps.

### **1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

The Facilitator advised that at the Annual Meeting, Council determined that the Independent Group would chair this Committee. The Committee was advised that Councillor Helen Brown was the Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the appointment of Councillor Helen Brown as Chair of the Committee be noted.

### **2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

Councillor Linda Thew nominated Councillor Dale Selvester as Vice-Chair of the Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Dennis Hutchinson.

Councillor Tina Claydon nominated Councillor Ray Hughes as Vice-Chair of the Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Kevin Rush.

On being put to the vote, both Councillors Hughes and Selvester received 5 votes each. The Chair was asked to give her casting vote and confirmed her vote for Councillor Selvester.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Councillor Dale Selvester be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**

None.

#### **4. MINUTES**

8th March 2023

Councillor Linda Thew referred to paragraph 3 of page 7 for the minutes and suggested that the word 'asked' should be included.

19th April 2023

Councillor Kevin Rush said that he had submitted his apologies for the meeting and asked that they be included.

Councillor Thew referred to the second paragraph on page 15 of the minutes and suggested that the word 'prions' be amended to read 'prisons'.

Councillor Thew also referred to the fourth paragraph on page 16 of the minutes and suggested that the word 'in-hose' be amended to read 'in-house'.

Subject to the amendments listed above, the minutes were moved as a correct record by Councillor Thew and seconded by Councillor Dale Selvester.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That subject to the amendments listed above, the minutes of the meetings held on 8 March 2023 and 19 April 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

#### **5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME & ACTION TRACKING**

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration, adding that there were no proposed changes to the items showing for the future meetings in June and July, 2023.

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

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

#### **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.

## **6. VOID MANAGEMENT**

The Chief Officer (Housing & Communities) introduced the Void Management update as shown within the agenda. The update provided key figures on the number of void properties and the key activities against the void action plan. The Committee would continue to receive this information monthly with a formal report on voids being presented to the Committee in September.

The Service Manager – Housing Assets presented the key figures and key activities against the void action plan, as outlined in the briefing note.

He outlined the number of new voids and those which had been completed. From March, 26 void properties were received, and 23 properties were completed, which had been completed prior to the appointment of the new contractors to the service. From April, 24 void properties were received and 18 completed. Delays experienced were due to absences and delays in certification. More voids had been completed, but due to delays in certification they were still yet to be signed off.

The Service Manager also outlined the number of properties requiring major works and those which required minor works along with demand for the properties.

In relation to the key activities against the void action plan, the Service Manager outlined the following:-

- The Service had met with all newly commissioned contractors;
- 6 out of 6 pre-contract meetings had been undertaken with the new contractors;
- The signing of contractors were nearing completion;
- The stock condition survey had commenced in October 2022;
- Additional resources had been allocated to undertake the stock condition surveys;
- The Training Coordinator was now in post;
- The Coordinator was scheduling all required core training for the next 12 months.

The Service Manager also drew the Committee's attention to the budget information and top 3 reasons for tenancy terminations, which had been requested by Members of the Committee at previous meetings.

Councillor David Evans commented on the number of void properties which had increased in April compared with March and asked whether the Committee would see this figure decrease in future months. He said that there was a need for more void properties to be brought back into use to get on top of the current situation. He also asked if the following information could be provided in future briefing updates:-

- Information on the bedroom type of property becoming void alongside the breakdown of total void figures;

- Type of properties tenants were moving to as part of a transfer to another FCC property;
- Geographical areas of void properties.

The Service Manager commented on the increase of void properties and reminded the Committee that the newly commissioned contractors were only recently in place. He reiterated his previous comments that the process could not be rushed and that the number of void properties may increase prior to them consistently reducing. In relation to the request for additional information, he said that information on bedroom types and a heat map to show the geographical location of void properties could be provided and that he would look into whether information on the type of properties tenants were moving too could be collated.

Councillor Bernie Attridge asked how many of the Council's own workforce were working on void properties and why more of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) could not be used. He said that there was a current crisis with void properties resulting in people having to temporarily stay in hotels whilst waiting for a Council property. He also asked why so many properties needed major works to be carried out and asked if housing management were assessing the properties and whether previous tenants were being re-charged for any damage done. He also asked why tenants were being allocated properties some 6/7 months ahead of the void property being released.

The Service Manager advised that the Council's DLO mainly carried out minor works on void properties as they were a maintenance and repair team but informed the Committee that consideration was being given to the DLO carrying out works around fencing and smoke detector fitting at void properties. He also advised that recharges were raised accordingly with previous tenants where damage had been done.

The Service Manager – Housing, Welfare & Communities advised on the process of allocating a void property and explained that they contact potential tenants to ask if they would like to be allocated a property months in advance of it being ready.

The Chair raised concern around the amount of rent/council tax not being collected due to the number of void properties. In response to her question around how many staff were in the DLO teams, the Service Manager - Housing Assets suggested that he provide the following information in the next update:-

- Number of staff within the DLO team;
- Number of Team Leaders who manage the DLO; and
- Number of Team Leaders who manage contractors

Councillor Dale Selvester asked if mutual exchanges were factored into the total of void properties. He commented on the need to ensure inspections were carried out at properties especially if they were aware that the property was becoming vacant and asked whether consideration had been given to holding back transfers of properties for a few months to allow for the number of void properties to reduce. He also questioned the allocation process and asked if a formal offer was refused would that person, then be removed from the waiting list.

The Service Manager - Housing Assets explained that mutual exchanges did not factor into the total of void properties. He also explained the process for transfer of properties and the inspections of housing officers and said that he could provide further detail on this at a future meeting if requested. He also did not feel that holding back transfers would assist, highlighting the current waiting list and number of people waiting for a property. The Service Manager - Housing, Welfare & Communities explained that during conversations with potential tenants when asked if they would like to be allocated a property months in advance of it being ready, this was done ahead of a formal offer then being given.

Councillor Geoff Collett expressed concern around the number of void properties. He commented on a site visit and meeting with Members held a number of months ago and said that he was concerned that the number of void properties had only increased since this meeting. Councillor Dennis Hutchinson agreed with these comments and said that there was a need to ensure regular inspections of tenant's homes which he felt would address the issue around major works needing to be carried out on void properties.

The Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration said that he shared the concerns of Members but added that it was important not to rush the process to ensure that the Council did not find itself in the same situation in 12 months' time. He said that Members needed to allow between 9 and 12 months to see improvements in the number of void properties given the newly commissioned contractors who were now working on these properties.

Councillor Kevin Rush asked if the inspection of the standards of work being carried out by the contractors could be done ahead of the 6 week period. He also asked if the DLO could be moved to work on void properties for a couple of months.

The Service Manager – Housing Assets explained that the DLO were working on a backlog of repairs. He also advised that inspections of the work of the contractors would be carried out before a 6 week period.

In response to a question from Councillor Linda Thew around the number of contractors, the Service Manager – Housing Assets advised that there were 6 contractors with 3 available to step in if there were issues with the standard of works being carried out.

Councillor Thew asked how many void properties were expected to be returned in the next week. The Service Manager – Housing Assets advised that 10 void properties were expected to be returned by the next meeting.

Councillor Pam Bank asked if there was the possibility to extend the current DLO's. The Service Manager – Housing Assets explained that the Council was not currently in a position to expand the DLO.

Councillor Evans moved that the update be noted. This was seconded by Councillor Rosetta Dolphin.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update be noted.

7. **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 11.22 a.m.)

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**Chair**





## COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> June, 2023
<b>Report Subject</b>	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
<b>Report Author</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
<b>Type of Report</b>	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**

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING</b>
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"><li>1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?</li><li>2. Is it an area of major change or risk?</li><li>3. Are there issues of concern in performance?</li><li>4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?</li><li>5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?</li><li>6. Is the issue of public or Member concern?</li></ol>
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.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	None as a result of this report.

