

Public Document Pack

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To: Cllr Marion Bateman (Chair)

Councillors: Pam Banks, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Rosetta Dolphin,
Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, Ted Palmer, Kevin Rush
and Dale Selvester

11 July 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 17TH JULY, 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 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (Pages 3 - 12)

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.

4 SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW UPDATE (Pages 13 - 24)

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

Purpose: To provide the Committee with an update on the Sheltered Housing Review.

5 TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY (Pages 25 - 44)

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

Purpose: To consider the Tenant Involvement Strategy.

6 VOID MANAGEMENT (Pages 45 - 46)

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

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

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

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 th July, 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
<p>Wednesday 11th September, 2024</p> <p>10am</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 7</p>	<p>NEW Homes review</p> <p>Housing Rent Income</p> <p>Welfare Reform Update</p> <p>Annual Performance Report 2023/24 to incorporate the Council Plan End of Year Performance Report 2023/24</p>	<p>To outline the outcome of the NEW Homes review.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>To provide an update on the impacts of welfare reforms and the work that is ongoing to mitigate them.</p> <p>To consider the Annual Performance Report 2023-24, noting the Council Plan (2023-28) end of year performance for 2023-24.</p>	<p>Consultation</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p> <p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Strategic Housing & Program Delivery Manager</p> <p>Service Manager - Revenues and Procurement</p> <p>Service Manager (Housing Welfare and Communities)</p> <p>Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)</p>
<p>Wednesday 9th October, 2024</p> <p>10am</p>				

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

<p>Wednesday 13th November, 2024</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 11th December, 2024</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 15th January, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 12th February, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 12th March, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				
<p>Wednesday 9th April, 2025</p> <p>10am</p>				

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Wednesday 7th May, 2025 10am				
Wednesday 11th June, 2025 10am				
Wednesday 9th July, 2025 10am				

Items to be scheduled

- **Food Poverty Update** – moved from 17th May meeting to be scheduled to a new date.
- **Rent Income Pilot Scheme** – As suggested at 12.07.23 meeting
- **De-carbonisation Strategy** – Workshop for Members as discussed at 12.07.2023 meeting

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 – September Page 10	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
10.01.2024	Minutes <u>15.11.2023</u>	Following a query from Cllr Rosetta Dolphin, it was agreed that a copy of the outcome of the garage site review by ward be circulated to Members of the Committee within the next month.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton	Programme currently being reformatted into a readable document.	August 2024
10.01.2024	6. Car Parking Provision – Council Owned Properties	Following questions around future schemes, it was agreed that information on the priority of schemes be shared with Members of the Committee.	Sean O'Donnell / Ceri Shotton	Programme currently being reformatted into a readable document.	August 2024
10.01.2024	8. Cost of Living and Welfare Reform	Following a request that the information contained within the report be circulated to all Members for information, it was suggested that an information flyer be produced and circulated to all Members of the Council.	Jen Griffiths / Ceri Shotton	This will be sent with the next report which is scheduled for September	September 2024
06.03.2024	6. Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) – Update	In response to a question from Cllr Linda Thew around contract costs, Sean O'Donnell said that the contract costs were provided in a previous report to the Committee but that he would extract and share with the Committee this information following the meeting.	Sean O'Donnell	DRS System implementation costs including all software and licences totals £396k for 5 years. Information shared with Cllr Linda Thew via e-mail on 09.07.2024	Completed

ACTION TRACKING

APPENDIX 2

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	Still currently in the pilot phase. All Areas have only just been opened. Further testing still required.	Possibly November 2024
12.06.2024	9. Housing Strategy Action Plan Performance Update	Cllr Helen Brown asked if a briefing note on the risks going forward could be circulated to Members of the Committee ahead of the Housing Strategy workshops. Paul Calland agreed to provide a briefing note.	Paul Calland	Information to be circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting on 17.07.2024	On-going



COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 th July, 2024
Report Subject	Sheltered Housing Review Update Report
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing stock consists of circa 7,300 properties with approximately 2,500 of those being classified and designated as sheltered stock.

The average age of the Council's housing stock is considered to be some of the oldest in the United Kingdom and they are also considerably older than many nearby local register social landlord's stock.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) are increasing alongside Welsh Government's ambitious aims in relation to decarbonisation. This means that we need to ensure:

- sheltered properties continue to meet our tenant's needs.
- identify and plan for the costs associated with investment and future maintenance.
- appropriately allocate future expenditure.

