

CABINET REPORT

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 23 rd 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 considered for demolition / re-development. A full options appraisal will be undertaken to explore all options and associated costs.</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.
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.</p> <p>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:</p> <p>Jen Griffiths, Service Manager, Housing Welfare and Communities</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 702929</p> <p>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>

HRA: The Housing Revenue Account is a ring fenced account derived from rental income and in the main, Welsh Government funding.

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.