

# Gwynedd Local Housing Strategy

## Executive Summary 2009-2012

**Contact person for further information:**

Shan L Williams  
Housing Strategic Policy Manager  
Housing Strategic Policy Unit  
Strategic and Improvement Department  
Gwynedd Council  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

[ShanLloydWilliams@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:ShanLloydWilliams@gwynedd.gov.uk)  
01286 679289

Contents page

Foreword		3
Section 1	Introduction	5
Section 2	Gwynedd's Housing Market	11
Section 3	Private sector housing	17
Section 4	Social Housing	25
Section 5	Vulnerable Groups	28
Section 6	Strategic aims, objectives and key Themes within Operational Plan	31
Appendix	LHS Operational Plan 2009-2012	33

This document is available in large print, Braille and on audiotape on request.

## Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the Executive summary of the Local Housing Strategy. This document provides a summary of the strategic direction local housing situation across all tenure in Gwynedd for the next 3 years and beyond. It incorporates changes to the original draft Strategy following the consultation period and also reflects the continuous process of reviewing and discussions led by the Housing Strategic Policy Team, to respond to the changing environment. A full background document was produced during 2008 which formed the basis for consultation, and can be accessed on Gwynedd Council's website [www.gwynedd.gov.uk](http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk)

Housing is now one of the key themes within the Gwynedd Community Strategy and a key priority within the Gwynedd Council's 3 year Business Plan. 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 has also risen up the policy agenda at the Welsh Assembly Government and is evident through the workstreams following on from the review carried out by Sue Essex, consultation earlier on during the year on a draft National Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Plan and Supporting People Plan as well as the housing and regeneration agenda.

This is a critically important time for the housing sector in Gwynedd. Gwynedd Council tenants voted in favour of transferring the housing stock to Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd in March 2009 and on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009, Gwynedd Council confirmed the decision to transfer the housing stock. The target date for completion of stock transfer is March 2010. This sets the challenge for the Authority to ensure that its statutory responsibilities in relation to retained housing functions are robust and effective.

The transfer of its housing stock to the newly created Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd will offer the Authority considerable opportunities. These are detailed within the three year Operational Plan later within this document, and focuses on outcomes for the citizens and communities of Gwynedd.

To make a real difference, focus needs to be on ALL housing tenure. A strong strategic Housing Partnership Board has been established and will take the lead on some of the strategic themes and action plans. There is huge potential which is matched by the commitment of all partners. There is also a consensus that there is a need to push back traditional boundaries, promote an entrepreneurialism approach and be responsive to new opportunities as they arise. This was very evident in the Gwynedd Housing Partnership Conference – *Responding to the Challenge*, September 2009. A copy of the Conference Report can be accessed from the websites of Gwynedd Council, Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, North Wales Housing Association, Snowdonia National Park, National Landlords Association and Dafydd Hardy Estates Agent.

We need to realize that delivering the Strategy and its Operational Plan will be a challenge and will require the full support of the Authority, members of the Gwynedd Housing Partnership, private sector developers, Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board, third sector organizations, Owner Occupiers, Tenants, Private Landlords, other Partnerships and last of all, US – all of us – to ensure that we capture the opportunities to make a real difference to the lives of people and communities across Gwynedd through housing and housing related activities.

Councillor Trefor Edwards, Housing Portfolio Holder, Gwynedd Council

Councillor John Wyn Williams, Senior Portfolio Holder, Gwynedd Council October 2009

Walis George, Chair of Gwynedd Housing Partnership October 2009

1.0 **Section 1 Introduction**

1.1 **The relationship between Gwynedd Local Housing Strategy and other plans and strategies**

1.2 *Gwynedd Together* Community Strategy is the key strategy for Gwynedd and its aim is to seek to address the main social, economic and environmental challenges facing the County in order to improve the quality of life of the residents of the area. Gwynedd Local Housing Strategy therefore, makes an important contribution towards achieving the vision of the Community Strategy of making Gwynedd *'a more lively, successful, open and co-operating community, which takes pride and promotes its cultural and uniquely natural assets and which positively contributes towards a more sustainable world'* by ensuring that the strategic priority areas are consistent with the areas for strategic intervention identified in *'Gwynedd Tomorrow'*.