This report provides an update on the progress of the sheltered housing review which adopts a holistic approach to the sustainability of the sheltered housing stock and is designed to review each scheme from:

- An asset management perspective - to identify the current and future investment needs of each scheme, WHQS works, de-carbonisation and compliance considerations;
- A housing management perspective - to address any demand / turnover and desirability issues and to determine the sustainability of each scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To note the progress of the Sheltered Housing Review.
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REPORT DETAIL

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW
1.01	<p>The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing stock consists of circa 7,300 properties with approximately 2,500 of those being classed as sheltered stock.</p> <p>The average age of the Council's housing stock is considered to be some of the oldest in the United Kingdom and they are also considerably older than many nearby local registered social landlord's stock.</p>
1.02	<p>The Welsh Housing Quality Standards are increasing alongside Welsh Government's ambitious aims in relation to decarbonisation. This means that we need to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sheltered properties continue to meet the needs of our tenants. • identify and plan for the costs associated with investment and future maintenance. • appropriately allocate future expenditure
1.03	<p>The review adopts a holistic approach to the sustainability of the sheltered housing stock and is designed to review each scheme from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An asset management perspective - to identify the current and future investment needs of each scheme, WHQS works, de-carbonisation and compliance considerations. • A housing management perspective - to address any demand/turnover and desirability issues and to determine the sustainability of each scheme.
1.04	<p>Each scheme will be assessed against an approved sustainability matrix which will result in it being awarded one of 4 possible recommendations:</p> <p><u>Option 1</u> – Scheme is sustainable with no recommended changes.</p> <p><u>Option 2</u> – Refurbishment / regeneration – scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, additional works required to make the scheme more attractive to existing and future tenants.</p> <p><u>Option 3</u> – Redesignation - scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, may benefit from re-designation to a more sustainable client group.</p> <p><u>Option 4</u> - Demolition / re-development – scheme potentially requires significant intervention to address more fundamental demand / sustainability issues and not be able to achieve compliance and therefore</p>

	<p>considered for demolition / re-development. A full options appraisal will be undertaken to explore all options and associated costs.</p> <p>It is important for the Council to ensure that its offer to sheltered housing tenants and prospective tenants is attractive, competitive and meets current expectations and aspirations.</p>
1.05	This approach was endorsed following a Member Task and Finish Group at the end of 2023.
Progress to date	
1.06	<p>There are 142 schemes in Flintshire which provides a total of 2,641 units of accommodation. The schemes are categorised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64 sheltered schemes (2,107 units) • 78 mini group schemes (534 units) <p>A thorough desktop and kerbside review has been carried out over the last couple of months which has provided more detailed information in relation to the location and layout of our schemes.</p>
1.07	<p>From this information, we have been able to break this down into several workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale asset review – where the concerns from an asset perspective are largely known. • Schemes to be considered for redesignation – mini group to sheltered. • Schemes to be considered for redesignation – sheltered to general needs. • Schemes to be considered for redesignation – sheltered to general needs with an accessible attribute. • Flint Heights • All remaining schemes <p>Each workstream will be assessed using the asset and housing management matrix and the process for review will follow the agreed communication plan.</p>
1.08	The action plans and outcomes from the work streams will have varying timeframes and associated costs, which is why we need to work the review in a controlled and organised way.
1.09	<p>We will complete the reviews for all schemes by the end of March 2026. However, as the outcomes of each review will vary in terms of the range and scale of work required, the time frame for the overall completion of any actions or works identified will be proportionate to this.</p> <p>For example, the works to complete the actions required for the large scale asset reviews could take many years.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The actions identified as a result of scheme reviews shall ensure that the housing stock is utilised most effectively and is sustainable over the longer term.</p> <p>No decant costs have been accounted for as the scheme re-designation proposals shall be delivered through letting void properties to general needs applicants rather than decanting existing tenants.</p> <p>The options appraisal process shall involve a detailed technical assessment of schemes and whilst most of this work can be conducted in house there may be a need for some specialist support and input when assessing potential for scheme reconfiguration or new build options.</p> <p>The decision to redesignate schemes or undertake options appraisals shall necessitate a significant investment in staff time particularly from the housing management service which shall lead on any decant process which can be intensive, challenging, and sensitive work. Any decision to de-commission schemes shall present a significant challenge to the housing asset service to ensure the scheme remains safe and secure throughout the decanting process.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There is a significant risk that a small number of sheltered housing schemes will become increasingly difficult to let as a result of changes in aspirations and expectations. Furthermore, it is essential that a strategic review of the future investment and compliance costs for sheltered schemes is undertaken to ensure that all stock can meet safety and compliance standards and de-carbonisation requirements.</p> <p>The review that has been undertaken to date provides the Council with up-to-date intelligence and insight regarding the performance of the sheltered housing stock and has identified a small number of schemes further appraisal or intervention may be required.</p> <p>It should be noted that where schemes are re-designated from sheltered housing to general needs accommodation there is a risk that those properties may become eligible for the right to buy should the current restrictions on buying Council housing be lifted. There are no signs that Welsh Government is considering lifting the restriction on the right to buy and should it do so then the Council should be consulted and may wish to discuss the potential for re-designated stock to be exempt from such proposals.</p>
3.02	Integrated impact assessments will be carried out as part of each scheme review.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	The approved communications plan includes the consultation process. Consultation will be an ongoing on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Communication and Engagement Plan.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	N/A

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officers: Jen Griffiths, Service Manager, Housing Welfare and Communities Telephone: 01352 702929 E-mail: Jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Capital Programme: The Council’s financial plan covering capital schemes and expenditure proposals for the current year and a number of future years. It also includes estimates of the capital resources available to finance the programme.</p> <p>The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS): is a national standard of quality for homes. This is set by the Welsh Government. It means that all tenants in Wales should have the opportunity to live in good quality homes which meet the requirements of that household.</p> <p>Energy Performance Certificate (EPC): utilised to measure an assets energy performance in terms of energy used and thermal retention.</p> <p>Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP): A SAP rating is the calculation that is required in order to produce a Predicted Energy Assessment.</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>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>HRA: The Housing Revenue Account is a ring fenced account derived from rental income and in the main, Welsh Government funding.</p>

Components: A part or element such as an assets amenities (Kitchen Bathroom, Boiler, Roof, Windows, Doors etc.)

Sheltered Stock: Housing for tenants aged 55 and over who may or may not have support needs.

General Needs: Housing for tenants which applies to general family housing and dwellings for singles and couples who may or may not have support needs.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB): Antisocial behaviour is defined as behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person.

Scheme Re-designation/classification – changing the eligibility criteria for a scheme so that it can accommodate a different client group than that for which the scheme was originally developed.

Sheltered Housing Review

Communications & Engagement Plan

Where a sheltered scheme is identified for review via the agreed matrix and methodology, it will be recommended for either:

- Refurbishment / regeneration – Scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, additional works required to make the scheme more attractive to existing and future tenants.
- Redesignation - Scheme has some issues requiring intervention – for example, may benefit from re-designation to a more sustainable client group.
- Demolition / re-development – Scheme potentially requires significant intervention to address more fundamental demand / sustainability issues and not be able to achieve compliance and therefore considered for demolition / re-development. A full options appraisal will be undertaken to explore all options and associated costs.

It is vital to communicate across all stakeholders effectively.

Contract Holders in particular must be fully engaged through the process as we recognise the potential sensitivities and strong emotions that may be provoked when looking to address changes to homes and indeed those communities.

If involvement and consultation is effective, Contract Holders will need to be kept fully informed, feel they have participated, contributed, and been listened to. As we know it is not always possible to provide exactly the solution Contract Holders want but we should listen to and consider their views. It is then vital that Contract Holders know and understand how the final decision was reached.

We are fully committed to the following:

- Identify stakeholders for each scheme – this will always include Contract Holders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration and local members associated with the scheme.
- Honesty and openness – where changes are necessary set this out from the start and be clear about what Contract Holders and stakeholders can, and cannot, influence.
- Share new information with stakeholders as soon as possible.
- Adopt and tailor a range of methods of communication, engagement and consultation as appropriate to each project and scheme.
- Engage Contract Holders where possible on finding innovative or creative solutions.
- Ensure Contract Holders are central to the review of their scheme from the start and not ignore their fears.
- Work with Contract Holders to build confidence and trust.
- Identify a key single point of contact throughout the process to ensure continuity.

- Review processes and effectiveness of methodology on a regular basis to ensure it is effective and meeting the needs of the relevant stakeholders.

