

ITEM

MEETING	COUNCIL
DATE	22 OCTOBER 2009
TITLE	GWYNEDD LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2009 - 2012
PURPOSE	To present the Gwynedd Local Housing Strategy and Operational Plan 2009-2012
AUTHOR	Dafydd Lewis Corporate Director
PORTFOLIO LEADERS	Councillor John Wyn Williams Senior Portfolio Holder Councillor Trefor Edwards Housing Portfolio Holder
ACTION	Approve the Strategy and Operational Plan

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires local authorities to produce housing strategies for their communities and submit them to the appropriate authority i.e. the Welsh Assembly Government. The Local Housing Strategy [LHS] must assess current housing and the particular needs of their area and then plan how to meet the housing requirements identified. The LHS sets out a locally agreed, long term housing vision and the direction, objectives and target outcomes to achieve it and should be evidence-based using the findings of a Local Housing Market Assessment. The draft Strategy and draft Operational Plan went out for consultation between November 2008 and January 16th, 2009.
- 1.2 Local Authorities were required to produce revised enhanced Local Housing Strategy by April 2007. The revised strategy mainstreams key elements from Homelessness and BME Strategies and the Supporting People Operational Plan. There are also a number of sub-strategies and Plans which come under the Local Housing Strategy. These include Empty Homes Strategy, Affordable Homes Strategy, Private Sector Housing Strategy, Young People's Accommodation Strategy and Older People's Accommodation Strategy. Until now, an interim Strategy had been in place which went out to consultation in December 2008. Background documents can be accessed from the Gwynedd Council website.

- 1.3 Under 'plan rationalisation' proposals, the vision of the LHS is reflected within the *Gwynedd Together* Community Strategy. Several of the strategic themes from the Local Housing Strategy appear in key strategies including the Unitary Development Plan, Children and Young People's Plan, and Health, Social Care & Well-being Strategy.
- 1.4 There is growing and increasingly widespread recognition of the role good quality housing can play in delivering the Council's wider objectives, which are:-
- a sustainable community,
 - fairness and opportunities for the vulnerable and
 - a focus on residents.
- Housing is a key priority within the Gwynedd Council's 3 year Business Plan, as identified within the interim LHS. Examples include the Tenant Ballot project, Affordable Housing, bringing Empty Homes back into use, accommodation options of older people – *Building for the Future* project, accommodation options for adults with learning disability and residential care project for children and young people.
- 1.5 Even after stock transfer, Gwynedd Council will remain the local Strategic Housing Authority which carries statutory duties and will need to ensure robust arrangements in place for the retained housing functions in the post transfer period.
- 1.6 The statutory duties include:
- The strategic role of the local housing authority
 - Homelessness, Housing Advice and Housing Allocations Policy
 - Supporting People
 - Private Sector Housing Renewal and Enforcement
 - Housing Benefit.
- 1.7 A strategic Housing Partnership has been established to take forward a number of the key strategic themes identified within the Strategy's Operational Plan, and is made up of representatives from the Local Authority, local Housing Associations, Snowdonia National Park, estate agent representative, representative from the National Landlords Association and the Welsh Assembly Government. The Partnership also has a key role in monitoring the Operational Plan. The Housing Partnership is administered and supported by the Housing Strategic Policy Unit, based within the Strategic and Improvement Department.
- 1.8 The Strategy and Operational Plan were approved by the Council Board on 13th October, 2009.

2. GWYNEDD LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

2.1 Gwynedd's Vision for Housing

The long term vision [to 2021] for Housing in Gwynedd, based on the work of *Gwynedd Tomorrow* is :

"We need to improve the supply, quality, affordability and suitability of the housing stock to meet the changing needs of the population"

2.2 The ambition behind our vision

The transfer of the Authority's housing stock to the newly created Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, will result in additional opportunities over the Strategy period [2009-2012] to work and plan jointly with the five Housing Associations operational in Gwynedd, developers, landlords, third sector organisations and service providers to:

- Continue to drive improvement in the delivery of housing services to all tenures;
- Ensure the development of connected housing services across partner agencies;
- A situation where there's a housing market that works efficiently, taking into account factors such as employment prospects and access to transport,
- Drive collaboration across services, organizational and administrative boundaries;
- Develop new and innovative services with key partners to address housing needs more effectively. Delivering new and innovative services also means making the most of resources, for example - joint working between Housing, Health, Social Services to modernise service delivery.

2.3 Strategic Themes

The vision of the Gwynedd Housing Partnership is supported by 5 strategic themes, which are consistent with both Gwynedd Council and the Welsh Assembly Government's current strategic direction:

Strategic themes	Aims
Strategic theme 1 Strengthen the strategic housing role in Gwynedd	To ensure the importance of the strategic housing role in connecting all housing activities to wider corporate, regional and national policy objectives; To ensure effective operation of continuing housing functions, post transfer; To ensure that key decision makers are

	<p>fully aware of the Authority's continuing housing responsibilities, post transfer;</p> <p>To maximise housing and associated infrastructure investment in Gwynedd;</p> <p>To ensure that housing programmes connect with corporate and multi-agency activities such as social care, health and well-being, community safety, economic development and community regeneration</p>
<p>Strategic theme 2 Supply and affordability</p>	<p>To ensure that the housing needs of Gwynedd are identified, recognized and supported;</p> <p>To maximize choice in the provision of affordable housing to meet the needs of local households, through a range of programmes</p>
<p>Strategic theme 3 Quality</p>	<p>To ensure that all homes in each Housing Sector within Gwynedd achieve an acceptable quality standard;</p> <p>To protect the environment through improving the energy efficiency of the current housing stock across the County</p>
<p>Strategic theme 4 Suitability</p>	<p>To reduce homelessness and minimize the incidence of rough sleeping;</p> <p>To prevent homelessness and fulfilling housing needs through the provision of suitable accommodation and related services for the people of Gwynedd;</p> <p>To provide sufficient levels of accommodation based support to address the housing needs of vulnerable people and groups</p>
<p>Strategic Theme 5 Suitability - sustainability</p>	<p>To improve the sustainability of communities within the County by ensuring that housing plays a key role in the regeneration of communities.</p>

2.4 **Operational Plan**

The Operational Plan of the Gwynedd Local Housing Strategy 2009-2012 is within Appendix B.

3. **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 **That the Council approves the Local Housing Strategy and Operational Plan 2009-2012.**

DPL/SLW/13.10.09

A. Views of the Local Member:

B. The Views of the Statutory Officers:

1. Chief Executive:

"I confirm what is said within the report, which is that the long term vision for housing in Gwynedd, as summarised within Community Strategy documents is "to improve the supply, quality, affordability and suitability of the housing stock to meet the changing needs of the population." I am also aware of the consultation arrangements which have given others the opportunity to influence the strategy when it was in draft form. As referred to by the Head of Finance, the task now will be to realise the outcomes at grass root level under the themes noted in the document – this will not be easy at the time when resources are shrinking."

2. Monitoring Officer:

"The action plan has been scrutinised by the Care Scrutiny Committee which will also monitor the implementation of the strategy. No matters of propriety arise."

3. Chief Finance Officer:

"In principle, I believe that the aims of the Local Housing Strategy are commendable, and practical and suitable plans have been set to make a difference in the field. In supporting the strategy I note, because of shortages in resources and external factors, it will not be possible to achieve the aspirations in their entirety – i.e. "ensure that the housing needs have been supported" [theme 2], "ensure that all housing of quality standard [theme 3], "reduce homelessness" [theme 4] etc."

C. Background Papers:

CH. Policy Implications:
