

Public Document Pack

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Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



Contact Officer:
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To: Rob Davies (Chair)

Councillors: Pam Banks, Gillian Brockley, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett,
Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Dennis Hutchinson, Ted Palmer and Kevin Rush

7 November 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER, 2024 at 10.00 AM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Delyn Committee Room, 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 5 - 8)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024.

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 **BUDGET 2025/26 – STAGE 2** (Pages 21 - 26)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities), Corporate Finance Manager - Cabinet Member for Finance and Social Value, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Purpose: To review and comment on the budget pressures under the remit of the Committee.

6 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 30 YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN** (Pages 27 - 40)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Purpose: To consider the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2024/25 and the HRA Business Plan.

7 INTENSIVE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS FOR HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION (Pages 41 - 56)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Purpose: To consult on engaging with a company for the purpose of delivering homeless accommodation services for up to 50 households experiencing homelessness.

8 VOID MANAGEMENT (Pages 57 - 58)

Report of Chief Officer (Housing and Communities) - Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Purpose: To provide an update on the number of Void properties and the work undertaken to bring in properties back into use.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following item is considered to be exempt by virtue of Paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public interest in withholding the information outweighs the interest in disclosing it until such time as the contract has been awarded.

CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX TO AGENDA ITEM 7 - INTENSIVE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS FOR HOMELESS ACCOMMODATION (Pages 59 - 72)

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

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **9 OCTOBER 2024**

Minutes of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Wednesday, 9 October 2024

PRESENT: **Councillor Tina Claydon (Vice-Chair in the Chair)**
Councillors: Pam Banks, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Geoff Collett, Rob Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, David Evans, Ted Palmer and Kevin Rush, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Paul Cunningham and Rob Davies.

OBSERVERS: Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Dave Hughes and Christine Jones

APOLOGIES: None

CONTRIBUTORS: Councillor Sean Bibby (Cabinet Member for Housing);
Councillor Paul Johnson (Cabinet Member for Finance and Social Value); Chief Officer (Housing and Communities); Housing & Prevention Service Manager; Service Manager - Housing & Assets and Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)

IN ATTENDANCE: Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Democratic Services Officer

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Ted Palmer declared a personal interest as a council tenant.

26. MINUTES

The minutes were approved.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024 be approved as a correct record.

27. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented a [report \(agenda item number 4\)](#) to consider the current Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking progress.

The Facilitator advised that Food Poverty update would be moved to the January meeting, and also the Garage Site review would be moved to the December meeting to free up time for the November meeting.

Councillor Helen Brown referred to her request made at the last meeting, for a report on options on the re-designation of Sheltered Housing properties, which had been included on the FWP as part of the Sheltered Housing Review Update

report scheduled for June 2025, and asked if this information could be presented at an earlier date.

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 progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

28. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS

The Housing & Prevention Service Manager introduced the [report \(agenda item 5\)](#) on the Independent Review of Flintshire Homelessness Services which detailed work that was underway in response to service capacity to meet growing demand.

Councillor Helen Brown suggested that a letter of thanks be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the Housing & Prevention Service to thank them for their continued work within the Service and the positive findings of the support they provide, as outlined within the report.

When considered, the Committee did not support the third recommendation, as outlined within the report. Recommendations one and two were supported.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee note the findings and recommendations from Neil Morland & Co. and support the report progressing through the Committee cycle with regular updates to be shared with Members in terms of progress against recommendations; and
- (b) That the Committee note the principle of cost avoidance and spend to save efficiencies to fund additional staffing capacity within the Housing & Prevention Service through diversifying the homeless accommodation portfolio, to maximise opportunity for successfully reducing spend on homeless accommodation.

29. 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 \(agenda item 6\)](#).

It was suggested that Members of the Committee be invited to see a void property prior to works being carried out a void property once work had been completed.

Following comments made by Councillor Ted Palmer, the Service Manager suggested that the new void properties, properties ready for allocation and total fields be moved to the top of the briefing note.

In response to a question from Councillor Bernie Attridge on how much additional funding had been transferred from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to Voids, the Service Manager agreed to provide this information following the meeting.

In response to a request from Councillor Kevin Rush, the Service Manager suggested bringing information on the Voids Lettable Standards and disrepair costs to the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

30. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None.

(The meeting started at 10am and ended at 11.57am)

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Chair

Meetings of the Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee are webcast and can be viewed by visiting the webcast library at <http://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 13 th November, 2024
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 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.

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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
Wednesday 11th December, 2024 10am Page 13	De-carbonisation Strategy Update	To provide the Committee with an update on the De-carbonisation Strategy.	Information Sharing	Service Manager Housing Assets
	Garage Site Review	To provide an update on the Garage Site Review, to include information on the Car Parking Matrix and information on garage sites allocated for Housing development,	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager Housing Assets / Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager
	Local Housing Market Needs Assessment	To present the Local Housing Market Needs Assessment	Information Sharing	Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager
	Demonstration of the DRS System	To provide a demonstration of the DRS System following the meeting.		
Wednesday 15th January, 2025 10am	Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Annual Update	To provide an update on the WHQS, including information on the Voids Lettable Standards and disrepair costs.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager Housing Assets
	NEW Homes review	To outline the outcome of the NEW Homes review.	Consultation	Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager
	Food Poverty Update	To provide an update in relation to the work that has been ongoing and is planned in relation to the food	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

	Council Plan (2023-28) Mid-year Performance Report 2024/25	poverty priority area. To review and monitor the Council's performance including actions and measures, as set out in the Council Plan (2023-28) at mid-year for 2024/25.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Wednesday 12th February, 2025 10am	Common Housing Register (Single Access Route to Housing - SARTH)	To provide an annual update on the Common Housing Register.	Assurance Monitoring	Housing & Prevention Service Manager
Page 14	Housing Support Grant Programme	To provide an update on the Housing Support Grant Programme.	Information Sharing	Housing & Prevention Service Manager
	Housing Strategy	To consider the Housing Strategy	Consultation	Strategic Housing & Delivery Programme Manager
Wednesday 12th March, 2025 10am	Housing Rent Income	To provide the latest operational update on the collection of housing rent and to set out proposed changes to the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy to strengthen the rent enforcement process.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement
	Welfare Reform Update	To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.	Assurance Monitoring	Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)
Wednesday 9th April, 2025	Variation of Contracts	To present the proposed variations to Tenancy Contracts. To include	Consultation	Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

<p>10am</p>	<p>Homelessness</p> <p>Sheltered Housing Review Update</p>	<p>information on Estate & Property Management.</p> <p>To provide an update to the Committee on the Homelessness Services.</p> <p>To provide an update on the Sheltered Housing Review, to include information on options around the re-designation of properties</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Housing & Prevention Service Manager</p> <p>Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p>
<p>Wednesday 7th May, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 11th June, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>	<p>Communal Heating Charges 2025/26</p>	<p>To consider the proposed heating charges in council properties with communal heating systems for 2025/26 prior to Cabinet approval.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)</p>
<p>Wednesday 9th July, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				

Items to be scheduled

- **Rent Income Pilot Scheme** – As suggested at 12.07.23 meeting
- **Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment** - To present the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

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 /Housing Rent Income	To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.	Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement / Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)
Six monthly	Update on NEW Homes & Property Management	To update Members on the work of the NEW Homes & Property Management	Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager
Annually – Page 16	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.	Service Manager – Housing Assets
Monthly	Void Management	To provide a detailed update to the Committee on Void properties and the work undertaken to bring the properties back into use.	Service Manager – Housing Assets

