

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 12 th June 2024
Report Subject	Housing Strategy Action Plan Performance Update
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on delivery of the Housing Strategy Delivery Plan 2019 - 2024 with a particular focus on the financial year 2023/24.

The Housing Strategy has a delivery plan which sets out three strategic priorities and related activity to achieve those priorities:

Priority 1: Increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location.

Priority 2: Provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home.

Priority 3: Improve the quality and sustainability of homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To note the progress on delivery of the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2019 - 2024.
2.	To note the changes outlined in the report to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The alignment of standards and intervention rate for acquisitions under the Social Housing Grant (SHG) with those under the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP). The updated timeframe for renewal of the current Housing Strategy.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE HOUSING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN
1.01	Flintshire's Housing Strategy and Action Plan sets out the vision for how the Council will deliver affordable housing, provide relevant support to partner organisations and ensure it creates sustainable homes.
	The Housing Strategy and Action Plan
1.02	The Housing Strategy identifies three priorities with key areas of activity within each priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1: Increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location. • Priority 2: Provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home. • Priority 3: Improve the quality and sustainability of homes.
	Priority 1
1.03	Priority 1 aims to address the lack of supply of affordable housing to meet demand, which is evident on the common housing register for social housing - Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) and on the Affordable Housing Register – Tai Teg.
1.04	The action plan sets out how we aim to ensure the provision of the right type of homes in the right locations to meet people's needs.
	Priority 2
1.05	Priority 2 aims to ensure we have the right type of housing related support in place to prevent issues that can cause vulnerable people to become homeless.
1.06	The principle of housing related support is to support a person to access, maintain and manage their accommodation by assessing and developing or maintaining the necessary skills and confidence to live as independent a life as possible. The priority will focus on prevention and intervention, and complements the priorities set out in the Regional Homelessness Strategy and Flintshire's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
1.07	Funding is available to support the prevention of homelessness through the Housing Support Grant (HSG) which enables a wide range of additional services and support. HSG does not, however, fund statutory homelessness service delivery.
1.08	Delivery of priority 2 is broader than homelessness and the action plan identifies interventions for different vulnerable groups including people with specialist needs such as those with learning disabilities and older people.

	Priority 3																		
1.09	<p>Priority 3 aims to improve the quality of existing housing stock and develop innovative, energy efficient new stock to contribute towards target of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases by 3% per year as set out in the Climate Change Strategy for Wales Delivery Plan for Emission Reduction.</p> <p>Decarbonisation is an evolving agenda and Welsh Government has revised the Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR 2021) that relates to all new affordable housing, setting out space standards and the aim to progress towards homes being carbon zero.</p>																		
	Planned Development Delivery Programme (PDP)																		
1.10	<p>There have been delays to the delivery of the Planned Development Delivery Programme (PDP). Generic issues around scheme viability remain. As a result, we have seen a significant hiatus in development of new housing across the County. This emanates from the cost-of-living crisis, rising interest rates together with wage and material inflation and delays in material availability.</p> <p>We continue to work closely with our RSL partners to try and mitigate the various challenges which have resulted in delays to schemes. These include the increase in the cost of living which has led to contractors entering administration and withdrawing from contracts due to increased costs and reduced scheme viability.</p> <p>The report advises that completions remain below target in the current year but demonstrates how this will increase in future years as the PDP approved by Welsh Government gears up to deliver around 530 new homes over the next three years (based on PDP for 2023/24).</p> <p>Welsh Government is yet to confirm funding for 2024/25 onwards.</p>																		
1.11	<p>Progress against established measures:</p> <p>Council Stock - 50</p> <p>Schemes have slipped in the programme and are currently at Welsh Government Technical Approval stage before the planning applications can be submitted. We anticipate that 55 units will be on site in the last quarter of 2024/25.</p> <p>Mostyn (30) and homeless provision at Duke Street and Park Lane (6) were technically on site at the start of April 2023 i.e., this financial year and are now included in the number of Council Homes completed figure.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Site</th> <th>LHMA</th> <th>Property type</th> <th>Funding Stream</th> <th>Funds as per PDP</th> <th>Number of units</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Park Lane, Holywell</td> <td>Flint and Coast</td> <td>4 x 1B homeless units</td> <td>SHG</td> <td>PDP 23/24 £338,673</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Duke Street, Flint</td> <td>Flint and Coast</td> <td>2 x 1B homeless units</td> <td>SHG</td> <td>PDP 2023/24 £151,794</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Site	LHMA	Property type	Funding Stream	Funds as per PDP	Number of units	Park Lane, Holywell	Flint and Coast	4 x 1B homeless units	SHG	PDP 23/24 £338,673	4	Duke Street, Flint	Flint and Coast	2 x 1B homeless units	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £151,794	2
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Ffordd Hiraethog and Ffordd Pandarus in Mostyn	Flint and Coast	16 x 1B flats, 6 x 2B flats & 8 x 2B houses	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £760,382	30
<u>Sub Total</u>					36
Acquisitions					
5 Oak Tree Close, Shotton	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 2B house		Councils existing resources	1
39 Wern Ucha , Bagillt	Flint and Coast	1 x 3B house	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £129,285	1
5 Larch Avenue Shotton	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 3B House	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £15,9300	1
1 South Bank, Queensferry	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 3B house	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £179 ,950	1
11 Deva Avenue, Connah's Quay	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 2B house	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £133 908	1
1B Cestrian Street, Connah's Quay	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 1B flat	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £59, 737	1
7 Bowlers Court, Mostyn Street Shotton	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 1B flat	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £48, 127	1
35 Bretton Drive Broughton.	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	1 x 2B flat	TACP	TCAP 2023/24 £94, 989	1
39 Ewloe Heath Buckley Ty' Rllwyfen, Buckley	Mold and Buckley	1 x 2B flat	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £109, 434	1
7A & 7B Pierce Street, Queensferry.	Connah's Quay, Broughton and Queensferry	2 x 1B flat	TACP	TACP 2023/24 £103 318	2