DRAFT

Scheme Identified

- Type of project identified as either refurbishment, demolition or redesignation.
- Identify our stakeholders for the project - Contract Holders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration, Local Members, staff and any others e.g. family members, other building users as appropriate
- Single point of contact member of staff identified
- Type of communication identified for information and consultation depending on scheme outcome to be implemented along with required timescales
- All information will be provided via written communication in letters, newsletters, surveys etc.
- Face to face meetings, drop-in session and consultation sessions will be held on site where appropriate or in the vicinity of the scheme so all Contract Holders may attend if they so wish. Prior notice will be provided

Review of Consultation Response

- Upon completion of any consultation activity a review of the findings will be undertaken
- Proposals will be updated/amended as necessary (and where required will be sent for formal approval)
- Final plans presented to stakeholders. This will be done by written communication to all Contract Holders in the first instance giving details of next steps, timeframe and their consultation responses

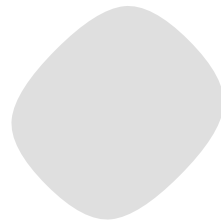
Implementation Project Plan

- Once project is due to commence stakeholders will be given sufficient notice and information by written communication.
- Depending on the type of scheme identified, this may include details of the contractor, timeframes for any work, where they can access further support and any other key contacts they may require
- Information sessions may be held either on the scheme or in the vicinity for tenants to ask any questions they may have or to view any plans
- If refurbishment - regular newsletters will be produced with updates on the work being undertaken
- For all types of project (depending on complexity of refurb) it may be necessary to refer to the decant policy and work with contract holders to ensure smooth transition

- Upon project completion, all Contract Holders will be asked to provide feedback via a survey on their experiences of the project overall and communications they will have received
- Final communications will be sent with confirmation, feedback on the survey and information on final outcomes

- All feedback will be reviewed and lessons learnt identified and communicated to relevant stakeholders

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COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 th July, 2024
Report Subject	Tenant Involvement Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council's Housing Service is responsible for over 7,300 homes across the county comprising of general needs and sheltered accommodation. To support the management of those homes it is important to us that our customers are given the opportunity to share their experiences of those services.

The former Tenant Engagement Strategy expired in 2021 and we have been operating an interim strategy whilst the new draft was being developed and the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) was concluded. The new draft strategy sets out our commitment to tenant engagement and highlights what work is needed to improve our current position.

Further work has been carried out to develop and finalise the full strategy and this report outlines the main details.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To support and approve the Tenant Involvement Strategy.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE STRATEGY
1.01	Flintshire County Council's Housing Service is responsible for approximately 7,300 homes across the county comprising of general needs and sheltered accommodation. To support the management of those homes it is important to us that our customers are given the opportunity to share their experiences of those services through a variety of ways.