ACTION TRACKING FOR THE COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
06.03.2024	6. Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) – Update	The Chair suggested that a demonstration of the DRS be given to the Committee once the system has gone fully live.	Sean O'Donnell / Denise Price	Demonstration to be provided following the Committee meeting in December. FWP updated to reflect this.	December
11.09.2024	5. Housing Rent Income	<p>In response to requests for additional information in future reports, the following was suggested/agreed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dave Barnes to speak to Sean O'Donnell following the meeting to discuss what data sets around Council Tax losses could be provide in future update reports; • Dave Barnes agreed to provide an analysis of write offs, to include information on the reasons for the write offs in future reports; • Dave Barnes agreed to review what data sets could be provided around the financial impact of no longer collecting water rates; and • Dave Barnes agreed to provide anonymised analysis on some of the higher rent arrear cases. 	<p>Dave Barnes / Sean O'Donnell</p> <p>Dave Barnes</p> <p>Dave Barnes</p> <p>Dave Barnes</p>	<p>Information to be included in the next update report on 12th March, 2025</p> <p>Sean O'Donnell currently liaising with Dave Barnes on which void properties could be removed from the Council Tax list due to major works etc.</p>	Ongoing

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

11.09.2024	Garage Site Review Matrix	During the briefing of the Garage Site Review matrix, following the meeting, it was agreed that information on garage sites allocated for Housing development, be included in the update report to the Committee in November.	Sean O'Donnell	Information to be included in the December report. The purpose of the report on the FWP has been updated to reflect this.	Completed
09.10.2024	4. Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	Councillor Helen Brown referred to her request made at the last meeting, for a report on options on the re-designation of Sheltered Housing properties, which had been included on the FWP as part of the Sheltered Housing Review Update report scheduled for June 2025, and asked if this information could be presented at an earlier date.	Ceri Shotton / Jen Griffiths	Report brought forward to April 2024 and FWP updated to reflect this.	Completed
09.10.2024	5. Independent Review of Homelessness	Councillor Helen Brown suggested that a letter of thanks be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the Housing & Prevention Service, to thank them for their continued work within the Service and the positive findings of the support they provide, as outlined within the report.	Ceri Shotton	Letter of thanks sent to the Housing & Prevention Service Manager to thank him and for him to share with his team.	Completed
09.10.2024	5. Independent Review of Homelessness	That the comments made by the Committee be collated and presented to Cabinet.	Ceri Shotton	The comments made by the Committee were given by the Cabinet Member at the Cabinet meeting held on 15.10.24.	Completed

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

09.10.2024	6. Void Management	Members of the Committee to be invited to see a void property prior to works being carried out a void property once work had been completed.	Ceri Shotton / Sean O'Donnell	Dates being sought for January 2025 for site visits.	Ongoing
09.10.2024	6. Void Management	Following comments made by Cllr Ted Palmer, that the briefing note be amended to highlight the number of properties completed ready for allocation. Sean O'Donnell suggested that the new void properties, properties ready for allocation and total fields be moved to the top of the briefing note.	Sean O'Donnell	Amendments to the briefing note will be made to the next report in November.	Completed
09.10.2024	6. Void Management	In response to a question from Cllr Bernie Attridge on how much additional funding had been transferred from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to Voids, Sean O'Donnell agreed to provide this information following the meeting.	Sean O'Donnell	Information e-mailed to the Committee and Cllr Attridge via e-mail on 05.11.2024	Completed
09.10.2024	6. Void Management	In response to a request from Cllr Kevin Rush, Sean O'Donnell suggested bringing information on the Voids Lettable Standards and disrepair costs to the Committee in the future.	Sean O'Donnell	Information to be included in the WHQS Annual Update report due in January 2025. The purpose of the report on the FWP has been updated to reflect this.	Completed

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 13 th November 2024
Report Subject	Budget 2025/26 – Stage 2
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Report Author	Corporate Finance Manager and Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As in past years, the budget for 2025/26 will be built up in stages.

The first stage has been concluded by the establishment of a robust baseline of cost pressures together with Member workshops and individual Group Briefings to ensure Members had a full understanding of the Council's concerning overall financial position.

In September, Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an updated position on the budget for 2025/26, which showed that we had an additional revenue budget requirement estimated at £38.420m which presents a serious and major budget challenge for the Council – proposed solutions to bridge this gap are currently being developed and will be shared with members in due course.

This review by Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout October and November is aimed at reviewing and scrutinising the portfolio cost pressures to provide assurance that they are an essential requirement for the 2025/26 budget and that there is no scope to remove / defer them to assist with dealing with the budget challenge.

The draft Welsh Government Budget is scheduled to be announced on 10 December and the Provisional Welsh Local Government Settlement is expected to be received on 11 December.

Stage 3 of the budget process will be the identification of the full set of budget solutions required to ensure a legal and balanced budget is set in line with the Council's overall available funding envelope.

The details of the cost pressure options for the Housing & Communities Portfolio which fall within the remit of this Committee are included within this report. The Committee is invited to review and challenge these cost pressures and associated risks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Review and comment on the Housing & Communities portfolio's cost pressures.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BUDGET POSITION 2025/26																
1.01	The first stage has been concluded by the establishment of a robust baseline of cost pressures together with Member workshops and individual Group Briefings to ensure Members had a full understanding of the Council's concerning overall financial position.																
1.02	In September, Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an updated position on the budget for 2025/26, which showed that we had an additional revenue budget requirement estimated at £38.420m which presents a serious and major budget challenge for the Council – proposed solutions to bridge this gap are currently being developed and will be shared with members in due course.																
1.03	This review by Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout October and November is aimed at reviewing and scrutinising the portfolio cost pressures to provide assurance that they are an essential requirement for the 2025/26 budget and that there is no scope to remove / defer them to assist with dealing with the budget challenge.																
1.04	<p>The draft Welsh Government Budget is scheduled to be announced on 10 December and the Provisional Welsh Local Government Settlement is expected to be received on 11 December.</p> <p>Stage 3 of the budget process will be the identification of the full set of budget solutions required to ensure a legal and balanced budget is set in line with the Council's overall available funding envelope.</p>																
1.04	<p>Housing and Communities– Cost pressures</p> <p>These are set out in the paragraphs which follow.</p>																
1.05	<p><u>Table 1: Housing & Communities – Cost Pressures</u></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Cost Pressure Title</th> <th style="text-align: center;">£m</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Note</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Strategic Decisions</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Homelessness demand</td> <td style="text-align: center;">7.517</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Benefits – Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1.643</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Cost Pressures</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9.160</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Cost Pressure Title	£m	Note	Strategic Decisions			Homelessness demand	7.517	1.	Benefits – Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	1.643	2.	Total Cost Pressures	9.160	
Cost Pressure Title	£m	Note															
Strategic Decisions																	
Homelessness demand	7.517	1.															
Benefits – Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)	1.643	2.															
Total Cost Pressures	9.160																

Notes:

1. Strategic Decision – Homelessness demand (£7.517m)

Following significant growth in demand for emergency accommodation for homeless persons and families there continues to be significant overspend within the Housing Solutions service. A number of potential mitigating measures are currently being considered with the intention to accelerate the rate at which homeless persons and families can be moved on from emergency accommodation into permanent accommodation. The key demand influences include the shortage of affordable supply in the private rented sector together with increasing numbers of no-fault evictions and an expectation of future growth arising from mortgage repossessions.

2. Strategic Decision – Benefits – Council Tax Reduction Scheme (£1.643m)

There is currently a pressure for CTRS in 2024/25. There was no increase to this budget in 2024/25, instead it was agreed that reserves would be utilised in year to offset overspends. A budget pressure for 2025/26 exists due to the expected impact on the current cost base of the level of increase in Council Tax to be determined for 2025/26.

1.06 **Potential budget solutions/budget savings workstreams for Homelessness.**

Developing other homeless accommodation solutions is a priority task for the Housing and Prevention Service and options are actively being explored to reduce the financial pressure.

1.07 **Budget Timeline**

An outline of the local budget timeline at this stage is set out in the table below:

Table 5: Budget Timeline

Date	Event
October/November 2024	Overview and Scrutiny Committees
10/11 December 2024	Draft Welsh Government Budget and Provisional Local Government Settlement
17 December 2024	Cabinet
16 January 2025	Overview and Scrutiny Committees – as required
21 January 2025	Cabinet – Budget Review
18 February 2025	Cabinet and Council – Final Budget Setting
February 2025	Welsh Government Final Budget/Settlement

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: the revenue implications for the 2025/26 budget are set out in the report.</p> <p>Capital: there are no new implications for the approved capital programme for either the current financial year or for future financial years – the capital programme will be subject to a separate report</p>
3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Member Budget Briefings July and October 2024 • Specific Overview and Scrutiny Committees • Corporate Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings
4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	As set out in the report.
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.
6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTFS and Budget 2025/26 Cabinet Report July 2024 Agenda - Cabinet 23.07.2024 • MTFS and Budget 2025/26 Cabinet Report September 2024 Agenda - Cabinet 25.09.2024 • Member Briefing Slides
7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day-to-day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for</p>

the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.

Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.

Budget Requirement: The amount of resource required to meet the Councils financial priorities in a financial year.

Forecast: An estimate of the level of resource needed in the future based on a set of demands or priorities.

Capital: Expenditure on the acquisition of **non-current assets** or expenditure which extends the useful life of an existing asset.

Revenue Support Grant: the annual amount of money the Council receives from Welsh Government to fund what it does alongside the Council Tax and other income the Council raises locally. Councils can decide how to use this grant across services although their freedom to allocate according to local choice can be limited by guidelines set by Government.

Specific Grants: An award of funding from a grant provider (e.g. Welsh Government) which must be used for a pre-defined purpose.

Welsh Local Government Association: the representative body for unitary councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks authorities in Wales.

Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.

Local Government Funding Formula: The system through which the annual funding needs of each council is assessed at a national level and under which each council's Aggregate External Finance (AEF) is set. The revenue support grant is distributed according to that formula.

Aggregate External Finance (AEF): The support for local revenue spending from the Welsh Government and is made up of formula grant including the revenue support grant and the distributable part of non-domestic rates.

Provisional Local Government Settlement: The Provisional Settlement is the draft budget for local government published by the Welsh Government for consultation. The Final Local Government Settlement is set following the consultation.

Funding Floor: a guaranteed level of funding for councils who come under the all-Wales average change in the annual Settlement. A floor has been a feature of the Settlement for many years.

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 13 th November 2024
Report Subject	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Financial Business Plan
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present for consideration the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Financial Business Plan and the proposed HRA Budget for 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To consider the HRA budget for 2025/26 as set out in the report.
2	To consider the proposed minimum rent increase of 2.7%.
3	To consider a garage rent increase of 2.7%.
4	To consider the increase in service charges to full cost recovery.
5	To consider the pressures and efficiencies set out in Appendix A.
6	To consider the proposed HRA Capital programme for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix B.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26 UPDATE														
1.01	<p>Considerations</p> <p>The HRA is required to produce a 30-year business plan.</p> <p>The strategic context for this year’s HRA budget setting includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure affordability for contract holders is at the core of our considerations. • Continued drive to ensure all service costs are efficient and that value for money can be achieved. • Ensure the treasury management strategy continues to meet the Housing Revenue Account’s new and ongoing borrowing requirements. • Setting a balanced budget with a minimum of 3% surplus revenue over expenditure. • Maximisation of revenue efficiencies to minimise the borrowing required to meet Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) • Delivery of new build Council housing and acquisitions of existing properties • Continued drive to ensure homes are Energy Efficient and explore Decarbonisation. • Provision of adequate ongoing capital to maintain WHQS levels. 														
1.02	<p>HRA Funding</p> <p>The HRA is a ring-fenced service and therefore it must be self-financing and not subsidised by the Council.</p> <div data-bbox="327 1299 1316 2072"> <table border="1"> <caption>HRA Funding 2024/25</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Funding Source</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Net Rental Income</td> <td>73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Borrowing</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Grants</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other income</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non Dwelling Rents</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Charges for Services</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Funding Source	Percentage	Net Rental Income	73%	Borrowing	14%	Grants	11%	Other income	1%	Non Dwelling Rents	1%	Charges for Services	0%
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	<p>The graph above indicates that the majority of the HRA funding (73%) comes from the rents charged to its customers and a further 25% of its funding comes from grants, in the form of the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA), Social Housing Grant (SHG), Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding (TACP) and borrowing. The remaining 2% comes from other sources such as non-dwelling rents and service charges.</p>
1.03	<p>HRA Pressures and Efficiencies</p> <p>Pressures and efficiencies have been identified and are detailed in Appendix A.</p> <p>An additional budget requirement of £0.377m has been identified for 2025/26. Of this, £0.179m relates to uncontrollable pressures such as pay and general inflationary increases and the remaining £0.198m are service pressures.</p> <p>We have also identified £1.062m of efficiencies to offset the pressures, which leaves a net saving of £0.685m in 2025/26.</p>
1.04	<p>Capital Programme</p> <p>The total proposed capital programme for 2025/26 is £28.683m, summarised in Appendix B.</p> <p>WHQS 2023</p> <p>A total of £18.989m has been allocated for ongoing WHQS works.</p> <p>WHQS.2023 works are continuing, the programme of works to deliver the new standard will run until 2033.</p> <p>WHQS.2 proposes to reduce the carbon emissions from social housing and in doing so contribute to the Welsh target of Net Zero Carbon.</p> <p>The standard focuses on affordable warmth with a target energy pathway of EPC 'C'. In support of the target Welsh Government have asked Landlords to advise on how they will meet net zero carbon by 2027. Welsh Government have asked Landlords to assess their stock and produce energy pathways for homes by 2027.</p> <p>The new standard will place significant additional capital pressures on the HRA over the coming years particularly due to the net zero carbon agenda and these additional pressures are not yet reflected in the future business plan.</p> <p>The 2025/26 capital budget increases the energy efficiency programme of works to £5.241m as part of a programme to assess the best way to achieve net carbon zero homes.</p> <p>Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)</p> <p>A total of £1.100m has been allocated for this mandatory service. This service is customer driven and can be volatile dependant on customer demands.</p>

Regeneration

A £4.000m regeneration budget has been allocated in the Capital Programme for 2025/26. The aim is to utilise this allocation to remodel HRA stock where the current stock is no longer fit for purpose. There are several pipeline schemes for consideration including:

- Sheltered Housing Review
- Estate Remodelling
- Assist with reducing Homelessness – acquiring existing properties.

SHARP

£4.594m has been built into 2025/26 for the development of Council housing. The capital programme is currently forecasting the addition of 50 units per annum, 10 buybacks and 40 new builds, for the next 5 years. The costs are based on the Standard Viability Model and assumes receipt of Social Housing Grant (SHG).

Capitalisation of the costs of the development team have now been included in the programme at 6% of the total development budget.

All schemes are required to meet financial hurdle rates set by the Council and should be able to pay back the original investment via rents within 50 years. Buybacks must payback within 40 years.

Asset Investment Budget Breakdown	£m
10 Buy back properties & 40 New Builds	4.594
Total	4.594

Capital Funding

The £28.683m capital programme will be funded by:

WHQS & Asset Investment Funding	£m
Revenue Contribution (CERA)	14.811
Major Repairs Allowance	4.978
Energy Efficiency income (FIT) & ORP Grant	0.300
Prudential Borrowing (Regeneration)	4.000
Prudential Borrowing (SHARP)	4.594
Total	28.683

1.05 Rent Setting

In December 2019, Welsh Government released the revised rent policy for a 5-year period beginning in April 2020/21, this policy has now been extended whilst a new rent policy is being developed.

The policy is designed to ensure that affordability for contract holders is at the core of our considerations and when setting the rent uplift, landlords should consider value for money and the whole cost of living in a property as part of their rationale for setting rents.

The Rent Policy for Social Housing Rents from 2020/21 sets out the following:

- An annual rent uplift of up to CPI+1%, for 5 years to 2024/25 using the level of CPI from the previous September each year.
- The level of rents for individual contract holders can be frozen or rise by up to an additional £2 over and above CPI+1%, on condition that total rental income collected by the social landlord increases by no more than CPI+1%.

The policy states, however, that should CPI fall outside the range of 0% to 3%, the Minister with responsibility for housing will determine the appropriate change to rent levels to be applied for that year only. CPI as of September 2024 was 1.7%. Our modelling in the current business plan assumes a rent increase of 2.7%.

Setting rent lower than 2.7% will mean the HRA will need to find further efficiencies of circa £0.400m every year for each 1% rent reduction.

Whilst affordability for contract holders should always be an important consideration when setting rents, it is also important to note, setting the rents at WG rent cap levels will enable the Council to utilise these additional funds on WHQS.2 which will reduce social housing utilities costs and improve affordability for contract holders.

1.06 Rent Impact on Contract Holders

We have identified that 64% of all contract holders are eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) support toward their rent and service charges. The table below shows the impact on those in receipt of HB.

HB eligibility	Average % of rent paid by HB	Average impact on tenants p.w.
Full	100%	£0.00
Partial	34%	£2.47
None	0%	£3.72

Consultation with contract holders will be via a section in the Star Survey to be distributed in October and a meeting with the tenant's federation has been organised.

1.07 Garage Rents and Service Charges (including impact to contract holders)

The proposed garage rent and garage plot increase is 2.7% for 2025/26, which equates to £0.31 per week for garage rent and takes the rent per week to £11.75 (based on 52 weeks). The proposed garage plot increase is £0.05 per week taking the garage plot rent to £1.85 per week.

The business plan anticipates income levels of £0.305m for garages and garage plots.

The rent and service charges policy were introduced in 2015 and expected all Local Housing Associations (LHA's) to be achieving full cost recovery for

service charges, if this had not yet been achieved a clear transition plan should be identified to achieve this.

To achieve full cost recovery, we would be required to increase service charges as follows:

Service Charge	Current charge per week	Full recovery cost per week	Increase per week	Impact per week with partial HB (ave. 34%)
Aerials	£1.55	£1.55	£0.00	£0.00
Laundry	£1.13	£1.20	£0.07	£0.05
Cleaning	£5.23	£5.75	£0.52	£0.34
Window Cleaning	£1.05	£1.05	£0.00	£0.00
Alarms	£3.18	£3.53	£0.35	£0.23
Total	£12.14	£13.08	£0.94	£0.62

Not all properties are subject to all service charges. Of all our contract holders, 2.4% are charged for five service charges and 2.5% are charged for four service charges and 9.6% for three.

The increase of the service charges would bring in additional income of £0.014m.

1.08 **Capital Financing**

The deed to terminate the voluntary agreement for the HRA borrowing cap was signed on the 2nd December 2019, it is therefore important that going forward, increased borrowing in the HRA is carefully managed and monitored to ensure that it is sustainable and affordable to the business plan.

Borrowing should only be used for investment expenditure and not day-to-day running costs or maintaining WHQS. The HRA is likely to be required to increase borrowing in the future to fund WHQS.2 as Welsh Government have indicated this will not be fully funded via grant, therefore we need to manage the risk of this future borrowing by keeping current borrowing at prudent levels.

Borrowing undertaken by the HRA is repaid under the Annuity Method which is calculated in line with the useful life of the asset. Our current borrowing levels are shown below:

Total HRA borrowing undertaken to date		£
Prior debt and HRA subsidy buyout		103,108,830
WHQS		21,871,366
SHARP		24,767,993
Regeneration		860,000
Total HRA Borrowing		150,608,189
Less repayments to date		(19,187,108)
Net HRA Borrowing		131,421,081
New Borrowing for 2025/26		£
SHARP		4,594,050
Regeneration		4,000,000
Total New HRA Borrowing		8,594,050
Total Capital Financing at 2025/26		140,015,131

Interest Rates

The HRA is part of the single debt pool for the Council. All borrowing for the Council is managed within one pool and the average borrowing rate for the Council is applied to all new borrowing in the HRA, the rate assumed in the business plan is 4.5% and interest payments for 2025/26 are estimated at £6.068m.

1.09

Reserves

There is a requirement to hold a minimum level of reserves of 3% of expenditure, however, it was agreed as part of the 2024/25 Business Plan, for Flintshire’s HRA to move to reserves to 7% due to the level of financial risk in the HRA rising as a result of increased borrowing levels for new build and increasing costs due to the volatility of the economy.

Reserves should not be used to fund recurring pressures to the Business Plan and levels should be reviewed annually in line with the HRA’s proposed borrowing commitments and budgetary risk factors.

In the current climate it would be prudent to maintain reserve levels at a minimum of 7% of expenditure (£2.922m) as we have ongoing risks to the Business Plan which would have to be funded from reserves if they materialised:

- Pay award could be higher than budgeted.
- Inflation could be higher than the provision in the Business Plan
- Arrears could increase due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Interest rates increasing due to the economic climate.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The HRA is a ring-fenced budget. This proposed HRA budget and Business Plan demonstrates that the council can achieve the ongoing WHQS, can meet service improvement plans and commitments and with prudential borrowing can continue its Council house building programme in 2025/26.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	All households will benefit from the Councils WHQS 2023 programme. The impact of the investment planning and efficiencies is being modelled for various customer groups to ensure that there is no disproportionate impact on any groups with protected characteristics.
3.02	The Business Plan assumes a confirmation of Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2025/26 and beyond, however, Welsh Government have indicated that the purpose of the funding will be reviewed in the future.

3.03	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact	
	Long-term	Positive – There is a commitment to increase supply to provide the right types of homes in the right location.
	Prevention	Positive – It is our aim to provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home.
	Integration	Positive - Achieving WHQS for all existing council houses and delivering new social housing will contribute to the integration within communities.
	Collaboration	Positive - To deliver in partnership with stakeholders to support positive impacts for all our contract holders.
	Involvement	Positive - Communication with contract holders, Members and other stakeholders.
	Well-being Goals Impact	
	Prosperous Wales	Positive – Existing social homes are WHQS compliant and meet the changing housing needs. Also providing good quality new social homes aiming for low/zero carbon. Maximising local employment and training opportunities for local people.
	Resilient Wales	Positive – Developing low / zero carbon homes through modern methods of construction and technologies. Ensuring that all statutory compliance requirements are adhered to.
	Healthier Wales	Positive – Ensuring all existing homes and new homes are fit for purpose and meet the needs of all people.
	More equal Wales	Positive - Provide good quality homes for the most vulnerable people in society.
	Cohesive Wales	Positive – Contributing to attractive, viable and safe communities
	Vibrant Wales	Positive – Ensuring all communities housing needs are supported
	Globally responsible Wales	Positive – The HRA Business Plan will contribute to the improvement of the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	As part of the 2023/24 rent settlement, the Council gave commitment to WG around engagement with contract holders. The Star Survey will now include questions on rent affordability to inform any decision making on rent setting.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix A – Draft Pressures and Efficiencies 2025/26.
5.02	Appendix B – Draft Capital Programme 2025/26.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

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

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April 2025</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day-to-day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Capital expenditure: money spent by the organisation on acquiring or maintaining fixed assets, such as land, buildings, and equipment.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council’s policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Treasury Management: the Council has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice. Treasury Management is conducted in accordance with the Council’s Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Practices which are both reviewed annually. All borrowing and long-term financing is made in accordance with CIPFA’s Prudential Code.</p> <p>Major Repairs Allowance: Welsh Government grant paid to local authorities in Wales who still manage and maintain their council housing.</p>

HRA - SUMMARY OF PRESSURES	£m	Notes
Repairs staff	0.053	Holding 1 post with no budget - risk accepted 1 Planner and 1 Admin currently using agency Streetscene imposing measures on skip sites resulting in additional caretakers required Increase due to regrade of staff Pay at 4% compared to 2% in last years BP
Repairs Support Staff	0.070	
Caretakers	0.075	
CBASS	0.027	
Pay Model/Increase	0.152	
Total	0.377	

HRA - SUMMARY OF EFFICIENCIES	£m	Notes
Concierge Service	(0.107)	Are 6 posts required. 3 posts only No fee from 24.25 but will prices be increasing? Capital Works carpark programme delayed by 5 years Underspent for the last 3 years To be used to offset the extra admin (£24k) 23.24 and (£69k) 24.25 Based on historical spend Based on latest forecast prices No income budget in Not required Not required
Travis Management Fee	(0.070)	
CERA	(0.400)	
Responsive Repairs Subcontractor Budget	(0.150)	
Repairs Mod App	(0.028)	
Reduction in Support Service recharge	(0.045)	
Reduction in BDP?	(0.125)	
Electric prices reducing	(0.090)	
Community Centre Income	(0.012)	
Decoration Vouchers	(0.030)	
Tenant Group Funding	(0.005)	
Total	(1.062)	

Net pressure	(0.685)
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HRA Capital Programme	£'m
WHQS	
Internal Works	3.744
Envelope Works	6.808
Externals	0.970
Renewables / Alternative Technology	5.241
Total WHQS	16.763
Non WHQS	
Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) - Mandatory/ Minor Adaps	1.100
Major Works	-
Fire Risk Assessments Work	1.108
	2.208
Fees	
Capitalised salaries	1.117
Regeneration of stock	
Estate remodelling/ Support homeless strategy	4.000
SHARP Programme	
New Build Programme Spend	3.932
Acquisitions Programme Spend	0.662
Total SHARP Programme	4.594
Total Capital Spend	28.683

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING & OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 13 th November 2024
Report Subject	Intensive Housing Management Solutions for Homeless Accommodation
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Expenditure on homeless accommodation is a high-risk area for the Council and costs have increased significantly in recent years as demand has grown and covid related hardship grants from Welsh government have reduced.

Area	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Temporary Accommodation	352,790	694,594	450,634	565,813
Emergency Accommodation	20,706	511,284	1,501,611	4,575,510
Homeless Hub	191,994	249,803	193,785	229,634
Totals	565,490	1,455,681	2,146,030	5,370,957

A specific challenge for the Council is the over reliance on holiday accommodation such as hotels, Bed and Breakfast (B&B's), caravans and other forms of holiday accommodation when fulfilling homeless accommodation duties. This is costly and not a good housing solution. Expenditure on hotels, B&Bs and other forms of holiday accommodation is outlined in the table above and is recorded as emergency accommodation.

The percentage of placements in hotels, B&Bs and other forms of holiday accommodation is significantly higher for Flintshire than the average elsewhere in Wales. As of February 2024, 58% of individuals in homeless accommodation provided by the Council were housed in B&Bs compared to 33% for Wales.

Developing other homeless accommodation solutions is a priority task for the Housing and Prevention Service and options are actively being explored to reduce financial pressures associated with fulfilling statutory homeless duties. Following consultation with other Welsh Authority Homeless Leads, D2 PropCo have been identified as a potential provider of homeless accommodation.

This report outlines the model of intensive housing management services provided by D2 PropCo for homeless accommodation and the cost benefits of engaging a partner for these services.

D2 PropCo currently provide housing management services for 10 Councils in Wales. They provide homeless accommodation for single people (small scale house shares – up to 5 people sharing) and families in self-contained accommodation as an alternative to hotels, B&Bs and other forms of holiday accommodation. They also provide accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

Initial discussions with D2 PropCo to better understand their service and to inform cost benefit analysis, has established the accommodation of 40 single people and 10 families could offer significant savings. The savings are estimated at £1,095,000 per year when compared to the potential cost of accommodating those 50 households in hotels. If the Council were to engage D2 PropCo the potential savings could be £3,285,000 over a three-year contract period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Note the work undertaken to identify potential providers of an intensive housing management service for homeless accommodation.
2	Note the outcome of the Prior Information Notice (PIN) by way of testing the market.
3	Approve the direct award to D2 PropCo to engage them as a partner to provide an intensive housing management solution for homeless accommodation.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING INTENSIVE HOUSING MANAGEMENT FOR HOMELESS SERVICES MODEL - D2 PROPCO
1.01	<p>D2 PropCo specialises in purchasing and renovating properties to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households, offering a vital alternative to Bed and Breakfast (B&B) placements and efficiencies for local authorities. More information about D2 PropCo can be found on their website HERE.</p> <p>D2 PropCo currently operates in South Wales and is highly regarded by Council partners for reducing reliance on costly B&Bs and delivering high quality housing solutions and property management services. They offer</p>

residents low-level support and comprehensive housing management, ensuring a secure and structured environment for residents.

Several Welsh authorities, including Caerphilly and Torfaen Councils, have successfully partnered with D2 PropCo using tender exemptions, recognising that no other provider delivers this type of service or cost efficiency.

During our due diligence processes we approached several South Wales Councils for references. Caerphilly Council reports that D2's model is over 50% cheaper than hotel placements, while Torfaen Council highlighted their high standards of property management and extensive support services, all for a fixed fee and at significant benefit.