50 Meadowbank, Holway, Holywell	Flint and Coast	1 x 2B house	TACP	TACP 2023/24	1
93 & 95 Hawarden Road, Hope	South Boarder	2 x 2B houses	TACP	TACP 2023/24 Acquisition and Construction	2
Sub Total					14
Total					50

Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) Stock – 30

RSLs provided 30 additional new homes including 1 unit to meet specialist provision.

RSL	Site	LHMA	Property type	Funding Stream	Funds as per PDP	No
W&W	61, Powell Road, Buckley	Mold & Buckley	1 x 3B house	TACP	TACP £83,977	1
FCHA	17, Elm Road, Queensferry	Connah's Quay, Broughton & Queensferry	Specialist housing provision 3 bed house	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £297,300	1
Grwp Cynefin	Rhewl Fawr, Penyfford Holywell (phase 3)	Flint & Coast	6 x 2B houses & 2 x 3B houses	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £883,468	8
Grwp Cynefin	Homebuy – 4, Bramley Way, Hawarden	Mold & Buckley	1 x 3B house	RCG	PDP 2023/24 £60,530	1
Grwp Cynefin	Homebuy – 15 Llys Brenig, Ewloe	Mold & Buckley	1 x 3 B house	RCG	PDP 2023/24 £ 86,530	1
Clwyd Alyn	Princess Avenue, Buckley	Mold & Buckley	8 x 1B flats, 2 x 2 B flats & 2 x 3B houses	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £1,238,909	12
Clwyd Alyn	Dee Gardens, Garden City	Garden City	4 x 3B houses & 2 x 4B houses	SHG	PDP 2023/24 £ 1,054,984	6
Total						30

