

COMMUNITY, HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 4 th November 2020
Report Subject	Sheltered Housing Review Update
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the first stage review of Sheltered Housing which was considered by Cabinet on the 4th February 2019 it is important to move onto the next stage in the review process.

The number of properties classified as Sheltered Housing amounts to 2,633 across the County equating to 36% of the housing stock. Analysis has also identified a series of issues where some of the schemes appeared to be unpopular and as a consequence, had high turnover and void levels.

Whilst the majority of the Councils Sheltered Housing is viable and sustainable it should be noted that there are still some significant issues with specific schemes and / or property types, which result in longer term voids and hard to let properties.

The review provides an ideal opportunity for the Council to provide greater clarity and transparency in relation to our offer to tenants in Sheltered Housing and seeks to make the best use of the Councils available housing assets.

To take this review forward a multi-disciplinary project team has been established led by the Service Manager for Housing Assets. An area based approach is being recommended which recognises that housing markets work on a micro and localised level and that a one size fits all approach would be counterproductive.

The review will entail an assessment of demand, turnover, void levels, investment requirements and a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). For a small number of schemes some investment appraisal modelling shall be undertaken to appraise costs in order to re-develop the site. This is a significant undertaking which may take 18 months to 2 years to fully complete the review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny Members note the work involved in the Sheltered Housing Review stage 2 process and provide any observations or feedback.
2	That regular update reports are provided to the Community Housing and Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and comment.
3	That the paragraphs 1.08 – 1.11 below form the basis of the Terms of Reference for the Stage 2 review

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW
1.01	Scrutiny will already be aware of Stage 1 of the review of Sheltered Housing within the County and some of the challenges being faced by the service in relation to demand, allocations policy and turnover.
1.02	A desk top analysis has been undertaken which identified the number of properties classified as Sheltered Housing amounted to 2,633 properties across the County equating to 36% of the housing stock. The analysis also identified a series of issues where some of the schemes appeared to be unpopular and as a consequence, had high turnover and void levels which were considered excessive.
1.03	Key findings from the data identified that the primary reason behind the stock turn-over (66%) occurs as a result of the tenant's death or their transfer to residential care accommodation. This does not diminish the fact that there are still some significant issues with specific schemes and / or property types, which result in longer term voids and hard to let properties.
1.04	The breakdown of our sheltered accommodation is as outlined below: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flintshire County Council has a total of 2,638 properties which are designated for people over 55 years, which is over a third of all our properties, consisting of:• 2,104 (80%) sheltered bedsits, bungalows, flats and houses;• 534 (20%) mini group bungalows and flats; and• 1 warden bungalow.
1.05	The properties range from 1 bedroom to 4 bedrooms, with some clustered together geographically and others forming part of wider Council housing estate. The Table below provides the breakdown and the proportion of properties by type and size in Flintshire.

Table 1: Breakdown of properties by type and size (Flintshire April 2019)

		1bed	2bed	3bed	4bed
Sheltered	Bedsit	64	0	0	0
	Bungalow	850	515	18	0
	Flat	323	309	1	1
	House	1	2	20	0
Mini Group	Bungalow	299	94	1	0
	Flat	116	23	0	0
Warden	Bungalow	0	1	0	0
	Total	1653	944	40	1

1.06 The majority of the properties are sheltered bungalows and flats with a smaller cohort of mini group bungalows. An initial stage 1 review of Sheltered Housing stock across Flintshire was undertaken in 2019. The review established a baseline using quantitative data to provide a profile of sheltered stock by size, type and location and provided a profile of tenancies including:

- a. profile of current tenancies;
- b. Identify reasons why tenancies ended and establish any patterns;
- c. Void rates - developing detailed understanding of reasons for turnover and identify where there are high void rates.

1.07 The initial review also provided an overview of demand for accommodation for those aged 55 years and over in accordance with the waiting list held by the SARTH project.

1.08 The review augmented the quantitative information with qualitative information from Housing Officers, which considered the following:

- Any obvious issues which are affecting the use i.e. condition, location, reputation;
- What could be done to address these issues; and
- Potential better uses for the properties where there are long standing voids.

1.09 The report concluded with recommendations for a Stage 2 review process which would address the following issues:

- The review of sheltered housing properties to identify the best use of the stock including whether they should be general needs or consider if they could be used to assist with delayed transfer from care / hospital and in doing so reduce costs to the Council.
- Consider whether it would be efficient to invest capital expenditure to make them fit for purpose for the future, for example:
- Installation of Stair Lifts might be a cost effective solution to avoid the need for tenants in upper flats to move to a more accessible property.
- Technology and training to enable internet shopping and other local deliveries, may be useful in supporting those who live in rural areas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether bedsit accommodation can best meet changing housing demand and expectations including the reduced demand from older people for this type of accommodation, and an increasing demand for single person accommodation. Consider demographic data and local housing market assessments to better understand the demand for sheltered housing and to also review transport links and wider sustainability issues which will influence the viability and demand for sheltered housing. 																						
1.10	In addition to the above it is recommended that the stage 2 review should be extended to consider what is the Councils Sheltered Housing “Offer”? This will enable the Council to provide clarity and transparency in relation to its offer to current and future tenants of Sheltered Housing.																						
1.11	Furthermore, as part of the review it is recommended that officers should take the opportunity to consider where appropriate, the potential for alternative uses of the stock and site.																						
1.12	It is therefore recommended that the above aims and objectives stated in points 1.08 – 1.11 above will form the basis of the Terms of Reference for the Stage 2 review.																						
	Taking forward the Stage 2 Review process																						
1.13	The location of the councils sheltered stock is quite evenly spread across the county with two thirds of the stock in the more semi urban areas of Flintshire including the main towns, with the remaining third in the rural communities.																						
1.14	Given the above it is suggested that an area based approach to the review shall be undertaken which prioritises the Sheltered housing stock located within town’s in the first instance given their impact on wider viability, sustainability and regeneration within the county’s urban centres.																						
1.15	The Diagram below provides a broad breakdown of the location of the sheltered properties.																						
1.16	<p>Location of Sheltered stock across Flintshire (April 2019)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Location of Sheltered stock across Flintshire (April 2019)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Location</th> <th>Percentage (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Buckley</td> <td>15.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Connah's Quay</td> <td>10.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flint</td> <td>13.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holywell</td> <td>6.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mold</td> <td>5.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Shotton</td> <td>7.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Broughton / Saltney</td> <td>1.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Garden City / Sealand / Queensferry</td> <td>3.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rural</td> <td>34.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rural</td> <td>3.9</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Location	Percentage (%)	Buckley	15.9	Connah's Quay	10.1	Flint	13.6	Holywell	6.7	Mold	5.6	Shotton	7.5	Broughton / Saltney	1.9	Garden City / Sealand / Queensferry	3.9	Rural	34.7	Rural	3.9
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1.17 When considering the profile of the Councils sheltered housing stock it is evident that Buckley has the highest concentration of stock and in normal circumstances it would be the logical starting point for the stage 2 review process to commence. However, the review commenced in Holywell, which was chosen as the starting point for the stage 2 review as a result of the potentially significant impact of the Plas yr Ywen Extra Care Scheme in the town centre which has been developed by Wales and West Housing Association and which is due to be opened in quarter 4 of 2020. This scheme has the potential to have an imminent and potentially significant impact upon the existing sheltered schemes by de-populating some of the schemes to rehouse residents in the new Extra Care scheme.

1.18 Furthermore, as part of the stage 1 review the Council developed a significant amount of data in relation to the sheltered housing schemes in Holywell and Buckley and it therefore seemed sensible to commence the review in Holywell and then move onto Buckley. The review shall then proceed as outlined below and in accordance with the quantum of sheltered housing within each locality:

Area	Review Priority
Holywell	1
Buckley	2
Flint	3
Connah's Quay	4
Shotton	5
Broughton/Saltney	6
Garden City/Sealand/Queensferry	7
Rural Area's	8

1.19 It is important for the Council to take this review forward in order to make best use of the current housing stock. The sheltered housing stock is large and diverse and requires a bespoke approach which recognises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to each area.

1.20 The review involves an appraisal of options for each Sheltered Scheme. For a relatively small number of schemes some form of intervention may be required through re-designation of eligibility criteria (for example by lowering the threshold for prospective tenants of first floor sheltered accommodation from 55 to 45 or 50 for example), or through targeted capital investment to provide a lift or investment to address scheme specific environmental issues or in a very small number of cases an appraisal regarding clearing the site and providing new accommodation shall be evaluated.

Once, the full review has been completed the recommendations shall be considered further which will then inform the report to Cabinet. Following

	the recommendations agreed by Cabinet, if required to do so Officers shall formulate plans for consultation with tenants, local members and stakeholders. The methodology for the Sheltered Review will be developed and finessed as it proceeds. It is estimated that the review may take up to 2 years to complete for all areas given the potential need for consultation on the review recommendation. The review will seek to provide Members with options for each scheme requiring intervention.
1.21	A project team has been formed to take the review forward which comprises the Housing Strategy Officer, Service Manager Housing Assets, Service Manager Programmes, Housing Manager, Capital Works Team Manager, Housing Register Team Leader and Finance Manager. The Senior Manager (Integrated Services- Lead Adults) from Social Services has also joined the project team to ensure that synergies are developed relating to housing, care and support and a joined up approach is taken forward.
1.22	It is recommended that regular updates are provided as the review progresses.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The review can be undertaken using existing staffing resources and there are no additional resources which are required at this stage. Any resource implications arising from review recommendations will be clearly identified, costed and reported

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The risks associated with this report are deemed to be low. The main risks relate to low demand sheltered housing stock and voids. These issues will be addressed through the review which will ensure that the Council make the best use of its housing stock.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>The initial review is not proposing to undertake any formal/ informal consultations as it shall be undertaken as a desk top exercise which considers demand, turnover and investment requirements.</p> <p>However, once the review has been completed then the way forward can be determined regarding any informal or formal consultation and engagement with residents and stakeholders. Should there be recommendations which necessitate the need for a formal consultation process then this has been built into the timeframe for the review.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - 4 th February 2019 Cabinet Report

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Peter McHugh – Service Manager Housing Assets Telephone: 01352 701658 E-mail: peter.mchugh@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) Policy – the regional common policy for all major social landlords allocating social housing properties.