1.3 **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"*

1.4 Furthermore, several of the strategic themes from the Local Housing Strategy appear in key strategies including the Children and Young People's Plan, Health, Social Care & Well-being Strategy and Gwynedd Community Safety Strategy. In addition, the Local Housing Strategy Operational Plan will contribute to the delivery of priority areas within National Service Frameworks [NSF] – in particular NSF for Children, Young People and Maternity Services and NSF for Older People. The impact of the Operational Plan on Gwynedd Council's Policies such as Welsh Language and Equality will be monitored on an annual basis and discussions have commenced around measuring the likely impact of new housing

developments in predominantly Welsh speaking areas. An Equality Impact assessment will be undertaken on the Local Housing Strategy during the current financial year and a programme of other Impact Assessments will be agreed on an annual basis.

- 1.5 As already referred to within the foreword, housing is also a key priority within the Gwynedd Council's 3 year Business Plan, with specific attention given to affordable housing, bringing empty homes back into use and developing housing options for older people and adults with learning disabilities, and the Tenant Ballot Project in relation to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard [WHQS].
  
- 1.6 As part of implementing plan rationalisation, there is a requirement for key elements of the following current plans to become part of an enhanced Local Housing Strategy:  
  
Black, Minority and Ethnic Housing Strategy, Local Homelessness Strategy and 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.
  
- 1.7 Housing is critical to economic development, educational achievement, social care, public health and sustainable community cohesion. Historically, Gwynedd Council has managed substantial housing stock, however, since the early 1980's the role of the Authority in building, owning and managing housing has declined with the introduction of Right to Buy, stock transfer and social housing now being provided by local Housing Associations.

1.8 Gwynedd Council tenants voted in favour of transferring the housing stock to Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd in March 2009 and on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009, Gwynedd Council confirmed the decision to transfer the housing stock. The timescale for transferring the stock is the end of March 2010. The date for achieving WHQS standards will be 5 years post-transfer.

1.9 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.

1.10 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.

### **1.11 The ambition behind our vision**

1.11.1 The transfer of our housing stock to the newly created Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd will give Gwynedd Council a considerable opportunity over the Strategy period [2009-2012] to work and plan jointly with the five Housing Associations operating in Gwynedd, developers, landlords, third sector organisations and service providers to:

**1.11.2 Continue to drive improvement in the delivery of housing services to all tenures.** This includes for example, streamlining working processes, collaborative working with Housing Associations to create nomination agreements, joint allocation lists so that applicants have a wider choice of

housing across the county, provision of enforcement functions to address poor standards in some private sector dwellings and bringing empty homes back into use;

**1.11.3 Ensure the development of connected housing services across partner**

**agencies.** This means working across different policy areas and with a range of partners, including neighbouring local authorities [for example in producing the Local Housing Market Assessment to ensure a robust evidence base to establish future housing requirements, Urban Housing Enabler post, Rural Housing Enabler post, Here to Help scheme to improve the energy efficiency of homes], Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board, Snowdonia National Park, Bangor University, Forestry Commission, third sector organizations such as Mantell Gwynedd, Gwynedd Care & Repair, Age Concern, key Partnerships such as Health, Social Care and Well-being, Children and Young People and Community Safety, and Gwynedd Homelessness Forum to bring together areas of housing and housing related activity.

**1.11.4 A housing market that works efficiently is also a basis for creating and maintaining a strong local, sub-regional and regional economy, taking into account factors such as employment prospects and access to transport.**

Working to develop strong relationships between the Gwynedd Housing Partnership, Housing Associations including Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, Gwynedd Economic Partnership, and the Môn – Menai Partnership will be critical to ensure that housing programmes connect with community regeneration and economic development ensuring maximum value is gained in the local community. In particular, initiatives such as apprenticeship schemes could be developed as part of targeted recruitment and training through housing investment including WHQS programme delivery and Undod contractor procurement frameworks – this being key to successfully tackling deprivation,



particularly economic inactivity;

**1.11.5 Drive collaboration across services, organizational and administrative**

**boundaries.** This will lead to producing joined up policy solutions which will effect services across agencies connecting to the Council's key objectives within its 3 year Strategic Business Plan. Opportunities will be identified for regional collaborative working around the delivery of strategic housing functions and the delivery of affordable housing, to inform the Wales Spatial Plan Regional Working Groups; and

**1.11.6 Develop new and innovative services with key partners to address housing**

**needs more effectively.** This involves Gwynedd Council's Housing Strategic Policy Team taking on the '*enabling role*' which involves significant partnership working to deliver all forms of affordable housing, including responsibility for the co-ordination and delivery of the Social Housing Grant [SHG] programme with the Undod Consortium of Housing Associations<sup>1</sup> and developing innovative solutions to address the county's housing needs with the financial sector, private sector developers, private landlords, estate agents, Housing Associations, Community, Town and City Councils. Gwynedd Council will continue to routinely review financial implications and projections with partners and will discuss issues such as the need to re-profile housing programmes, as part of assessing the impact of the recession and a changing environment, on delivery of the Local Housing Strategy.

**1.11.7 Delivering new and innovative services also means making the most of**

**resources - joint working between Housing, Health, Social Services to modernise service delivery.** For example, maximising the opportunities for vulnerable people including older people, young people including care leavers,

---

<sup>1</sup> Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, North Wales Housing Association are the three Housing Associations working with Gwynedd Council from the Undod Consortium.

adults with learning disability, physical and sensory disabilities, people with mental health, homeless people , gypsy and travelers and black minority ethnic groups to lead full and independent lifestyles. Commissioning good quality housing-related support by Social Services, Supporting People, Health and other partners can result in reduction in admissions to residential or nursing care and earlier hospital discharges. Supporting People investment delivers financial benefits through reduced costs in homelessness, health services, tenancy failure and residential care.

1.11.8 Taking elements of the Local Housing Strategy and its Operational Plan forward is a key role for the Gwynedd Housing Partnership, and is supported and administered by the Council's Housing Strategic Policy Team.

## Section 2 Gwynedd's Housing Market

### 2.0 Snapshot of housing profile within the County<sup>2</sup>

#### **Tenure**

59,729 dwellings in Gwynedd;

6,329 of these are Council houses;

2,103 are owned by the three largest Housing Associations in the area;

Approximately 51,000 Private dwellings in Gwynedd;

An estimated 5,500 second homes in Gwynedd;

Property types<sup>3</sup> : 20,055 detached; 18,321 terraced, 12,609 semi-detached; 3,171 purpose built flats; 1,220 converted flats; 342 mobile or temporary structures;

An estimated 2,200 unoccupied properties within numerous classes statutorily exempted from Council Tax;

An additional 1,390 long term empty properties in Gwynedd, which have been vacant for more than 6 months;

An estimated 371 of these long term empty properties lie within the Snowdonia National Park boundary.

#### **Housing Unfitness and disrepair**

Key findings from the latest Gwynedd Stock Condition Survey [2003]:

9% [5,260] of the housing stock classed as unfit, compared to the North Wales average of 6.6%;

18.2% classified as defective;

Unfitness in the private sector is 17.6%, compared to national level of 18.4%;

Majority of unfitness found in older housing, 56.5% of stock, compared to 32% national level

---

<sup>2</sup> Source : Gwynedd Empty Homes Strategy 2009-2012

<sup>3</sup> Source: Census 2001

## 2.1 Key drivers

2.2 Underpinning the Local Housing Strategy are findings of the Local Housing Market Assessment [LHMA] [see separate Background document on Gwynedd Council's website].

Socio Economic factors;

Demographic change – ageing population;

Reducing numbers of people of working age;

Reducing numbers of people in younger age groups;

Changes due to migration;

Increasing single person households;

House prices to income ratio;

Affordability and supply of homes for purchase and rent;

Operation of land and market factors;

Limited supply of social housing;

Demand for intermediate housing products<sup>4</sup>;

Disparity of wages and higher living costs in rural areas;

House prices and limited access to finance including forecasted long term reductions in Social Housing Grant and Acceptable Cost Guidance – issues around supply chain costs in rural areas;

The need to maximise existing housing stock, for example through the Empty Homes Strategy and continued focus on repair and renovation;

High levels of homelessness presentations;

Poor quality of some private rented housing stock, particularly Houses in Multiple Occupation;

Increases in student population in Bangor [Menai] and surrounding wards.

---

<sup>4</sup> intermediate housing is where prices or rents are above those of social rented housing but below market housing prices or rents.

2.3 In addition, the current economic climate and credit crunch has led to instability being created in the financial markets which affect the availability of credit and mortgages. This has led to greater difficulty for first-time buyers, with larger deposits required to secure mortgages.