1.02	The former Tenant Engagement Strategy expired in 2021 and we have been operating an interim strategy whilst the new draft was being developed and the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) was concluded.
1.03	The new Tenant Involvement Strategy sets out our commitment to tenant engagement and highlights what work is needed to improve our current position.
1.04	In bringing together the strategy and associated action plan the views of our residents have been gathered through active engagement, including full census STAR survey which was completed in 2022.
TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2024 – 2027 (appendix 1)	
1.05	The Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024 – 2027 strategy details our commitment to develop and improve customer involvement throughout the services the Housing and Communities portfolio offers.
1.06	<p>We know we can do much more to involve and engage with our tenants and now is the right time to move forward with these plans.</p> <p>We will embrace new ways of working such as the opportunities presented by the increased use of digital technologies and explore new methods of engagement; whilst also continuing to engage in more traditional ways.</p> <p>There are many ways to communicate with our customers and these need to be expanded to offer a wider reach for our customers so that they reflect the views of our diverse range of tenants.</p>
1.07	Tenant involvement is about tenants and housing staff working together to share information and ideas to improve the quality of housing services we provide. It enables tenants to be able to influence decisions about areas of work such as housing policies, housing conditions and housing services. We recognise that listening to and involving our tenants is an essential part of improving our services.
1.08	<p>Meaningful involvement can benefit tenants and the landlord and is key for shaping services for the better. There are many proven benefits which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing the Council’s accountability to its customers • improved outcomes for our tenants with the chance to influence services • creating services that better meet tenants’ needs • increased tenant satisfaction • improved communications • becoming more aware of each other’s perspectives and organisational and financial limitations • creating a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between the Council and its tenants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing opportunities for tenants to increase self-confidence and skills.
What we want to achieve and how we will achieve this	
1.09	The overall aim of our Tenant Involvement Strategy is to ensure we have in place robust involvement opportunities, developed with our tenants, to ensure we are providing a quality housing service that meets their needs and the needs of the community.
1.10	We recognise that listening to and involving our customers is an essential part of improving our services. Tenant involvement is about tenants and housing staff working together to share information and ideas to improve the quality of services we provide. It enables tenants to be able to influence decisions about areas of work such as housing policies, housing conditions and housing services.
1.11	<p>A set of key objectives have been identified so that we can deliver the strategy aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and provide a range of involvement opportunities for our tenants. • Ensure our tenants are at the heart of driving service improvements and can work with us to shape our services. • Improve and extend communication methods to ensure tenants are informed and engaged. • Improve skills and confidence of our tenants so they feel able to participate in a meaningful way that meets their needs. • Increase participation of our tenants in issues affecting their local community to see positive changes to our estates and communities. <p>This is supported by the action plan (appendix 2) which has key deliverables and timescales for action.</p>
Barriers to getting involved	
1.12	<p>We recognise there are also barriers which prevent tenants getting involved which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of training and confidence • Understanding of what it means • Lack of awareness of opportunities • Time constraints • Travel, carer and other costs
1.13	<p>The strategy sets out our commitment to offering practical solutions to make it a more viable option for as many tenants as possible. These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing training and support to those who are committed. • Providing information in various formats. • Covering transport and associated costs where appropriate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging meetings at times and locations most accessible to tenants. • Making use of digital methods so that people can engage from home at a time and pace that suits them. • Offering a wide range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles.
	Next Steps
1.14	<p>We will offer a wide range of activities and ways in which people can get involved at various levels of commitment.</p> <p>We recognise that different people have different levels of interest and time to commit but also may prefer a different method of communicating and engaging with us.</p>
1.15	<p>Whilst meetings and tenant groups are an important and integral way to engage with our tenants, we also want to attract a newer and broader audience to get involved. This will help us to ensure we are creating a range of ways to gather and consider opinion of a good and fair representation of our tenant base.</p>
1.16	<p>The results of the STAR survey and other consultation work we have been doing (including Renting Homes Wales and rent setting) have enabled us to establish a much broader core base of tenants who we can formally consult with on such matters.</p> <p>In addition, we have supported a range of tenant groups to establish and thrive within our communities.</p> <p>This provides a much firmer foundation from which we can grow to ensure our tenants have their say and engage with us to inform our plans longer term.</p>
1.17	<p>It is important to ensure active engagement with the workforce to get their views on how tenant involvement can help them to improve the work they do and implement positive changes to our service delivery.</p> <p>We want to ensure all areas of the service are aware of the benefits of involving tenants and that they make efforts to ensure it becomes embedded as a way of working.</p>
1.18	<p>The opinions and views of Elected Members, internal colleagues and partner organisations is of great value and is a key element of this work.</p> <p>We are committed to work together, where appropriate, to strive for our tenants to be more engaged in services and our communities to be sustainable and vibrant places to live.</p>
	How we will monitor & review
1.19	<p>Following the STAR survey in 2022 we have established a steering group of officers and formulated three specific work streams to deliver on identified action plans.</p>

1.20	Our intention through the tenant involvement action plan is to replicate these workstreams with tenants and create an environment to ensure that there is communication and consultation on an ongoing basis.
1.21	Regular updates will be provided to all of our tenants. This will start with our the provision of an update on the action taken to address the feedback from the 2022 full census survey. This will also provide an opportunity to highlight the work the tenant workstreams are involved in and to encourage participation.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT																								
3.01	<p>Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers</p> <p><i>Approval of our involvement strategy 2024-27 along with our Action plan for 2024/25. We aim through our strategy to create a positive impact on our housing communities and an increase in engagement with and from our tenants across all service areas. This will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate for the needs of those communities.</i></p> <p>Date assessment completed: 11/06/2024</p> <p>Impacts Questionnaire</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Impact Indicator</th> <th>Result</th> <th>Justification/Mitigation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Equality and Welsh Language</td> <td>G</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Health</td> <td>G</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilience and Adaptation</td> <td>G</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Economy</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mobility and Connectivity</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carbon, Nature and Environment</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	Equality and Welsh Language	G		Health	G		Resilience and Adaptation	G		Housing			Economy			Mobility and Connectivity			Carbon, Nature and Environment		
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Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving your local authority's Net Zero target		
Legend:	G	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.
	A	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.
	R	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
	RR	Negative impacts overall.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	In bringing together the strategy and the associated action plan, the views of our residents from the census STAR survey completed in 2022 have been taken into consideration.
4.02	The draft strategy was presented to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny in December 2023.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Tenant Involvement Strategy Appendix 2 - Tenant Involvement Action Plan