Financial background checks on D2 PropCo have also been carried out using the Dun & Bradstreet framework which considers financial viability. The report highlighted no concerns and provided reassurance on the organisations financial standing.

The Council urgently needs to reduce the high costs and resource strain caused by B&B placements. Unfortunately, most B&B placements allocated to homeless clients are out of County due to there not being enough available options in Flintshire. This in turn then places households further away from the authority / support options, which may impact on the client's situation and cause added trauma to already vulnerable people.

In light of the challenges around out of county placements, those residents within neighbouring areas of Chester and Denbighshire will be targeted for relocation into properties acquired by D2 PropCo.

The approach used by D2 PropCo to providing housing solutions is to buy property on open market and then invest in the properties to bring them up to a standard comparable to the social housing Welsh Housing Quality Standard. For house shares, CCTV is also installed within communal spaces for residents' safety and welfare monitoring.

Representatives from D2 PropCo attended the Ending Homelessness Board to present the model and Board Members were impressed by the potential for efficiencies, but also the standard of accommodation and operational management practices. Appendix 1 is the presentation provided to the Ending Homelessness Board.

Board members asked D2 PropCo if there was opportunity to target long term empty homes as a route to, not only increasing supply for homeless needs, but also to address the challenge of long-term empty homes in Flintshire, which can cause a blight on the local landscape. This is feasible and discussions with local auction houses and the Council's Empty Homes Officer are underway.

Full contract price and maximisation of potential efficiencies would only be realised upon all 40 bed spaces and 10 family homes being available for occupation.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Detailed below are the cost implications associated with the delivery of this model in Flintshire:</p> <p>Revenue: Appendix 2 outlines the savings that could be achieved over a 5-year period for housing up to 40 single people and 10 families by using D2 PropCo instead of hotels and B&Bs. Homeless accommodation is Council Fund expenditure so the successful delivery of the contract would present significant potential for savings to the Council Fund.</p> <p>Monitoring and reviewing the contract can be delivered through the Housing and Prevention Service’s commissioning and reviewing functions which are already well established and resourced.</p> <p>Focussing this housing solution on residents presently housed out of county, will not only relieve tensions with neighbouring Councils, who have their own homelessness pressures, but will also save staff time and fuel costs for support and housing management services outside of Flintshire area.</p> <p>Capital: There are no capital funding implications for the Council. The business model for D2 PropCo is supported by external financiers and D2 PropCo are currently in discussions with the Development Bank of Wales for growth plans. They have funding in place for work within Flintshire already but are also exploring options for delivery in other parts of North Wales.</p> <p>Human Resources: All staff managing the properties will be employed by D2 PropCo. For vulnerable residents who require more than the low-level support offered by D2 PropCo, additional support can be provided through existing Housing Support Grant funded services.</p> <p>Residents housed by D2 PropCo, will continue to be owed homeless duties under Housing Wales Act 2024 and as a result will remain open to the Homeless Team until they exit homelessness. Rent and service charges will be collected by the Homefinder Team and any breaches of occupation conditions will be addressed by Homefinder Officers.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Risk: Potential legal challenge if choosing not to follow the full tendering process exposes the Council to risk around procurement processes</p> <p>Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal advice sought through Weightmans Solicitors (Appendix 3) • In an effort to satisfy ourselves that there are no other providers who can deliver such a service, a Prior Information Notice was posted on Sell2Wales to try and identify any other potential providers. This notice was to inform the market of the upcoming commissioning intentions and to ascertain any other interest for this

contract. No other interest was received. Therefore, we feel a tendering exercise would not be beneficial as it is likely that only D2 PropCo would bid for the contract.

Risk: Entering a full tender process could delay cost savings by up to six months, worsening the current situation and placing further strain on the Council Fund.

Mitigation:

- After receiving external legal advice and consulting with FCC's Legal Department, a Prior Information Notice (PIN) was put on Sell2Wales for provision of intensive homeless accommodation management services. This notice was to inform the market of the upcoming commissioning intentions and to ascertain any other interest for this contract. As noted above no other interest was received. Therefore, we feel a tendering exercise would not be beneficial as it is likely that only D2 PropCo would bid for the contract.
- Support the exception process following recent outcome of the PIN period if no other providers come forward.

Risk: Renovating properties to provide suitable temporary accommodation can be time-consuming. Delays in the renovation process could result in a shortage of available accommodations, prolonging reliance on costly B&B placements.

Mitigation:

- Implement robust project management practices with clear timelines and milestones for D2 PropCo property renovation projects.
- Ensure regular progress reports and reviews of contract delivery to ensure adherence to schedules.

Risk: an intensive housing management partner for homeless accommodation is engaged but they are only able to secure accommodation without HMO status and this dilutes the potential cost benefit and scale of efficiencies.

Mitigation:

- Develop a range of briefings for elected members and Planning Committee to outline the D2 PropCo model and offer reassurance over robust housing management practices.
- Commit to small scale HMOs to reduce density within homes used for shared housing (max 4 or 5 people sharing).

Risk: Local communities may resist the establishment of temporary accommodations in their areas due to misconceptions about the impact on neighbourhood safety, property values, or local services.

Mitigation:

- Conduct proactive community engagement and communication campaigns to educate the public on the benefits of the D2 PropCo model, addressing concerns and demonstrating how the project will positively impact the community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully select sites for temporary accommodations to minimise disruption and address community concerns. Work with local stakeholders to identify the most suitable locations. Establish channels for ongoing community feedback and ensure that any issues are addressed promptly and transparently. 										
3.02	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Long-term</td> <td>Positive – Increase in targeted support and alternative delivery methods to ensure services are inclusive for all.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td> <td>Prevention - Preventing homelessness through ensuring there is adequate support and accommodation to cater for a range of people’s needs.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td> <td>Positive – Increased integration between services and partner organisations.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td> <td>Positive – Increased collaboration between services, partner organisations and service users.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td> <td>Positive – Service user involvement to help shape effective services so that support is timely and person centred.</td> </tr> </table>	Long-term	Positive – Increase in targeted support and alternative delivery methods to ensure services are inclusive for all.	Prevention	Prevention - Preventing homelessness through ensuring there is adequate support and accommodation to cater for a range of people’s needs.	Integration	Positive – Increased integration between services and partner organisations.	Collaboration	Positive – Increased collaboration between services, partner organisations and service users.	Involvement	Positive – Service user involvement to help shape effective services so that support is timely and person centred.
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3.03	<p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td> <td>Positive – Hire staff to deliver support on a greater scale within Flintshire.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td> <td>Positive – Creating services that build resilience to support households that become homeless.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td> <td>Positive – Reduction in households placed outside Flintshire and away from support, overcoming health inequalities associated with homelessness and poor housing conditions and investment to increase targeted support for people with housing issues and ill-health.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More equal Wales</td> <td>Positive – Services are delivered in a way that are inclusive for all. Consideration has been given to local and regional gaps in provision for often marginalised communities such as the homeless, those with mental health or substances issues and the LGBTQ+ community.</td> </tr> </table>	Prosperous Wales	Positive – Hire staff to deliver support on a greater scale within Flintshire.	Resilient Wales	Positive – Creating services that build resilience to support households that become homeless.	Healthier Wales	Positive – Reduction in households placed outside Flintshire and away from support, overcoming health inequalities associated with homelessness and poor housing conditions and investment to increase targeted support for people with housing issues and ill-health.	More equal Wales	Positive – Services are delivered in a way that are inclusive for all. Consideration has been given to local and regional gaps in provision for often marginalised communities such as the homeless, those with mental health or substances issues and the LGBTQ+ community.		
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	Cohesive Wales	No Impact
	Vibrant Wales	No impact
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	After receiving external legal advice and consulting with FCC's Legal Department, a Prior Information Notice (PIN) was put on Sell2Wales for provision of intensive homeless accommodation management services. This notice was to inform the market of the upcoming intentions of Flintshire and to ascertain any other interest for this contract. No other interest was received.
4.02	Consultations have been held with other Local Authorities that are utilising D2 PropCo in the same way to ensure that what has been promised is being delivered as part of our due diligence.
4.03	Advice has been sought from our internal procurement and external legal advice about potential for direct award. Their comments are detailed within the Exceptions Report attached as Appendix 3.
4.04	<p>It will be important to inform local ward members of the service delivery model so Councillors can have confidence in the model. In areas where D2 PropCo already provide homeless accommodation services, it is standard practice for local elected members to be invited to view the properties and meet the D2 PropCo team to offer reassurance over property standards and housing management practices.</p> <p>D2 PropCo and Housing and Prevention Service would be happy to host a Member briefing session to showcase the operating practices for intensive housing management service solutions for homeless accommodation.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – Presentation to the Ending Homelessness Board – July 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2 – FCC value for money modelling for D2 PropCo</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Exemption Report - Procurement and Legal advice (Confidential)</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	NA