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

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	None as a result of this report.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Community Housing & Assets OSC.

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

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<b>Improvement Plan:</b> 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
<b>Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2023</b>  <b>10am</b>          Page 13	<b>Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income</b>	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)
	<b>Estate Management</b>	To consider Estate Management and work being undertaken by the Council and the impact this has on tenants.	Consultation / Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities
	<b>Anti-Social behaviour</b>	To update Members on the Policy and to outline any proposed changes to the Policy.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities
	<b>Void Management</b>	To provide a further update on voids management and delivery.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager – Housing Assets
	<b>Council Plan 2022-23 Year-End Performance</b>	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Housing & Assets)
<b>Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2023</b>  <b>10am</b>	<b>Temporary Accommodation Audit Update</b>	To provide a progress report on the action plan for service improvement following the audit of the Temporary Accommodation.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager – Housing & Prevention

**COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

<p><b>Members of the Social &amp; Health Care OSC to be invited for this item</b></p>	<p><b>Void Management</b></p> <p><b>Disabled Facilities Grant</b></p>	<p>To provide a detailed update to the Committee on Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.</p> <p>To present the updated Policy for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Consultation</p>	<p>Service Manager – Housing Assets</p> <p>Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2023</b></p> <p><b>10am</b></p> <p>Page 1</p>	<p><b>WHQS Capital Programme – Delivery review update</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Service Manager – Housing Assets</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2023</b></p> <p><b>10am</b></p>	<p><b>Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan</b></p>	<p>To consider the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2024/25 and the HRA Business Plan</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing &amp; Communities)</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2023</b></p> <p><b>10am</b></p>	<p><b>Council Plan 2023-24 Mid-Year Performance Reporting</b></p>	<p>To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing &amp; Communities)</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2024</b></p> <p><b>10am</b></p>	<p><b>Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income</b></p>	<p>To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement / Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p>

## COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

<b>Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2024</b>  <b>10am</b>	<b>NEW Homes Business Plan</b>	To consider the NEW Homes Business Plan	Consultation	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager
<b>Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2024</b>  <b>10am</b>				
<b>Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2024</b>  <b>10am</b>	<b>Communal Heating Charges 2024/25</b>	To consider the proposed heating charges in council properties with communal heating systems for 2024/25 prior to Cabinet approval.	Consultation	Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)
<b>Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2024</b>  <b>10am</b>	<b>Welfare Reform Update /Housing Rent Income</b>	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)
	<b>Council Plan 2023-24 Year-End Performance</b>	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)

### 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.
- **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 17<sup>th</sup> 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	<b>Performance Reporting</b>	To consider performance outturns for improvement targets against directorate indicators.	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Six monthly	<b>Welfare Reform Update – including Universal Credit</b>	To update Members on the impact of Welfare Reform and the cost to the Council.	Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and communities
Six monthly	<b>Update on North East Wales Homes &amp; Property Management</b>	To update Members on the work of the North East Wales Homes & Property Management	Housing Strategy Manager
Annually – September 16	<b>WHQS Capital Programme – Delivery review update</b>	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	<b>Update on Housing Rent Income</b>	To provide an update on rent collection and current arrear levels	Revenues Manager



**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.
08.03.2023	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
17.05.2023	5. Minutes	<p><u>08.03.2023</u> Cllr Linda Thew referred to paragraph 3 of page 7 of the minutes and said that the word 'asked' should be included.</p> <p><u>19.04.2023</u> Cllr Kevin Rush said that he had submitted his apologies for the meeting and asked that they be included.</p> <p>Cllr Linda Thew referred to page 15 of the minutes and said that the word 'prions' should be amended to read 'prison'.</p>	<p>Ceri Shotton</p> <p>Ceri Shotton</p>	<p>Minutes have been amended, translated and uploaded onto the Council website.</p> <p>Minutes have been amended, translated and uploaded onto the Council website.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

		<p>Cllr Linda Thew also referred to page 16 of the minutes and said that the words 'in-hose' should be amended to read 'in-house'.</p>			
17.05.2023	7. Void Management	<p>Cllr Dave Evans asked if the following information could be provided in future update reports:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on the bedroom type of property becoming void alongside the breakdown of total void figures;</li> <li>Type of properties tenants were moving to as part of a transfer to another FCC property;</li> <li>Geographical areas of void properties.</li> </ul> <p>Sean O'Donnell said that he could provide information on bedroom types and a heat map to show the geographical location of void properties. He said that he would look into whether information on the type of properties tenants were moving too could be collated.</p> <p>In response to a question from the Chair around the in-house void team, Sean O'Donnell suggested that he provide the following information in the next update:-</p>	Sean O'Donnell	<p>Information included in 14.06.23 update report</p> <p>Information to be provided verbally at the 14.06.23 meeting</p> <p>Information included in 14.06.23 update report</p> <p>Information included in 14.06.23 update report</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of staff within the DLO team;</li><li>• Number of Team Leaders who manage the DLO; and</li><li>• Number of Team Leaders who manage contractors</li></ul>			
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## COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 14 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
<b>Report Subject</b>	Communal Heating Charges 2023/24
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
<b>Report Author</b>	Strategic Finance Manager (Commercial and Housing)
<b>Type of Report</b>	Operational

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Housing and Communities portfolio currently operates eight communal heating schemes within Flintshire, with 417 properties on communal heating systems. The Council has recently renegotiated the fuel tariff to be charged for 2023/24 as the previous contract ended in March 2023. The rate chargeable for gas is increasing by approximately 420% for the next 12 months. To date, communal tenants have benefitted from the Council's Industrial and Commercial Contract rate and have been protected from the energy price increases which our other social tenants have been impacted by. However, this increase in the tariff will now also impact on those tenants who live in the properties on the communal heating systems. When notifying tenants of their communal heating charges for 2022/23 notice was given of the likely increase in charges in 2023/24 to reflect global energy costs.

New communal heating charges are based on the prior year's energy use which ensures an accurate assessment of costs and impacts on the heating reserve account. In order to recover the projected heating charges in full we will need to increase communal heating charges in line with our tariff increases.

The proposed recharges for 2023/24 are set out within this report.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee approve the proposed changes to the current heating charges at council properties with communal heating schemes, as outlined in the report. All changes to take effect from 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2023.
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## **REPORT DETAILS**

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE COMMUNAL HEATING RECHARGES</b>
1.01	The Housing and Communities portfolio currently operates eight communal heating schemes within Flintshire, with 417 properties on communal heating systems. Tenants are recharged based on the Council's Industrial and Commercial Contract rate which has recently been renegotiated by the Council as the previous contract ended in March 2023. The tariff for gas has increased by approximately 420% for the next 12 months.
1.02	The cost of fuel used within these communal heating schemes is paid for initially by the Authority through a heating reserve account and then collected from tenants in addition to their weekly rent.
1.03	Each year the new communal heating charges are calculated based on the previous year's energy use which enables us to project the costs and impacts (negative or positive) on the heating reserve account.
1.04	Any proposed changes to charges are intended to ensure that each communal heating scheme recovers the full energy cost charged in respect of each scheme.
1.05	Currently, the Council charges tenants for the energy consumed within each block. This is a basic flat rate charge irrespective of individual usage. The method of applying tenants heating charges is to apply uplifts or decreases to tenants each year, based on previous year's usage plus energy rate costs.
1.06	<p><u>2020/21</u></p> <p>In April 2020, the energy rates decreased by an average of 14% and in some properties, the energy usage fluctuated against the estimated usage used to calculate 2020/21 charges.</p> <p>The majority of tenants saw a reduction in their Communal Heating charges in 2020/21. However, at the properties which saw an increase in energy usage, this resulted in a small deficit on the heating reserve at the end of 2020/21. This was recovered through the 2021/22 charges.</p>
1.07	<p><u>2021/22</u></p> <p>In 2021/22 on average, the total energy usage reduced slightly across our Communal Heating schemes and there was a further reduction in costs of 14%. This resulted in a small surplus on the heating reserve in the majority of our properties.</p>
1.08	<p><u>2022/23</u></p> <p>In 2022/23, the total energy usage reduced slightly in the majority of our Communal Heating schemes and the rate per kWh remained the same as the previous year. This resulted in a small surplus on the heating reserve</p>