1.12	The action plan is presented annually to Cabinet, Communities and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Housing Association partners via the RSL Strategic Housing Group.
1.13	The PDP process moved to an online portal last year allowing RSLs to add updates and schemes directly onto the system for consideration by the Council's housing strategy team.
1.14	Local authorities were previously allowed to use up to 20% of their SHG budget for acquisitions. As at July 2023 the WG recognised that local authorities might continue to experience difficulties in achieving full spend, so to maximise the number of homes brought forward the limit has been removed.
1.15	Welsh Government has aligned the standards and intervention rate for acquisitions (existing dwellings and off the shelf purchases) under SHG with those from the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP), allowing a greater choice of accommodation options to be delivered at pace.
1.16	<p>TACP funding for 2023/24 was announced in July 2023 with updated criteria and eligibility published. FCC submitted an 'expression of wish' form in August 2023 for schemes that Flintshire County Council (FCC) would like to bring forward for consideration for TACP funding in relation to acquisitions, voids, and large-scale acquisitions for conversion. The WG then requested details of any reserve schemes included on the original expression of wish form in August 2023. On the 20th of December 2023 the WG announced that, subject to Ministerial approval, some additional funding would be available for TACP from January 2024 and that FCC had been allocated an indicative additional sum of £1,082,426.</p> <p>FCC submitted additional schemes and we were successful in our application. In addition to our initial Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) allocation of circa £1.6m we have been able to access additional TACP funding, taking our allocation to circa £3.5m which, with help of our RSL partners, has enabled us to both acquire additional homes and to assist in bringing over 100 void properties back into use.</p>
	RENEWAL OF THE HOUSING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN
1.17	The current Housing Strategy and action plan runs from 2019 until 2024. The section below proposes a timetable to review and refresh the Housing Strategy from 2025 until 2030.
1.18	<p>The current Housing Strategy built on previous achievements but was developed within the context of the then current challenges, such as welfare reform, the increase in 'hidden' homeless and limited resources. The context has changed significantly since 2019 including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK has left the European Union. • War in Ukraine. • Average house prices have risen across Wales from £160k in 2019 to £219k in 2022. • The Covid Pandemic (first reported in December 2019).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflation / CPI 1.4% in 2019, 6.8% last year, and as at March 2004 (for all items) stands at 3.8%. • The pound to the dollar was £1.22 (2019) - £0.79 (2023). • Full implementation of the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 in December 2022. • Significant increase in homelessness. • Local Development Plan (LDP) adopted for FCC.
1.19	<p>The Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) is a key tool in assessing demand for housing locally to inform planning policy and the local housing strategy and is currently in the process of being updated.</p> <p>New guidance and LHMA tool have been introduced by Welsh Government on the development and formatting of these assessments. Arc4 have been commissioned to undertake this study in readiness for submission to Welsh Government in early 2024. A draft has been submitted to the WG with the caveat it is not published as we are currently in the process of clarifying some of the information and outcomes outlined in the draft LHMA. We have some concerns over the results and assumptions that the new tool and guidance has produced. Consequently, this has impacted on the outline timeframe for renewal of the Housing Strategy.</p>
1.20	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>The Housing Strategy is a collaborative document and will involve extensive consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders. Following the template of previous iterations of the strategy, the below sets out an updated outline framework for renewal of the strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Council/Officer workshop - May /June 2024 • Private Rented Sector partners workshop - May/June/July 2024 • RSL partners workshop - May/June/July 2024 • An initial draft strategy document as a basis for formal external consultation for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet - September/October 2024 • Formal Consultation – October to December 2024 • Final Review inclusive of comments received during the consultation period by Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet - December 2024/January 2025. • New plan published - March 2025

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: The Housing Strategy Action Plan is a strategic document, there are no implications for the approved revenue budget for either the current financial year or for future financial years.</p> <p>Capital: The Housing Strategy Action Plan is a strategic document, there are no implications for the approved Capital programme relating to the Strategy or Action Plan other than already approved borrowing by NEW Homes and through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing capacity.</p>

