

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 13 December 2023

PRESENT: Councillor Helen Brown (Chair)

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

APOLOGY: Councillor Pam Banks

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Bernie Attridge attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Dave Hughes (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Streetscene and the Regional Transport Strategy); Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration); Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance, Inclusion, Resilient Communities including Social Value and Procurement); Chief Officer (Housing and Communities); Service Manager (Housing Assets); Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager; Service Manager (Housing & Prevention); Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities); Housing Strategy Manager and Business Performance Team Manager

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

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

53. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Facilitator presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration and advised that there were no proposed changes to the items listed.

She discussed the actions arising from Appendix 2 as follows:-

- The draft letter to Welsh Government was shared with the chair on the 12th of December and was due to be sent out later in the week.
- She discussed an outstanding action with regards to out of County Placements. The Finance Officer had collated the information and was just awaiting approval to share the details.

She concluded that all other actions shown were now completed.

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

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.

54. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC HOUSING AND REGENERATION PROGRAMME 2 (SHARP2) AND THE TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION CAPITAL PROGRAMME (TACP)

The Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager provided a report on the delivery of the Councils strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme 2 (SHARP2). The report provided an update on the following:-

- Delivery of the Council's Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme 2 (SHARP2) programme;
- Changes to the Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme since the report to Overview and Scrutiny (September 2023) and Cabinet (October 2023);
- Welsh Government Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) allocation of £1.6 million; and
- Progress on the acquisition of additional homes.

The programme was currently at its first stage awaiting Welsh Government (WG) approval. There was a 3-stage programme for approval, but the Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager was pleased to report that the feedback they had received was currently positive.

The Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager added that there were several updates to the programme including additional costs to Registered Social Landlords for larger contracts, where regrettably some of the contractors had gone into liquidation causing the contracts to be re-priced. WG had supported the additional costs for the Northern Gateway and Mynydd Isa which would represent over 150 new homes.

The Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager also reported on the WG Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) aimed at trying to get properties back into use as quickly as possible, mainly targeting accommodation for homeless persons or persons in temporary accommodation. The Council had been successful in obtaining funding of around £1.5 million, which would be targeted at bringing 28 properties back into use.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin said that she was pleased to see proposals for Greenfield but advised that it should be listed as 'School Lane' and not 'School Road'. The Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager said that he would make the necessary amendment.

Councillor Dolphin also asked when consultation would be carried out with Town and Community Councils. The Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager advised that consultation would commence in the new year with formal consultation packs being prepared and provided.

Councillor Linda Thew asked if it was realistic for the 28 houses to be completed by the end of March 2024. The Strategic Housing & Programme Delivery Manager said that a number of acquisitions had already been completed and was confident that the 28 houses would be completed.

Councillor Dale Selvester asked what the status was with regards to the Queensferry Garage Site review. The Service Manager (Housing and Assets) advised that all garage sites had been surveyed and assessed. He added that a report was submitted to the Committee earlier last year showing which garage sites were prioritised for demolition first. All options were being considered, including the creation of additional parking spaces and the creation of green space.

Councillor Dolphin asked if Members could receive a copy of the results of the garage site review within their own wards. The Service Manager (Housing and Assets) that an update report on the garage site review would be added to the Forward Work Programme for consideration at a future meeting.

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

RESOLVED:

That the progress on delivery of the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme 2, Social Housing Grant, Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme and 'Buy Backs' be noted.

55. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW TASK & FINISH GROUP

The Facilitator reported that a decision was made by the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 8th of March, 2023 to establish a Sheltered Housing Review Task & Finish Group. This followed the recommendation of the Committee at its meeting on 8th February 2023, following consideration of the Sheltered Housing Review report.

The Group has met on three separate occasions to consider the terms of reference of the Group, the Scoring Matrix and the Communications and Engagement Plan. The first meeting considered and set out the Terms of Reference. The second meeting set out the matrix going forward including how dual member wards would be awarded if they had different views. The final meeting that took place considered the communication and engagement plan.

The report set out the recommendations made by the group, for consideration by the Committee with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet.

Councillor Dale Selvester commented that he was pleased with the work of the Task & Finish Group and how the matrix would work as part of the review.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Geoff Collett and seconded by Councillor Dale Selvester.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee endorse the recommendations of the Task & Finish Group to be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

56. COUNCIL PLAN 2023 -24 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Chief Officer Housing & Assets introduced a summary of the Council's Mid Term position with regards the Council Plan priorities identified for 2023/24 adding that the report concentrated on areas of performance which were not currently achieving their target.

She added that there were currently no red actions relating to the Council's priorities and activities. However, there were a number of measures which had been rated red. Those measures were around homelessness services and the delivery of housing development programme.

Councillor Bernie Attridge expressed his concerns regarding the performance indicators/measures which showed a red RAG status. He commented on the priority for housing support and homeless prevention and asked when the Committee would receive information on what actions were being taken to improve performance on the areas outlined within the report. The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) referred to detailed reports which sat behind the performance reports and action plans which were regularly monitored and updated. She also referred to the Homelessness options report considered by the Committee at the last meeting, which outlined a number of options the Council were considering to assist with the increase in presentations to the homeless service.

The Chair asked if an update could be provided to the Committee on the location of a new homeless hub. The Service Manager (Housing & Preventions) advised that a location had been identified and it was hoped that further information would be shared with local Members in the new year.

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

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the levels of progress and confidence in the achievement of priorities as detailed within the Council Plan 2023/28 for delivery within 2023/24 be supported;
- (b) That the overall performance against Council Plan 2023/24 performance indicators/measures be supported; and

- (c) That the Committee be assured by the explanations given for those areas of underperformance.

57. VOID MANAGEMENT

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 and reported that 40 properties had been completed ready for allocation. He also outlined the following, as presented in the briefing note:-

- The number of major voids
- Total overall number of void properties which had increased slightly to 235
- The performance of the current contractors
- Top reasons for terminations

The Service Manager commented that due to the action plan moving in the right direction the void management team would now meet every quarter instead of every month, and also that the contractor's allocation had now increased to 65 voids and this would continue to be increased month by month.

Councillor Bernie Attridge expressed his concerns around people in temporary accommodation not being offered the void properties in the high rise flats, Flint. The Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) advised that the accommodation at the high rise flats were designated sheltered accommodation for people over the age of 55. She also explained that the profile of accommodation across the County did not meet the needs of the profile of people in temporary accommodation and options to address this were considered by the Committee at the last meeting.

Councillor Dale Selvester asked what plans were in place to promote low demand properties. The Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration advised that videos of properties were provided and supported the suggestion from Councillor Selvester that consideration be given to improving the information and providing videos on the Council's website.

The Chair suggested that, due to the Christmas break, the Committee receive the void management briefing note at the January meeting for information only. The Committee supported this suggestion.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

58. 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 10.53 a.m.)

Chair