2.4 Additional work around assessing and capturing housing needs and demand amongst Gypsies and Travellers, Black, Minority Ethnic [BME] and migrant workers are key pieces of work planned to be undertaken as part of the LHMA Project, working collaboratively across Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire and the Snowdonia National Park boundaries. Currently, work is being undertaken on assessing the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

2.5 The work of the Rural Housing Enabler [RHE] has proven to be an essential resource of information about housing needs and demand in rural areas of Gwynedd. The RHE's remit is to engage with targeted communities, collect information about the need for affordable housing in rural areas, identify potential opportunities to increase the provision of affordable housing and seek to influence and inform housing and planning programmes – both locally and nationally through the Rural Housing Network. Funded through Social Housing Management Grant, Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy Councils have recently appointed an Urban Housing Enabler, over a two year period. A programme of housing need surveys in urban areas will be established and the Urban Enabler will support this work with a focus in Gwynedd on Bangor and Caernarfon.

## **2.6 Land use planning**

The key interaction between the Local Housing Strategy and the Local Development Plan [LDP] is through the affordable housing agenda which links housing and planning issues.

2.7 Gwynedd is covered by two planning authorities, Gwynedd Council Local Planning Authority and the Snowdonia National Park Authority. Both Authorities are developing their Local Development Plans. The LHMA will improve the robustness of data, playing a critical role in information housing policies for inclusion within the LDPs.

2.8 An internal Gwynedd Council Housing Supply working group between the Regulation Department [includes Planning], Housing Service and Housing Strategic Policy Team and is chaired by the Corporate Director, to ensure effective strategic planning in relation to land use, housing and planning issues. There is also a multi-agency Housing Supply and Affordability sub-group which reports to the Gwynedd Housing Partnership Board.

## **2.9 Housing Need**

The Welsh Assembly Government's Local Housing Market Assessment Guide (March 2006) sets out a methodology by using secondary data sources to calculate a global figure for unmet affordable housing need. The North West Wales Local Housing Market Assessment Phase 1 Baseline Document (2008) provides a good guide to the general level of annual affordable housing need in Gwynedd. Work undertaken to date includes an assessment of the overall surplus/shortfall of affordable housing in Gwynedd as at 2008, based on the methodology provided by the Welsh Assembly Government in its Local Housing Market Assessment Guide. This work indicated a shortfall of 1,723 units within the whole of the County of Gwynedd.

## **2.10 Affordable Housing Delivery Plan [AHDP]**

Gwynedd Council and its partners have collaborated to develop an Affordable Housing Delivery Statement, in accordance with the Welsh Assembly Government's *One Wales* document, to provide 6,500 affordable homes in Wales

over the period between 2007– 2011. The Affordable Housing Delivery Statement developed by Gwynedd Council covers the Gwynedd Council Planning Authority area and the document's main elements are:

- An assessment of the need for affordable housing
- Establishment of four year targets for affordable housing
- Securing affordable housing, and
- Monitoring and reviewing the delivery of affordable housing.

2.11 The final version of the Delivery Statement was endorsed by Gwynedd Council during May 2009.

### **2.13 Gwynedd Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Gwynedd Council is working on revising the Gwynedd Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance. A consultation draft of the revised Supplementary Planning Guidance was the subject of a formal 6 week consultation up to 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 and the intention is for the final version to be adopted by Gwynedd Council Board in November 2009.

### **2.14 Welsh Assembly Government Social Housing Grant and Strategic Capital Investment Fund**

Close collaboration with Housing Associations continues in order to develop a programme of affordable housing schemes so to maximise the amount of Social Housing Grant secured from the Assembly. Approximately £3million per annum of Social Housing Grant was secured for Gwynedd for the 2006–2007 and 2007-2008, £3million secured for 2008-2009 and £3,220,662 secured for 2009-2010.

2.15 In addition £1,817,888 of Strategic Capital Investment Fund (SCIF) has been allocated towards 4 schemes to be implemented between 2009 and 2011.

- 2.16 Since 2004, 459 affordable properties have received planning consent. See Gwynedd Council's website for a list of completed schemes. As at September 2009, 32 affordable home units are currently being developed. See Gwynedd Council and individual Housing Association websites for details.
- 2.17 There are other mechanisms by which affordable housing can be provided. These include shared ownership properties, *Homebuy*, self-build, right to buy. Please see Operational Plan for details of actions during the next three years.