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICERS DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officers: Jen Griffiths, Service Manager, Housing Welfare and Communities Telephone: 01352 702929 E-mail: Jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Information</p> <p>When we talk about information we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Informing tenants and other customers about the services that are available. ➤ Informing tenants and other customers about the various options that are available as a part of the consultation process. ➤ Information is essential for consultation to be effective.
8.02	<p>Consultation</p> <p>When we talk about consultation we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seeking our tenants' and other customers' views about our proposals to improve services. We will listen to your views and then make a decision. ➤ We will consider these views alongside other factors such as budget restrictions or legal obligations. ➤ However, if we are unable to use your ideas, we will explain why. Consultation is essential for participation to be effective.
8.03	<p>Participation</p> <p>When we talk about participation we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Involving our tenants and other customers in decisions about their homes and communities, alongside elected members and managers within the Housing Service.
8.04	<p>Monitoring and Review</p> <p>When we talk about monitoring and review, we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Asking tenants and other customers about the quality of the services they receive. ➤ Reviewing those services with the assistance of tenants and other customers to make improvements. ➤ The information received through monitoring and reviewing services, with tenants and other customers, provides important evidence in planning future service improvements.
8.05	<p>Working Together</p> <p>When we talk about working together, we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interacting with our tenants and other customers in a creative and energetic atmosphere, to share and build on each-others' ideas and to develop new or enhanced ways of working. ➤ Working together is the highest and most productive way of involving our tenants and other customers. ➤ By working together we are able to share ownership not only of the problem, but the solution. ➤ By working together we are able to create a true sense of partnership and of moving forward together.

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Flintshire County Council Housing Services

Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024 - 2027

Version	Version 0.3
Author	Sarah Mylchreest, Customer Involvement Officer
Date	April 2024

Introduction

Welcome to our Involvement Strategy.

Flintshire County Council's Housing and Communities Portfolio is responsible for approximately 7300 homes across the county comprising of general needs and sheltered accommodation. To support the management of those homes it is important to us that our tenants are given the opportunity to share their experiences of those services through a variety of ways.

A full census STAR survey to gauge the view of our tenants on the services provided was undertaken in 2022 and we have made a commitment to undertake such surveys every two years. We are using the results of this to work alongside our tenants to develop our strategy and associated action plans moving forward. The feedback given to us through this extensive piece of work is invaluable and will assist us to improve what we do and make changes in our services. This will ensure that our work will be based on the areas our tenants are telling us we need to improve.

This strategy details our intentions to develop and improve tenant involvement throughout the portfolio. There have been many changes in our department over the last few years. Covid-19 brought challenges and many new ways of working for us all. This was then followed by an extensive work to ensure the correct and full implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act.

We know we can do much more to involve and engage with our tenants and now is the right time to move forward with these plans. We wish to embrace new ways of working such as the opportunities presented by increased use of digital technologies and explore new methods of engagement; understanding and realising that many different opportunities are needed if our services are truly going to reflect the views of our diverse base of tenants.

What is involvement?

Customer involvement is about tenants and housing staff working together to share information and ideas to improve the quality of services we provide. It enables tenants to be able to influence decisions about areas of work such as housing policies, housing conditions and housing services. We recognise that listening to and involving our tenants is an essential part of improving our services.

Meaningful involvement can benefit tenants and the landlord and is key for shaping our services for the better. There are many proven benefits for both parties in working together, these include:

- enhancing the Council's accountability to its tenants.
- improved outcomes for our tenants with the chance to influence services.
- creating services that better meet tenants' needs.
- increased tenant satisfaction.
- improved communications.
- becoming more aware of each other's perspectives and organisational and financial limitations.
- creating a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between the Council and its tenants.
- providing opportunities for tenants to increase self-confidence and skills.

What we want to achieve and how we will achieve this

The overall aim of our Tenant Involvement Strategy is to:

Ensure we have in place robust involvement opportunities, developed with our tenants, to ensure we are providing a quality housing service that meets their needs and the needs of the community.

Our objectives to meet this aim are as follows:

- ***Develop and provide a range of involvement opportunities for our tenants.***
- ***Ensure our tenants are at the heart of driving service improvements and are able to work with us to shape our services.***
- ***Improve and extend communication methods to ensure tenants are informed and engaged.***
- ***Improve skills and confidence of our tenants so they feel able to participate in a meaningful way that meets their needs.***
- ***Increase participation of our tenants in issues affecting their local community to see positive changes to our estates and communities.***

To achieve this there is an action plan which will set out how the involvement service will be delivered. It will include the various activities and tasks that will help us to achieve our key objectives shown above with key timescales and the difference we hope to achieve by undertaking this work.

