

**COMMUNITY HOUSING & ASSETS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**16 DECEMBER 2020**

Minutes of the meeting of the Community, Housing & Assets Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Wednesday, 16 December 2020

**PRESENT: Councillor Ian Dunbar (Chairman)**

Councillors: Geoff Collett, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Mared Eastwood, Veronica Gay, Dennis Hutchinson Kevin Rush, Robert Davies, Paul Shotton and Ray Hughes

**APOLOGY:** Councillor Brian Lloyd

**SUBSTITUTE:** Councillor George Hardcastle (for Helen Brown)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillors: Rob Davies, Patrick Heesom and Paul Shotton attended as observers

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Councillor Dave Hughes, Cabinet Member for Housing; Councillor Billy Mullin, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management; Chief Executive; Chief Officer (Housing & Assets), Housing & Assets Senior Manager, Housing Strategy Officer – Housing and Assets, Housing & Prevention Senior Manager, Benefits Manager, Housing Manager and Revenues Manager

Angie Eardley, Community Investment Manager, Wates Construction Limited attended for Minute Number 22

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Community & Education Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Electoral Services Officer

**18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECALRATIONS)**

None

**19. MINUTES**

Councillor George Hardcastle referred to page 10 of the minutes and asked for confirmation that the Tenants Federation would be consulted on the review of sheltered housing stock. The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) explained that the Council would continue to engage with the Tenants Federation.

In response to a question from Councillor Veronica Gay, the Chief Officer commented that officers would work with public protection in identifying any Council Houses of Multiple Occupancy. He then sought clarification on comments made in a previous meeting by Cllr Veronica Gay where she had implied that some Council Houses in Saltney were being used as HMO, Cllr Gay clarified that the previous comment referred to former Council houses.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November, 2020 were moved as a correct record by Councillor Ron Davies and seconded by Councillor Kevin Rush.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**20. EMERGENCY SITUATION BRIEFING (VERBAL)**

The Chief Executive provided a short update on the emergency situation. He explained that Ysbyty Enfys in Deeside would now double up as a mass vaccination centre by the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and added that some 3000 people had already been vaccinated in Flintshire which included care workers. He said that they were currently looking at updating the traffic management around the site in preparation. He also reported that work was being undertaken to identify an additional vaccination site in Mold and commented on the success of the Covid testing walk-in centre at the Civic Hall, Connah's Quay.

The Chief Executive, commented on the First Ministers Coronavirus Alert Level in Wales and added that it was expected to rise to alert level 4 after Christmas. He clarified what services would remain open as normal at level 4, which included Recycling Centres/Household Waste and Parks. An update on schools would be given at a later date.

The Committee thanked the Chief Executive for all the updates.

**RESOLVED:**

That the verbal update be noted.

**21. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME & ACTION TRACKING**

The Facilitator presented the latest Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking report.

The Facilitator informed the Committee that the regular Emergency Situation updates would not be included on future Agendas as Members would continue to receive weekly updates from the Chief Executive. She also reported that the Recovery Strategy update, which had been a regular item on the Agenda, was currently under review and would now be presented to the Committee quarterly.

Two additional meetings had been added to the schedule of meetings as shown on the forward work programme and the Facilitator would liaise with the Chairman and officers following the meeting to identify reports for the meetings in February and May, 2021.

The Facilitator also reported that all actions arising from the last meeting had been completed as shown at Appendix 2 of the report.

The recommendations outlined within the report were moved by Councillor Kevin Rush and seconded by Councillor Geoff Collett.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

**22. STRATEGIC HOUSING & REGENERATION PROGRAMME – COMMUNITY BENEFITS**

The Chairman welcomed Angie Eardley, Community Investment Manager, Wates Construction Limited, to the meeting who provided a detailed presentation on the following:-

- Local Skills and Employment & Community funding;
- Training weeks on site;
- Job creation;
- Support for local jobseekers through the Flintshire Communities for work team;
- Community donations through the Wates Family Enterprise Trust and local fundraising; and
- Meet The Buyer and Meet the Social Enterprise events to grow local companies

The Chairman praised Wates for all their help and support with regards to on site training and local community support.

The recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Ray Hughes and seconded by Councillor Ron Davies.

**RESOLVED:**

That the content of the Community Benefits Performance Summary produced by Wates for the period April 2019 to March 2020 be endorsed.

**23. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE**

The Benefits Manager introduced an update on the impacts that Universal Credit 'Full Service' and other welfare reforms were having on Flintshire residents and the work that was ongoing to mitigate this and support households.