### **Section 3 Private sector housing**

3.0 The private sector encompasses 71.4%<sup>5</sup> of the housing stock within Gwynedd. Therefore it is vital that the housing conditions within this housing sector are key to the Authority's strategic objectives.

#### **3.1 Housing Renewal Policies**

In 2007, the Council reviewed its Housing Renewal Policies. A copy is available on the Gwynedd Council website. Gwynedd Council contributes financially to ensure that quality is achieved through its Housing Renewal Programme.

#### **3.2 Area Renewal**

The aim of Area Renewal is to address substandard housing in designated areas. Area Renewal also contributes to the community regeneration. A total of £1.3 million Specific Capital Grant from WAG, has been awarded this year for renewal works in the areas of Blaenau Ffestiniog East and Central Bangor. The 10 year lifetime of the renewal areas will expire in 2014. Depending on the resources available for area renewal, the following could be offered:

- Grant assistance to owners and landlord;
- Enforcement
- Clearance and demolition orders

In light of reducing budgets for Housing Renovation Grants, the Council is working in partnership with organizations such as the *Home Improvement Trust* to develop equity release products.

---

<sup>5</sup> Source : Living in Wales Survey, 2004

### **3.3 Community Safety**

Social problems often arise in areas of poor housing. The Council will seek to address issues of community safety and contribute towards discharging the Council's responsibilities under S.17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988.

Financial assistance may be available through:

- Landlord Assistance
- Security Assistance
- Renewal Area Assistance

### **3.4 Disabled Facilities Grants [DFG's]**

DFG's are mandatory grants, available to carry out works that will enable disabled applicants to remain in their own home. An annual budget of £1.3million is allocated towards DFG's. The Council will seek to continue to spend this funding on adaptation work. Housing Grant Officers and Occupational Therapists have developed a framework to prioritizing adaptation works.

### **3.5 Gwynedd Care & Repair**

Gwynedd Care & Repair assists older people and / or disabled people to remain independently in their own homes, and works in partnership with the Council's Private Sector Housing Team, Social Services and Health. They also run the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme which can assist patients to return from hospital quicker, through undertaking minor repairs and adaptations within their home. They also run a Handyperson Scheme.

3.6 The Agency's Strategic Business Planning Group guides its work, planning future service provision and monitors the Agency's performance and financial situation.

### **3.7 Loans and Equity Release**

Gwynedd Council is working in partnership on a pilot basis, with the Home Improvement Trust, specifically the *Houseproud* Scheme to assist homeowners aged 60 and over, or adults with disabilities of any age to get essential repair, improvements or adaptation works completed by accessing loans, without the risk of potential repossession if the loan is not repaid.

- 3.8 A review of other Equity Release products and loans will be conducted during the lifetime of the Local Housing Strategy, with a view to develop innovative solutions. Discussions will also take place within the Council to consider the potential of offering loans instead of grants.

### **3.9 Energy Efficiency**

An ambitious and successful partnership that has been developed in Gwynedd is between Gwynedd Council and British Gas – the *Here to Help* project. Following the success of an initial pilot across five villages in the Nantlle Valley, the scheme has been rolled out across Gwynedd, targeting private sector households. By the end of the life of the current Local Housing Strategy, all wards will have been targeted. This project has also led to increasing financial benefits thereby contributing to alleviating Fuel Poverty. This initiative is one of many within the local Affordable Warmth Plan, which will be reviewed annually.

- 3.10 Gwynedd Council also works closely with the North Wales Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, which provides free impartial advice on energy efficiency, fuel poverty and how to access available schemes.

3.11 A strong emphasis on energy efficiency also exists within the Council's housing stock through the Energy Efficiency Programme. Success is measured through the Standard Assessment Procedure [SAP] rating of 57.2<sup>6</sup>.

### **3.12 Sustainable Development**

There are two key housing related aims within the *Wales Spatial Plan – People, Places, Futures*. These are:

- Building sustainable communities, and
- Promoting a sustainable economy.

### **3.13 Sustainable renewable energy sources**

Gwynedd's Carbon Footprint Project is one of Gwynedd Local Services Board's key priorities, established to secure a substantial decrease in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Outcomes of this Project will include amongst others:

- Reduction in energy use in partner agencies;
- Reduction in waste and increased recycling in partner agencies;
- Sustainable procurement policies in place.