How can I get involved?

We intend to offer a wide range of activities and ways in which you can get involved at various levels of commitment. It's also about recognising that different people have different levels of interest and time to commit but also may prefer a different method of communicating and engaging with us.

It's not just about meetings and tenants' groups (although these are also important) we want to attract a newer and broader audience to get involved to ensure we are getting the opinion of a good and fair representation of our tenant base. For this we need to look at our digital participation too.

Whatever way you decide to get involved, and however much time you can commit, all views and voices are welcome, and all will help us in developing our services and improving how we work.

We recognise there are also barriers which prevent tenants getting involved including:

- Lack of training and confidence
- Understanding of what it means
- Lack of awareness of opportunities
- Time constraints
- Travel, carer, and such costs

We are therefore committed to offering practical solutions to make it a more viable option for as many tenants as possible. These include but are not limited to:

- Providing training and support to those who are committed.
- Providing information in various formats.
- Covering transport and associated costs where appropriate.
- Arranging meetings at times and locations most accessible to tenants.
- Making use of digital methods so that people can engage from home at a time and pace that suits them.
- Offering a wide range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles.



Lower level in the comfort of your home - for example complete a feedback survey, engage with online content, register with MyAccount



Lower level in your community - for example join a tenants and residents association, attend a drop-in session



Medium level - for example attend a Housing organised meeting or consultation event to have your say, join a focus group, attend some training



Higher level - for example sit on one of our improvement groups, become a tenant inspector

Information

When we talk about information we mean:

- Informing tenants and other customers about the services that are available.
- Informing tenants and other customers about the various options that are available as a part of the consultation process.
- Information is essential for consultation to be effective.

Consultation

When we talk about consultation we mean:

- Seeking our tenants' and other customers' views about our proposals to improve services. We will listen to your views and then make a decision.
- We will consider these views alongside other factors such as budget restrictions or legal obligations.

- However, if we are unable to use your ideas, we will explain why. Consultation is essential for participation to be effective.

Participation

When we talk about participation we mean:

- Involving our tenants and other customers in decisions about their homes and communities, alongside elected members and managers within the Housing Service

Monitoring and Review

When we talk about monitoring and review we mean:

- Asking tenants and other customers about the quality of the services they receive.
- Reviewing those services with the assistance of tenants and other customers to make improvements.
- The information received through monitoring and reviewing services, with tenants and other customers, provides important evidence in planning future service improvements.

Working Together

When we talk about working together we mean:

- Interacting with our tenants and other customers in a creative and energetic atmosphere, to share and build on each-others' ideas and to develop new or enhanced ways of working.
- Working together is the highest and most productive way of involving our tenants and other customers.
- By working together we are able to share ownership not only of the problem, but the solution.
- By working together we are able to create a true sense of partnership and of moving forward together.

Who we will involve & how

It is our intention to work closely with a wide range of our tenants throughout the County to develop our plans. Our tenants are best placed to tell us how they would like to be involved and how frequently. We will be using the results of our STAR survey as well as going out and speaking to tenants such as our Tenants Federation and local residents' groups in order to formulate our plans longer term as they will be continually evolving.

We will engage with other staff across the Housing Service to see how they think tenant involvement can help them to improve the work they do and see positive changes to our service delivery. We want to ensure all areas of the portfolio are aware of the benefits of involving tenants and that they make efforts to ensure it becomes part of the everyday way of working.

We also value the opinions of our partner organisations and internal colleagues and will work with them where appropriate to see our tenants more engaged in services and our communities more sustainable and vibrant places.

How we will monitor and review

Working with our tenants there will be a constant review process in place. We will ensure that the action plan is monitored regularly to ensure we are on track to meet the targets we are setting out in this plan.

Regular updates will be provided to our Tenants Federation and will be reported to our wider tenants as appropriate as new ideas and ways to get involved are developed and available.

Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024 – 2027

Action Plan 2024

Aim – Ensure we have robust involvement opportunities, developed with our tenants, to ensure we are providing a quality housing service that meets their needs and the needs of the community.