Flintshire County Council, together with its partners, had been working to mitigate the full impacts of welfare reform from falling upon vulnerable Flintshire residents, and the report outlined how this would continue to be managed under the provision of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

The Benefits Manager provided an update on the impacts that welfare reform continued to have on Flintshire residents and the work that was ongoing to mitigate this and support these households, as outlined within the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Ron Davies, the Benefits Manager explained that the intention of the Carer's Bonus Payment was for all eligible carers to receive and benefit from the full £500 payment, however, HMRC confirmed that payments were regarded as earnings and would be liable for tax, national insurance contributions and student local repayments. Councillor Ron Davies outlined his disappointment that the payments were liable for tax and national insurance.

The Chairman asked that the thanks of the Committee be passed to the whole team for the work being undertaken to support Flintshire's most vulnerable people.

The recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Ron Davies and seconded by Councillor Mared Eastwood.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee support the ongoing work to manage the impacts that Welfare Reforms have and would continue to have upon Flintshire's most vulnerable households.

## **24. HOUSING RENT INCOME**

The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) introduced the operational update on rent collection and rent arrears for 2020/21.

The Revenues Manager advised that the total rent arrears in 2020/21, up to week 34 (23/11/2020) was £2.49m, compared to £2.31m at the same point in 2019/20. The Rent Income service continued to fully support tenants and ensure intervention and regular communication was maintained to prevent further legal action being taken to ensure tenants met their payment obligations.

The Covid-19 emergency situation had impacted on the ability of some tenants to pay on time, however, in cases where tenants did not engage or pay, despite all of the offers of help and support, the service was no re-activating rent recovery, including through the courts where necessary, to ensure tenants kept to the terms of their tenancy agreements.

The Revenues Manager provided a detailed presentation which covered the following areas:-

- Re-cap on Rent Arrears over the decade;
- Recap -2019/20 Rent Collection outturn;
- 19/20 and the 20/21 impacts;
- Tenants claiming Universal Credit;
- Rent Collection: 20/21 Latest Position (to week 36);
- Movement in Arrear levels (Apr to Nov);
- Rent Arrears -the local and national challenges;

- Current Tenant Arrears % by LA (anonymised);
- Recovery Planning for 20/21 and 21/22

The Cabinet Member praised the investment in the in Mobyssoft 'Rent Sense' Software which had assisted officers in identifying tenants early to provide support and assistance.

Councillor George Hardcastle asked if a breakdown of the levels of rent arrears for tenants above £5,000 could be provided together with information on the highest figures of rent arrears. It was agreed that this information be circulated to Members confidentially following the meeting.

The recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Ron Davies and seconded by Councillor Adele Davies-Cooke.

**RESOLVED:**

That the latest financial position for rent collection in 2020/21, as set out within the report, be noted.

**25. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which fulfilled the legal requirement of the Housing Act 1996 and was designed to give a clear statement of the approach Flintshire County Council, as a landlord, would take to address anti-social behaviour within the remit of the Housing Management Team.

The aim of the policy sought to ensure that effective systems were adopted to prevent and minimise instances of anti-social behaviour and to resolve them as early as possible through timely and appropriate interventions.

The Housing Manager reported that the Council worked with internal departments and internal agencies to take any appropriate action and explained that a copy of the policy, attached at Appendix 1 of the report would assist Councillors in signposting any anti-social behaviour issues within their wards.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chief Officer explained that the Council was unable to act on anti-social behaviour issues occurring at privately owned properties as this was a Police matter but could act if the issues were affecting neighbouring Council house tenants.

The recommendations outlined within the report were moved by Councillor Ron Davies and seconded by Councillor Kevin Rush.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**26. RECOVERY STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) introduced the Recovery Strategy update and advised of the risks which had been amended since the last meeting. The risk trend around Homelessness and its impact on workforce capacity had been increased due to the increase in homelessness presentations. In relation to the backlogged voids impacting negatively on the New Homes Business Plan, this risk had also been increased due to properties taking longer to let due to available appointments to view and void repair delays.

The recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Mared Eastwood and seconded by Councillor Geoff Collett.

**RESOLVED:**

That the updated Risk Register and Risk Mitigation Actions, as outlined within the report, be noted.

**27. MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR RECOVERY, PORTFOLIO AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

The Chief Officer (Housing and Assets) introduced a report to present a summary of performance at the mid-year point relevant to the Committee. The report was an exception based report and therefore focused on the areas of under-performance.

The Benefits Manager assured the Committee that robust measures were in place to allow for the completion of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and that work could continue if residents were comfortable for works to be completed in their home during the emergency situation.

The recommendation outlined within the report was moved by Councillor Ron Davies and seconded by Councillor Geoff Collett.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**28. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 11.48 a.m.)

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**Chairman**