3.14 The Local Housing Strategy's contribution towards the Gwynedd Carbon Footprint Reduction Plan is through understanding the contribution of the domestic housing sector to the Gwynedd Carbon Footprint and implement plans in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### **3.15 Working in partnership with Private Sector Landlords**

Gwynedd Council recognizes that partnership working with the private sector is key to the delivery of effective housing services. The Council's Renewal Policies

---

<sup>6</sup> Source : Local Housing Strategy background document, 2008

offer various forms of assistance, and in addition, the following private sector partnerships have been developed:

- Landlords Forum
- North Wales representative of the National Landlords Association is a member of the Gwynedd Housing Partnership Board

### **3.16 Housing, Health and Safety Rating System [HHSRS]**

HHSRS is the Government's approach to evaluate potential risks to health and safety in residential dwellings and is a way of driving up standards in private rented accommodation.

### **3.17 HMO Licensing**

Gwynedd Council has been successfully working in partnership with property owners/landlords to improve both the safety and quality of the housing stock within the Private Rented Sector. The Council introduced "The (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Notification and Registration Scheme" in 1999, and as a result have made consistent progress in identifying rented properties and improving general housing standards within this sector. The aim being to ensure that all tenants are safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards and that shared housing is of a high standard with regard to their general facilities, amenities and living conditions.

3.18 The private rented sector has an increasingly important role in the provision of housing options for those who are either not able to consider home ownership, or for whom social housing is not a viable option and also for students attending Universities and Higher Education. It is therefore the goal to ensure that the achievements already attained to date are built upon in the coming years by extending the existing Mandatory Licensing Scheme by means of an Additional Licensing Scheme to include all Houses in Multiple Occupation.

### **3.19 Additional licensing**

The Housing Act 2004 contains provisions enabling Local Authorities to extend licensing to other categories of HMO's to address particular problems that may exist in smaller HMO properties and also in sub-standard converted self-contained flats.

3.20 It is the intention of Cyngor Gwynedd Council to introduce an Additional Licensing Scheme that will initially run for a period of five years. The proposed scheme which went out for consultation in June 2009, will include all HMO's in Gwynedd that are:-

- Occupied by three or more persons, forming two or more households.
- Section 257 HMO's (Housing Act 2004), created by converting buildings into flats where the conversions did not meet the Building Regulations 1991 Standards and they have not been subsequently brought up to the relevant standards.

3.21 The aim is that Gwynedd Council will:

- Engage with landlords whose management arrangements are inadequate or unsatisfactory and improve general standards.
- Reduce the risk of fire and other hazards in smaller HMO's and poorly converted self-contained flats.
- Improve the standard of HMO's relating to amenities and repair.
- Support inexperienced landlords and make all landlords/property owners more accountable for the behaviour of their tenants and tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Create a fairer and more equitable situation where landlords of all HMO's invest in better standards.

- Improve the quality of housing to benefit both tenants and the wider community.

### **3.22 Working with private sector house builders**

Private Sector house builders have been identified as a key partner in the development of the LHMA and were invited to participate in a Stakeholder event in 2007. A Home Builders Federation representative is also represented on the LHMA Project Board, which ensures ongoing sharing of knowledge and expertise.

- 3.23 Many of the local house builders acknowledge the need for affordable housing and are working closely with the Authority and the Housing Associations, to discuss and develop solutions.

## Section 4 Social Housing

- 4.1 Registered Social Landlords [RSL's] or otherwise known as Housing Associations, are the main strategic partners in the provision of social housing in Gwynedd. RSL's are also key players in the Gwynedd Housing Partnership which ensures the delivery, monitoring and reviewing of the LHS objectives.
- 4.2 RSLs are also key members of other strategic groups such as the *Building for the Future* Project, Empty Homes Project Group, Supporting People Provider Forum, Homelessness Forum, Affordable Housing Group, Rural Housing Enabler Group, Affordable Warmth and Care & Repair. Regular meetings are also held with the RSLs to discuss both strategic and operational issues relating to housing development, monitoring of grant spend, *Homebuy* and other low cost home ownership products, Local Housing Market Assessment, mortgage rescue schemes and identifying specialist housing needs.
- 4.3 There are currently four RSL's with housing stock in Gwynedd, providing both general needs and supported housing. These are Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, North Wales Housing Association and Cymdeithas Tai Hafan. However, with the creation of *Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd*, there will be five. The aim is to develop joint Nomination agreements between the Local Authority and RSL's including *Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd 2009-2010*.
- 4.4 The Local Authority through its strategic role, works in partnership with RSL's from the Undod Consortium to access Social Housing Grant from the Welsh Assembly Government, and ensures that investment decisions are made on the basis of sound evidence and that the SHG is used effectively.
- 4.5 SHG investment is guided by the priorities within the Operational Plan and will be revised in line with outcomes of further work on the Local Housing Market



Assessment and other methods used for informing the local Housing Needs Assessment.