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

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Housing Support Grant This is an early intervention housing related support programme targeted at people in housing need and at increased risk of homelessness. The HSG programme brings the historic funding streams for Supporting People, Homelessness Prevention and Rent Smart Wales grants into 1 single funding stream.</p> <p>Welsh Housing Quality Standard The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) was introduced by the Welsh Government in 2002 to raise the physical standard and condition of social housing in Wales. It applies to housing associations and local authorities with social rented housing, ensuring that all dwellings are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents.</p> <p>Houses of Multiple Occupation House in Multiple Occupation often abbreviated to HMO is a technical term to signify that people of multiple households (i.e. not a single family unit) are living in the same building. Typically, each resident has their own rental contract for the period of occupation.</p> <p>Prior Information Notice Prior Information Notices (PIN) are preliminary announcements issued by public sector organization as part of procurement activities. These notices signal upcoming procurement opportunities, acting as an early alert for potential suppliers about future tenders or contracts.</p> <p>Dun & Bradstreet Report A Dun & Bradstreet Business Credit Report (D&B) is a report that collects data to determine a company’s creditworthiness and financial standing. D&B collects public and private information to produce a comprehensive credit profile. D&B also provides business credit scores called PAYDEX ratings that range from 1 – 100.</p>



“Housing vulnerable people, families and young adults since 2017”

About D2 Propco

D2 is a Welsh-based company that has the primary goal of providing vulnerable adults, young people and those who have encountered hardships a safe, quiet & clean place to live. We purchase and renovate properties to council requirements and implement our supported management service.

At D2 we pride ourselves on being adaptive, proactive, caring and professional. We've been pioneering the way temporary accommodation should be run since 2017, this is why currently 10 Welsh local authorities utilise, respect and value the service we provide.



Example of one of our 5-bedroom temporary accommodation properties



Issues faced by local authorities

Cost

Issue

The costs of temporary accommodation can quickly spiral out of control, the most commonly-faced problem being the high cost and fluctuation of local B&B pricing.

Solution

D2's solution is fixed nightly rates, unlike bed and breakfasts and hotels, our rates remain the same regardless.

Our residents are also secure in residency regardless of social or seasonal events.

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Suitability

Issue

Bed and breakfast is no way suitable as temporary accommodation for anyone, especially families, mainly due to the distinct lack of services, facilities and safety.

This is commonly highlighted in the media and local and central government.

Solution

D2 provide "homes" specifically furnished and equipped to ensure our residents are as comfortable as possible during their stay, no matter the length of time.

Maintenance & Management

Issue

Common issues reported in other types of accommodation are ignored for long periods of time, often until the problem worsens.

Solution

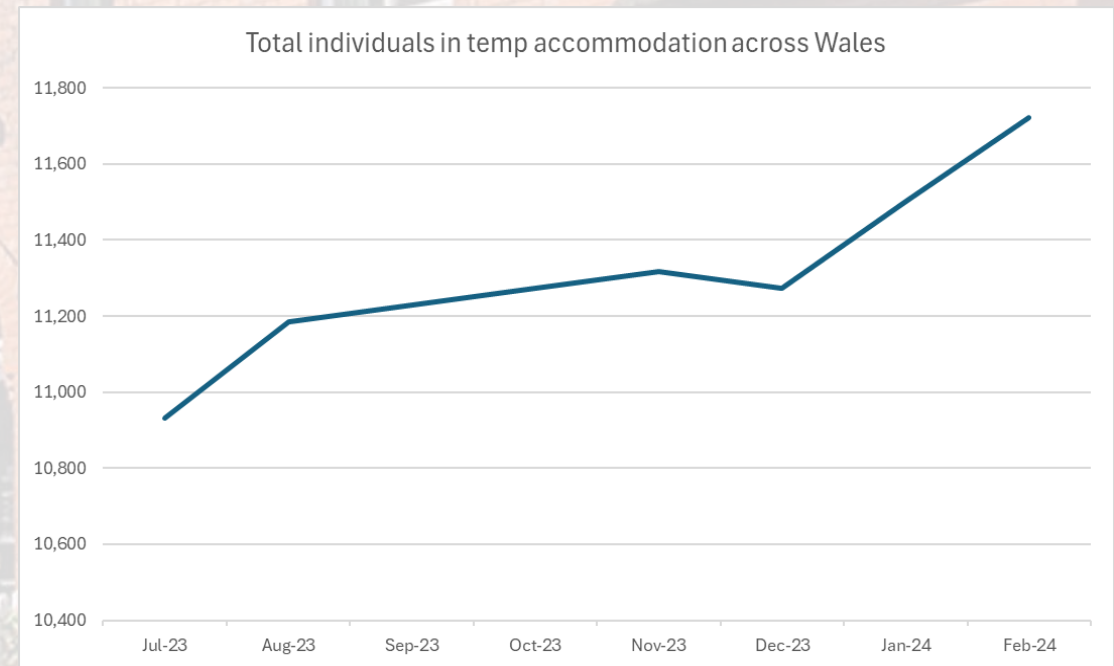
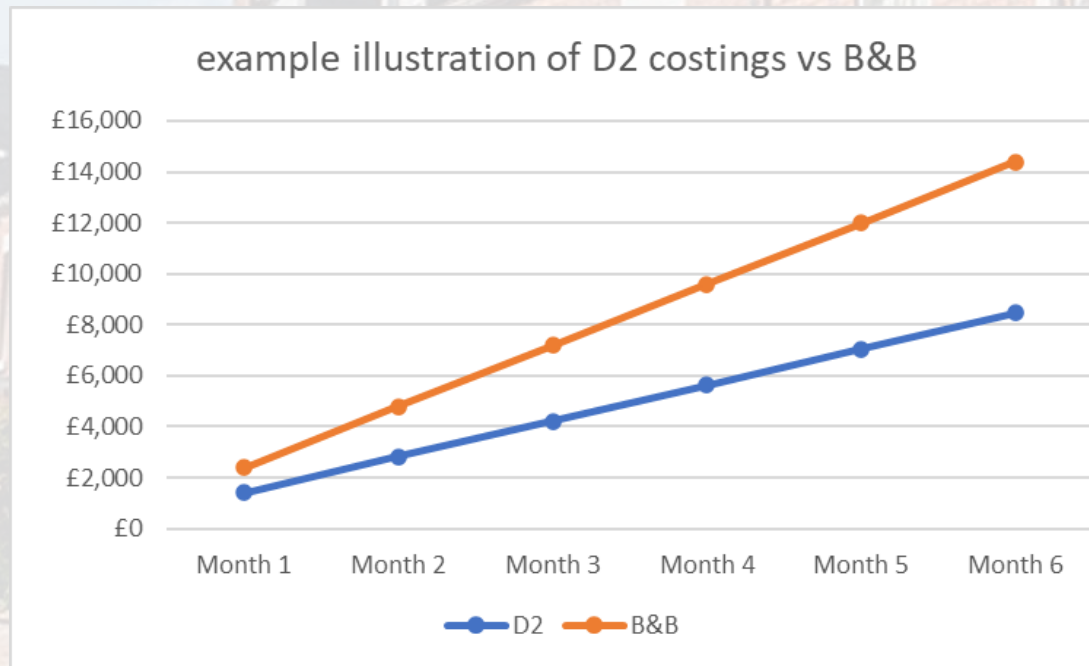
D2 employ full time property managers and a maintenance team.