	<p>Human resources: The Housing Strategy team is operating with limited resources. There were some actions within the Action Plan in 2023 that referred to the potential for new posts to be recruited to assist in delivering additional services.</p> <p>A systems analyst and project officer post for property acquisitions has been identified and options are being explored as to how best to recruit to these positions.</p> <p>Challenges relating to the recruitment and retention of staff remain.</p> <p><u>Agency Staff</u> Two Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme Delivery Managers commenced in February and March 2023 and are now embedded into the Team. A Senior Maintenance Surveyor placement continues.</p> <p><u>Apprentices</u> Two apprentices were recruited in September 2023. The graduate trainee is currently working in the development team but will also work across the Housing Asset team.</p> <p>Both apprentices have settled in well.</p>
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The reporting of the Housing Strategy Action Plan is a progress report rather than a new policy therefore an impact assessment is not deemed as necessary.</p>
3.02	<p>An internal Audit was undertaken in 2022/23 – Right Type of Home in the Right Location - Housing and Communities. The final report dated March 2022/23 was rated amber / green; key controls generally operating effectively but with recommendations in relation to some fine tuning which we have implemented including the creation of a risk register.</p> <p>Schemes are appraised on a regular basis to ensure that where possible, risks are identified at an early stage and mitigating actions are taken to ensure the timely delivery of schemes within the PDP.</p> <p>For 2023/24 WG advised that the Flintshire County Council (FCC) SHG allocation was £13,352,142. WG set budgets for the next three years. The allocation for years two and three is also £13,352,142.</p> <p>Over this three-year period Flintshire will be allocated circa £40m, however, it has received applications for SHG schemes in excess of this figure. For example, four ‘reserve’ schemes currently have a total grant requirement of circa £18m with two ‘proposed’ schemes circa £11m. We are in the process of reviewing and prioritising SHG Schemes for 2024/25 onwards.</p> <p>Reserve schemes are those which the Local Authority agrees are strategically important and will be brought into the main programme as</p>

soon as funding is available or scheme deliverability permits. Reserve schemes act as a backup for the SHG programme i.e., they take up slippage within authorities' own programmes or can take up slippage from other Wales authorities so are essential to programme delivery.

Proposed schemes are those which the Local Authority is likely to support or have long lead in times. Local Authorities should be entirely transparent with their RSL partners / LA development teams on the likelihood of potential schemes being supported within the main programme.

In attempting to try and ensure that all viable schemes were included within the PDP some allocated grant funding fell outside the year three funding window. The WG stipulated that the remaining grant figure in year 4 could not exceed our annual allocation of circa £13.3m. This resulted in a review of schemes with four schemes removed - land at Wern Farm, Bagillt (45 units), former Spectrum Garden Centre, Mold Road, Cefn y Bedd (30 units), older persons scheme, Buckley (60 units) and learning disabilities bungalows, Buckley (13 units).

Moreover, increasing costs have led to some RSLs requiring additional funding to ensure the viability of their schemes. Materials, labour shortages of skilled labour and wider economic pressures on contractor mean some have gone into liquidation.

The intention is to negotiate with the RSLs after reviewing all schemes and be in a position, if later in the year WG offers access to 'slippage' funding, to apply for, and allocate, additional funding to viable schemes this financial year.

Key risks have been identified as follows:

Delays to delivery and additional funding requirements

There are some RSLs whom have received considerable sums of grant monies in previous years, but as additional funding has been required due to increased costs and contractors entering administration the schemes have been delayed.

This includes the following schemes:

- Northern Gateway (100 units) and 66a Mold Road, Mynydd Isa (56 units).
- New Inn, Station Road (8 units) and Land at Brunswick Road, Buckley (9 units).

All four are now on site.

The schemes are being closely monitored to ensure delivery.

- 66a Mold Road – The contractor is now on site. This Scheme has been allocated additional SHG funding of £3,562.887 in 23/24. Contract completion date is set for 15th November 2025 however