- 4.6 RSL's also make an important contribution to regeneration. From a recent Report [October 2008], commissioned by Community Housing Cymru, undertaken by the Welsh Economy Research Unit, the estimated construction expenditure on brownfield development during 2007/2008 by Undod came to £12 million. During the same year, a total of 37 additional homes were provided.

#### **4.7 Supporting vulnerable people within the community**

- 4.7.1 RSLs support women and their children, who have suffered from domestic violence, offer housing support to adults with mental health issues, adults with learning disability, people with drug and alcohol problems, ex-offenders and also homelessness people. This can be provided through supported housing or outreach and resettlement services.

- 4.7.2 Supported housing gives service users the confidence and know-how to take control of their lives, so that they can find out what options and opportunities are available to them. Service users get one-to-one support on matters such as accessing jobs and education or health services, and learn life skills - such as cooking and budgeting - that will lead to them maintaining successful, independent tenancies when they move on. People usually live in supported schemes for a year or two before moving into own property.

- 4.7.3 Supported housing also provide other services such as outreach and resettlement to homeless, supporting young people who are involved with the youth justice service and education and employment services.

For more information, please see the Supporting People Operational Plan or please contact individual RSLs.

#### **4.8 Extra Care Housing**

Gwynedd Council as one of its key themes within the 3 year Business Plan and within the modernization agenda within Social Services, is developing Extra Care housing for older people in four geographical areas within the county. These areas are Bala, Bangor, Ffestiniog and Porthmadog. Working in partnership with Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd in Bala, Cymdeithas Tai Eryri in Ffestiniog and Porthmadog and North Wales Housing Association in Bangor, four Extra Care schemes will be developed. Funding has already been confirmed for Bala and Ffestiniog through the Social Housing Grant bidding process, with the remaining capital from the RSL's. Work is due to commence on the Bala scheme during 2009-2010 and in Ffestiniog during 2010-2011. The Bangor scheme is well developed in terms of design and an application for full planning permission will be submitted to Gwynedd Council during this financial year. All four schemes, if developed, will amount to approximately £30 million.

Working with Gwynedd Council, the RSLs will also be considering other options for developing and funding accommodation in the future. Options could include for example, re-modelling existing sheltered accommodation, or jointly funding developments in partnership.

#### **4.9 Housing, employment and Welsh language project**

A new project, led by Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, is being developed on the Llŷn Peninsula comprising of affordable housing [tenure-neutral] and an enterprise centre offering work units, facilities and support for both established and new small businesses. The aim is that the enterprise centre will operate through the medium of Welsh and promote the use of Welsh as the language of business. Cymdeithas Tai Eryri are working closely with Pen Llŷn Communities First to further develop the scheme.

#### **4.10 Sustainable Communities**

Local Housing Associations maximize their commitment to sustainable communities by developing energy efficient and sustainable affordable housing. For example 4 new low carbon housing have recently been completed at Ffordd Eithiog in Bangor achieving level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

## **Section 5      Vulnerable Groups**

### **5.0      Homelessness**

The role of Gwynedd Council in preventing homelessness has never been more of a priority. Whilst much hard work and resources go towards the provision of the statutory homelessness framework under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, there is a growing recognition at all levels, and through the work of the Gwynedd Homelessness Forum, of the need to prevent homelessness where possible.

5.1 It is also well accepted in the homelessness sector that the earlier a client seeks advice, the greater the options available to them. The provision of effective, timely housing and legal advice to those facing the threat to their home is at the forefront of the battle to prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation. A profile of homelessness can be seen in the LHS background document. Major causes of homelessness continue to be relationship breakdown, crimes related to domestic violence, end of private sector tenancies and parental evictions. Mortgage possessions are increasing, due to the current economic climate.