in all but one of our properties, which will be factored into the 2023/24 recharge calculations.

Tenants at these properties were eligible to apply for the Energy Bills Support Scheme (£400 for winter 2022/23) if they had not already received the support on another of their utility bills.

1.09

2023/24

If we continued to calculate the charge in the same way as previous years, tenants who are on the Communal Heating systems would be subject to increases of up to 515% for 2023/24, based on the newly agreed gas tariff of £0.095 per kWh.

This is higher than the overall tariff increase of 420% as the revised communal charges come into effect for tenants from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023 and therefore the Council needs to recover the full year price change over 8 months in order to recover the heating costs in full. The charges would be as follows:

Communal Area		Weekly Charge 2022/23	Increase/ (Decrease) 2023/24	Revised Weekly Charge 2023/24
Bolingbroke Heights, Flint	1 Bed	£ 3.75	£ 18.45	£ 22.20
	2 Bed	£ 4.50	£ 22.14	£ 26.64
Richard Heights	1 Bed	£ 3.75	£ 18.45	£ 22.20
	2 Bed	£ 4.50	£ 22.14	£ 26.64
Castle Heights, Flint	1 Bed	£ 4.20	£ 19.70	£ 23.90
	2 Bed	£ 5.04	£ 23.64	£ 28.68
Llwyn Beuno, Holywell	1 Bed	£ 7.10	£ 34.40	£ 41.50
	2 Bed	£ 8.52	£ 41.28	£ 49.80
Llwyn Aled, Holywell	1 Bed	£ 7.80	£ 37.10	£ 44.90
	2 Bed	£ 9.36	£ 44.52	£ 53.88
Acacia Close, Mold	1 Bed	£ 7.10	£ 32.70	£ 39.80
	2 Bed	£ 8.52	£ 39.24	£ 47.76
	3 Bed	£ 9.59	£ 44.15	£ 53.73
Glan-y-Morfa Court1, Connahs Quay	1 Bed	£ 8.10	£ 16.60	£ 24.70
	2 Bed	£ 9.72	£ 19.92	£ 29.64
Glan-y-Morfa Court2, Connahs Quay	1 Bed	£ 5.65	£ 26.85	£ 32.50
Chapel Court, Connahs Quay	1 Bed	£ 6.20	£ 31.90	£ 38.10
	2 Bed	£ 7.68	£ 38.04	£ 45.72

Based on the increasing tariff and the requirement to recover any deficit, we have further considered how to calculate the 2023/24 communal heating charges, to minimise the increases to tenants. The proposal is set out below:

- Currently the recharge to tenants recovers the full cost of heating the buildings at the Heat Network sites. Flintshire County Council have made a provision of £0.090m in the 2023/24 budget to allow for tenants to be billed based on individual usage once the correct infrastructure has been installed. This will result in a “shortfall” on the heating reserve account, which is effectively the cost of the energy used to heat communal areas.