We aim to rectify issues within 24 hours, or faster if an emergency repair was needed.



Cost savings

- The average length of occupancy for D2 across the 10 authorities we currently support, for single adults is 20 weeks.
- With an approximate average cost of B&B's being **£80.00** a night, that's **£11,200** per individual.
- With D2 having an average price per night of **£47.00**, that's already a saving of **£4,620 per person** over a 20 week stay, with of course all the other benefits we offer over the alternatives.



Benefits and Testimonial

	D2	B&B & Hotel
Daily property Inspections & tenant welfare checks	✓	✗
Full time property maintenance team	✓	✗
Cost effective & fixed price	✓	✗
24 hour on call trained staff	✓	✗
Emailed daily reports for local authority	✓	✗
Local authority references	✓	✗
Weekly food packs	✓	✗

"Torfaen County Borough Council has been working with D2 for some years now in delivering shared accommodation for the purposes for temporary accommodation under the Housing Wales Act 2014. We have a number of properties with them, all of which are maintained to a high standard, the team are very professional and support residents throughout their stay. The work we do with D2 is a true representation of partnership working."

Lesley Groves

Housing Strategy Manager, Torfaen Council



***D2 service model covers 4 service users – Singles, Male & Female houses, Families (2-8 family members), UASC (18+ move on and 16+ supported living)**





House managers



Maintenance team



Example property



Example property



Appendix 2: D2 PropCo Vfm

Purchasing Enhanced Temporary Housing On Block Booking Arrangement

OVERVIEW

We are currently in discussions with a company based in South Wales but looking to work in North Wales. The company delivers temporary accommodation services for 11 Welsh LAs already.

The model is an intensive housing solution for homeless people and households and offers a 24/7 management and support service.

Contract and procurement advice is being undertaken for a 5 year contract period and due diligence has proven that the company and service comes highly recommended by Welsh Council peers.

The company buy up and refurbish properties and will target areas at request and also focus on long term empty homes to bring them back into use.

There are approx 100 households placed in out of county hotels and the focus of this housing solution will be on bringing people back in county

	Year 1	Inflation estimate	Year 2	Inflation estimate	Year 3	Inflation estimate	Year 4	Inflation estimate	Year 5	Over 5 year lease
40 X Single bed accommodation										
Annual Charge - £50 pn x 40 Single units	730,000	3.0%	751,900	3.0%	774,457	3.0%	797,691	3.0%	821,621	3,875,669
Annual Charge - £100 pn x 5 x 2 bed House	182,500	3.0%	187,975	3.0%	193,614	3.0%	199,423	3.0%	205,405	968,917
Annual Charge - £100 pn x 3 x 3 bed House	109,500	3.0%	112,785	3.0%	116,169	3.0%	119,654	3.0%	123,243	581,350
Annual Charge - £100 pn x 2 x 4 bed House	73,000	3.0%	75,190	3.0%	77,446	3.0%	79,769	3.0%	82,162	387,567
	1,095,000		1,127,850		1,161,686		1,196,536		1,232,432	5,813,504
HB Income - Assumed 70% collection rate	- 120,816		- 120,816		- 120,816		- 120,816		- 120,816	- 604,080
Net Cost to FCC	974,184		1,007,034		1,040,869		1,075,720		1,111,616	5,209,424
Op and B cost (assumed single rate of £90 pn, family rate of £140 pn)	1,825,000	5.0%	1,916,250	5.0%	2,012,063	5.0%	2,112,666	5.0%	2,218,299	10,084,277
Potential Saving to Council	- 850,816		- 909,216		- 971,193		- 1,036,946		- 1,106,683	- 4,874,853

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**Communities and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Voids Management Update
Reporting period: Oct 2024**

Key figures			M	J	J	A	S	O
Number of new void properties in reporting period			39	37	39	36	33	33
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			48	46	44	43	41	64
Number of lettings			28	40	37	42	43	52
Total voids			206	197	192	188	180	149
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	138	140	150	138	124	95
		Minor voids	48	35	26	17	30	40
		TBC	20	22	16	33	26	14
	Housing Management	High Demand	191	174	171	169	160	128
		In Progress	1	1	0	0	0	0
		Low Demand	14	22	21	19	20	21
Property Type	General Needs		96	97	98	97	76	76
	Sheltered		110	100	94	91	104	73
Property Type	1 bed		80	63	61	55	50	48
	2 bed		65	68	69	75	72	56
	3 bed		57	60	57	57	54	44
	4 bed		2	4	4	4	3	1
	4 bed plus		2	2	1	1	1	0
Capital District Areas	Buckley		21	17	18	19	18	17
	C'Quay & Shotton		29	31	29	27	28	24
	Deeside & Saltney		30	27	25	23	23	22
	Flint		59	54	55	54	51	33
	Holywell		43	40	36	37	38	33
	Mold		24	28	29	28	22	20

Additional information

Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Top reasons for terminations:

- **Oct**
 - *Deceased (13)*
 - *Residential Care (8)*
 - *Moved to alternative accommodation (6)*

Work Allocation

Total number of voids being worked upon - 112

Low Demand assets

- **Bolingbroke Heights 2-Bed**
- **Castle Heights 2-Bed**
- **Richard Heights 2-Bed**

Reasons – Due to desirability concerns relating to the communal areas and open spaces, along with the existing service offer. Also relating to the bedroom tax applied to those persons under the age of 66.

- **Llwyn Aled**
- **Llwyn Beuno**

Reasons – Due to access and egress issues. Existing tenants (contract holders) along with any applicants who have refused an allocation offer, have expressed difficulties and or concerns with regards to the number of steps/ internal staircases.

- **Knights Green**

Reasons – Due to access and egress issues. Existing tenants (contract holders) along with any applicants who have refused an allocation offer, have expressed difficulties and or concerns with regards to the number of steps/ internal staircases.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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