	<p>there will be a phased handover approach and we anticipate phase one handover to be around January / February 2025, circa 10 units.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Gateway – new contractor on site. This scheme has been allocated additional SHG funding of £ 7,048,883 in 23/24. This will be a phased delivery and we are anticipating circa 15 units at the end of 24/25. Both 66a Mold Road and Northern Gateway are complex sites where piling is required so the RSL is currently adopting a conservative approach as to when the first properties on each site will be completed. • New Inn, Station Road – initial contract was dissolved. Additional funding of £821,000 has been allocated in 2023/24. Completion is anticipated by end of Q2. • Land at Brunswick Road, Buckley - Contractor entered Administration. Additional funding of circa £743,975 has been allocated in 2023/24. Anticipated completion by end of Q3. <p>Concentration of allocated funding to one RSL</p> <p>We are closely monitoring this situation. Concerns have been aired previously with both the WG and the RSL. There is also an over subscription of alternative schemes. After encouraging partners to put forward viable schemes for inclusion in the PDP for 2024/25 there is likely to be an over subscription of alternative schemes which we need to prioritise in consultation with RSL Partners and the WG.</p> <p>Other identified risks</p> <p>Utilising the risk register there are an additional five schemes (pre-construction) which have been rated red. Of these three relate to RSL schemes and two relate to FCC schemes.</p> <p>RSL Schemes - two RSL schemes in Buckley (older persons / elderly care provision and learning disabilities bungalows) have been delayed due to outline planning having only been obtained in February 2024 and were designated as ‘reserve’ schemes.</p> <p>One scheme, Wern Farm, Bagillt, was also designated a ‘reserve’ scheme, as the RSL advised that it may be possible to acquire the site in 24/25 but that may fall into 25/26.</p> <p>Flintshire County Schemes - two FCC Schemes (Canton Depot, Bagillt & High Steet, Connahs Quay (Old Music Shop)) are impacted by the risk of flooding (Tan 15 designation flooding).</p> <p>We do not currently have any schemes on the PDP where they are deemed to be unviable.</p>
3.03	<p>Cost of living pressures, the economic impacts of global shipping disruption and the continuing impacts of the War in Ukraine are continuing to place significant cost and availability pressures placed on labour and materials.</p>
3.04	<p>Environmental impacts of phosphate on drainage systems. As part of the LDP adoption process, the Planning Strategy Team developed a</p>

	Phosphate Mitigation Strategy in collaboration with Wrexham County Borough Council last year.
3.05	<p>There is a continued risk of increased demand on homeless prevention services as termination notices have risen. As of March 2024, there were 282 placements (363 people) accommodated in emergency and temporary accommodation in Flintshire compared to 55 households in February 2021.</p> <p>As a result of rising interest rates and the potential for rates to rise further or stay at this level for longer there is a potential risk of increased demand on homeless prevention services if repossessions start to grow which may also result in increased demand for social and affordable homes.</p>
3.06	The ability to ensure that planned developments meet the standard viability models as required to access funding from the Welsh Government may be compromised.
3.07	The continuing challenging economic situation and the additional costs of borrowing and servicing debt repayments and meeting updated Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) 2023 may impact on RSL's ability to borrow.
3.08	Scheme viability may be impacted by rising costs.
3.09	Reduction in funding to LAs following more than a decade of austerity pre pandemic together with increases in pay and utility bills along with other existing and emerging cost pressures means Flintshire County Council is potentially facing a significant forecasted budget gap.
3.10	<p>The private rented sector continues to be adversely affected by the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 in addition to the above issues leading landlords to exit the market.</p> <p>The Renting Homes Wales Act is also impacting on RSLs and LAs in relation to the definition and circumstances as to when an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) is required.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly FCC Development Team meetings • Quarterly meetings with Welsh Government and RSL colleagues • Quarterly and ad hoc meetings with individual RSLs • Consultation takes place with Members and site visits arranged when appropriate.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 - Housing Strategy Action Plan Progress Report 31st March 2023</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Risk Matrix</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Flintshire Housing Strategy & Action Plan 2019 - 2024 https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Housing/Flintshire-Housing-Strategy-and-Action-plan-2019-2024.pdf</p> <p>Local Development Plan – Flintshire https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Planning/Flintshire-Local-Development-Plan.aspx</p> <p>Flintshire County Council Prospectus Local Authority prospectus (agreed October 2023)</p>
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Marj Cooper, Housing Strategy Manager Telephone: 01352 70 3721 E-mail: marj.cooper@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<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>Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) Policy – the regional common policy for all major social landlords allocating social housing properties across Flintshire.</p> <p>Social Housing Grant – Welsh Government funding that may be available to housing associations and developing Local Authorities. It is to help fund new affordable housing e.g. for social rent. To qualify for grant homes must comply with Welsh Government Development Quality Requirements (WDQR) and standard viability models.</p> <p>Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) - Funding will be available to support Social Landlords on a range of schemes. In summary, the Programme will continue to fund voids and remodelling, demolition and newbuild, and conversion. These scheme types apply to LA/RSL existing stock. TACP will also support MMC, including for ‘meanwhile use’, acquisitions i.e. Existing Dwellings and Off the Shelf purchases as well as ‘acquire to convert’. In some cases, TACP can support the acquisition of tenanted properties from Private Sector Landlords where the tenant will be made homeless.</p>