- For 2023/24, we have the option to reduce the amount charged to tenants on the communal heating scheme by an estimated percentage, based on the “heat loss” in communal areas, as follows:

Site Address	Heat Loss (%)
Acacia Close, Mold	30%
Bolingbroke & Richard Heights, Flint	20%
Castle Heights, Flint	25%
Chapel Court, Connahs Quay	30%
Glan Y Morfa Court, Connahs Quay	20%
Llwyn Aled, Holywell	30%
Llwyn Bueno, Holywell	30%

- In addition to this, it is proposed that we “annualise” the charge to tenants (i.e., calculate the weekly cost for the full year, excluding the shortfall that is building up between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> July 2023 due to the 2022/23 recharge rates being applied in this period). This would mean that there would be a deficit remaining on the heating reserve of approximately £0.080m at the end of 2023/24 (estimated based on the assumptions applied on usage etc), which would need to be recovered in future years as utilities prices recover and stabilise.

The table below sets out the heating charges for 2023/24 based on these proposals.

Communal Area		Weekly Charge 2022/23	Increase/ (Decrease) 2023/24	Revised Weekly Charge 2023/24
Bolingbroke Heights, Flint	1 Bed	£ 3.75	£ 8.90	£ 12.65
	2 Bed	£ 4.50	£ 10.68	£ 15.18
Richard Heights	1 Bed	£ 3.75	£ 8.90	£ 12.65
	2 Bed	£ 4.50	£ 10.68	£ 15.18
Castle Heights, Flint	1 Bed	£ 4.20	£ 8.70	£ 12.90
	2 Bed	£ 5.04	£ 10.44	£ 15.48
Llwyn Beuno, Holywell	1 Bed	£ 7.10	£ 13.70	£ 20.80
	2 Bed	£ 8.52	£ 16.44	£ 24.96
Llwyn Aled, Holywell	1 Bed	£ 7.80	£ 14.45	£ 22.25
	2 Bed	£ 9.36	£ 17.34	£ 26.70
Acacia Close, Mold	1 Bed	£ 7.10	£ 12.80	£ 19.90
	2 Bed	£ 8.52	£ 15.36	£ 23.88
	3 Bed	£ 9.59	£ 17.28	£ 26.87
Glan-y-Morfa Court1, Connahs Quay	1 Bed	£ 8.10	£ 10.90	£ 19.00
	2 Bed	£ 9.72	£ 13.08	£ 22.80
Glan-y-Morfa Court2, Connahs Quay	1 Bed	£ 5.65	£ 12.55	£ 18.20
Chapel Court, Connahs Quay	1 Bed	£ 6.20	£ 12.65	£ 18.85
	2 Bed	£ 7.68	£ 14.94	£ 22.62

Based on the proposal, the average increase to tenants is 197%. In monetary terms, the maximum weekly charge is £26.87 for a 3 bedroom



	<p>flat in Acacia Close (which would equate to £112 per calendar month; £1,343 per annum).</p> <p>This proposal would be at a cost of £0.112m to the HRA for 2023/24, against a budget of £0.090m.</p>
1.10	<p>The proposed costs are still subject to change as the commercial tariff for 2023/24 has only very recently been agreed and Flintshire County Council may be eligible to apply for the Energy Bills Discount Scheme – any discounts would also be passed on to tenants on the Heat Networks.</p> <p>The energy contracts are only on 12-month contracts currently due to the volatility of the markets.</p>
1.11	<p>Going forward, we are required to bill tenants for actual usage rather than a proportional charge due to triggering the requirements of The Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2014. The infrastructure to enable this will be put into place during 2023/24 to allow this to happen from 2024/25 onwards.</p> <p>Based on this, it may prove difficult to recover any deficit remaining on the heating reserve and this will need to be considered when looking at the 2024/25 recharges.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	As identified above.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
3.01	Tenants cannot claim Housing Benefit for the cost of domestic heating.
3.02	Estimates have been based on energy usage during 2022/23. A severe winter could lead to higher costs which may lead to an increased charge during 2024/25.
3.03	Tenants have previously benefitted from preferential rates due to the Council having secured a low fixed rate for fuel up to March 2023. Due to the recent energy price increases, it is likely that tenants will be liable for much higher energy costs which could impact individuals' ability to pay.
3.04	<p>Tenants on the heat networks were eligible to apply for the Energy Bills Support Scheme (£400 for winter 2022/23), if they had not already received the support on another of their utility bills.</p> <p>If further support for individuals is identified in 2023/24, where required, tenants will be supported in applying for this financial assistance.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
4.01	No formal consultation required.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	None.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	None.