Objective 1 - Develop and provide a range of involvement opportunities for our tenants		
Outcomes	Actions	By When
<p>Increase in the number of tenants involved with Housing</p> <p>A more representative body of tenants involved</p>	- Redesign a customer involvement structure that has a range of options for tenants to engage & participate at various levels	December 2024
	- Use the results of the STAR survey and other feedback to inform the redesign	
	- Increase digital methods of engagement	On-going
	- Set up a tenants working group to work with us in developing these ideas	September 2024

Objective 2 – Ensure our tenants are at the heart of driving service improvements and are able to work with us to shape our services

Outcomes	Actions	By When
<p>Increased tenant satisfaction with our services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a range of focus & service groups for tenants to work with us on various service delivery areas i.e. – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building safety • WHQS2 • ASB • Rents • Communications - Establish 3 Tenant Service Improvement Groups which reflect the Staff Service Improvement Groups established to prioritise improvements based on Survey feedback from tenants - Develop methods of capturing tenant feedback on our services at key points in their tenancy i.e. surveys, questionnaires including digital methods - Increase the availability of Housing Officer led drop-in sessions across our communities 	<p>March 2025</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>On-going with various services</p> <p>November 2024</p>

Objective 3 – Improve and extend communication methods to ensure tenants are informed and engaged		
Outcomes	Actions	By When
<p>Increased & improved ways we engage our tenants</p> <p>Tenants feel more engaged & better informed</p>	- Develop a communications plan with a customer communications group	December 2024
	- Customer profiling - Capture data at regular intervals of customer contact	On-going
	- Develop the use of social media to communicate wider with our tenants	November 2024
	- Revamp the information on the FCC website for Housing Tenants creating a Tenants Hub area where information can be shared and updated regularly	January 2025
	- Promote access to “My Account” more widely to increase numbers accessing the service	On-going
	- Introduce regular updates and information sharing with our tenants	On-going

Objective 4 – Improve skills and confidence of our tenants so they feel able to participate in a meaningful way that meets their needs

Outcomes	Actions	By When
Tenants feel more confident engaging with Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a training plan identifying useful courses for tenants at different stages of their involvement i.e. core for all tenants/new tenants & wider courses for those who are more experienced - Cover the cost of 2 x federation members & 2 x non-federation tenants to attend TPAS Annual Conference 	<p>On-going</p> <p>November 2024</p>

Objective 5 - Increase participation of our tenants in issues affecting their local community to see positive changes to our estates and communities

Outcomes	Actions	By When
Increase in tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood	- Work with a range of partners to identify how we could work together	On-going
More sustainable communities with reduced tenancy turnaround	- Promote support available for local groups and projects to develop i.e. the small grants scheme for groups	October 2024
Reduction in ASB issues	- Identify key estates/areas for a pilot scheme to establish a new residents group	February 2025
Increase in residents groups and local activities being established		



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

Key figures			N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
Number of new void properties in reporting period			46	20	39	25	17	38	39	37
Number of properties identified as difficult to let or subject to major capital investment			-	-	-	-	-	25	25	26
Number of properties completed ready for allocation			40	24	33	35	23	44	48	46
Number of allocation offers accepted			40	24	33	31	27	39	41	46
Number of lettings			38	21	34	30	25	31	28	40
Breakdown of total void figures	Housing Assets	Major voids	84	-	90	101	108	125	138	140
		Minor voids	44	-	63	51	54	49	48	35
		TBC	107	-	84	75	59	41	20	22
	Housing Management	High Demand	115	-	134	143	169	180	191	174
		In Progress	90	-	73	57	32	9	1	1
		Low Demand	28	-	30	27	20	26	14	22
		TBC	2	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Property Type	General Needs		117	-	105	103	114	104	96	97
	Sheltered		118	-	132	124	107	111	110	100
Property Type	1 bed		70	-	77	73	79	82	80	63
	2 bed		89	-	95	83	71	67	65	68
	3 bed		69	-	65	65	66	62	57	60
	4 bed		6	-	5	5	4	3	2	4
	4 bed plus		1	-	1	1	1	1	2	2
Capital District Areas	Buckley		27	-	29	27	29	22	21	17
	C'Quay & Shotton		45	-	37	34	31	32	29	31
	Deeside & Saltney		36	-	33	31	29	32	30	27
	Flint		48	-	61	62	61	59	59	54
	Holywell		59	-	56	53	50	44	43	40
	Mold		20	-	21	20	21	26	24	28
Total voids			235	231	237	227	221	215	206	197

Additional information

Provision of other information to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Top reasons for terminations:

- *June*
 - *Deceased (12)*
 - *Residential Care (11)*
 - *Moved to alternative accommodation (4)*

Work Allocation

Total number of voids being worked upon - 154

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.