<b>7.00</b>	<b>CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS</b>
7.01	<p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Rachael Corbelli, Strategic Finance Manager  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 703363  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:rachael.corbelli@flintshire.gov.uk">rachael.corbelli@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>8.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
8.01	<p><b>Housing Revenue Account:</b> records all revenue expenditure and income relating to the provision of council dwellings and related services.</p> <p><b>Tenant:</b> a person who occupies land or property rented from a landlord (in this instance Flintshire County Council).</p> <p><b>Heating Reserve Account:</b> the account which records all expenditure on communal heating and all income from tenants.</p>



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

<b>Key figures</b>			<b>M</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>A</b>
Number of new void properties in reporting period			26	24	25			
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			23	18	30			
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	129	137	132			
		Minor voids	57	50	52			
		TBC	73	81	79			
	Housing Management	Demand	158	173	169			
		Low demand	93	90	92			
		TBC	8	5	2			
Property Type	General Needs		118	125	120			
	Sheltered		141	143	143			
Property Type	1 bed		87	89	90			
	2 bed		99	100	98			
	3 bed		70	76	71			
	4 bed		2	2	3			
	4 bed plus		1	1	1			
Capital District Areas	Buckley		23	26	26			
	C'Quay & Shotton		56	61	62			
	Deeside & Saltney		33	35	34			
	Flint		57	53	54			
	Holywell		59	61	56			
	Mold		31	32	31			
Total voids			259	268	263			

<p><b>Key activity against void action plan</b></p>
<p><i>Bullet point list of activity against action plan in reporting period</i></p> <p>A1 – identification of additional funding streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to engage with Welsh Government with regards to further funding streams for 2023/24 i.e., TACP</li> </ul> <p>C4 – provision of required training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Coordinator in post</li> <li>• Coordinator scheduling all required core training for next 12 months</li> </ul>
<p><b>Next steps</b></p>
<p><i>Bullet point list of activity planned against action plan in next reporting period</i></p> <p>B3 - Management and performance monitoring of Void Refurbishment Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocation of work to newly commissioned contractors in line with their capacity to deliver</li> <li>• Progress meetings scheduled over the next 12 months to monitor performance and quality</li> <li>• Contractors Performance meetings set up for the next 12 months - to monitor target times, quality of work, capacity and general performance.</li> <li>• All meetings will be recorded to evaluate and provide ongoing evidence of performance standards.</li> </ul> <p>D4 – Undertake benchmarking against other local authorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commence with contacting local authorities</li> <li>• Ascertain different void standards and categories</li> </ul>
<p><b>Any other information</b></p>
<p><i>Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee</i></p> <p><i>Allocated Budget for this year:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £4.6m Overall Total Voids Budget</li> </ul> <p><i>Void properties require major investment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 70%</li> </ul> <p><i>Top 3 reasons for terminations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Move to residential care (5)</li> <li>○ Transfer to another FCC property (4)</li> <li>○ Deceased (4)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><u>In-house DLO Team Work Allocation</u></b></p> <p><i>Number of operatives within the DLO team</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 32 operatives (working on approximately 25-30 Voids)</li> </ul> <p><i>Number of Team Leaders who manage the DLO</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Team Leaders</li> </ul>

**Contractor Work Allocation**

*Number of Contractors*

- *6 Contractors (working on approximately 50 Voids)*

*Number of Team Leaders who manage contractors*

- *2 Team Leaders*

*Number of Capital Works Surveyors who manage contractors*

- *2 Surveyors*

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