5.2 The Council supports partnership initiatives for appropriate housing solutions to satisfy the requirements of the current Local and National Homelessness Strategies, the Council's Bed and Breakfast reduction plan and the Supporting People Operational Plan. Private sector leasing schemes, nomination agreements, and rent deposit schemes give people accommodation choices and contributes to prevention of homelessness.

### **5.3      Rough sleepers**

Although Gwynedd Council does not have a duty to accommodate rough sleepers, WAG require each local authority to undertake an annual rough sleeper

count. Further research is required into the nature and extent of rough sleeping in the County, so as to minimise the incidence.

5.4 The current Homelessness Strategy will be reviewed during 2009-2010 and will become operational from April 2011.

**5.5 Homeless and Vulnerable Groups Health Action Plans (HaVGHAP's)**

Led by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board, the Housing Partnership needs to ensure that the HaVGHAP remains effective in terms of targetting the health related needs of homeless persons and other groups open to harm.

**5.6 Black and Minority Ethnic**

Local authorities and Housing Associations have a duty to produce an individual BME Housing Strategy or be a partner to a regional and / or multi-agency BME Strategy. The six local authorities of North Wales combined to produce a joint BME Housing Strategy in April 2004. Within the LHS Operational Plan, there is an action to review the current regional BME Strategy and adopt a work plan for 2010-13, specifically for Gwynedd. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken on the LHS during this financial year.

**5.7 Gypsies and Travellers**

Phase two of the LHMA has involved setting up a project group to discuss and implement a Gypsies and Travellers Assessment. There will be four elements to the work of this group:

- gypsy travellers on fixed sites;
- transient travellers in unauthorized areas such as waste land;
- travellers in 'bricks and mortar' accommodation and
- secondary data such as local authority reports, school records etc.

5.8 This work is due to be completed during the final quarter of 2009-2010 and will inform the Gypsy and Travellers aspect to the Local Housing Strategy.

### **5.9 Migrant Workers**

Further work is required to identify the barriers faced by migrant workers in relation to Housing.

### **5.10 Supporting People**

Supporting People is the policy and funding framework addressing the delivery of housing - related support services to a range of vulnerable adults. Introduced in April 2003, key features of the Supporting People Programme are as follows:

- Streamlined funding framework;
- Local service planning;
- Partnership approach – housing, health, social care, third sector;
- Evidence based planning;
- Monitoring and review.

5.11 Copies of the Supporting People Operational Plan are available from the Supporting People Unit, based within the Housing Service. A Report will be written during the current financial year, looking at the benefits of integrating Operational Plans of Supporting People and Homelessness Services. If accepted, this would mirror the national direction.

### **5.12 Older People and Young People's Accommodation Needs**

Older People's Accommodation and Young People's Accommodation have been addressed fully through sub-strategies and operational plans. Both are now operational. Copies are available on Gwynedd Council and Housing Partnership Members, together with the Children and Young People's Partnership website.

### **5.13 Learning Disability Accommodation Project**

A Suitable Accommodation Project Board – Learning Disability has been established to:

- Deliver additional accommodation opportunities for adults with a learning disability in Gwynedd
- Review current accommodation options and introduce alternative / modern housing options
- Deliver a sustainable accommodation environment

5.14 By 2014, the Project Board will:

- Respond to the accommodation needs and aspirations of the learning disability community in Gwynedd
- Develop and implement plans to deliver a more sustainable accommodation environment
- Investigate the possibility of introducing alternative models of accommodation such as Extra Care and Core and Cluster housing as well as increasing the current community housing stock for adults with learning disability

## **Section 6 Strategic aims, objectives and key Themes within Operational Plan**

### **6.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to present the strategic themes and objectives for the next 3 years Strategy and Operational Plan.

### **6.1 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:

<b>Strategic themes</b>	<b>Aims</b>
<b>Strategic theme 1</b> <b>Strengthen the strategic housing role in Gwynedd</b>	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 fully aware of the Authority's continuing housing responsibilities, post transfer;  To maximise housing and associated infrastructure investment in Gwynedd;  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
<b>Strategic theme 2</b> <b>Supply and affordability</b>	To ensure that the housing needs of Gwynedd are identified, recognized and



	<p>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><b>Strategic theme 3</b></p> <p><b>Quality</b></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><b>Strategic theme 4</b></p> <p><b>Suitability</b></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><b>Strategic Theme 5</b></p> <p><b>Suitability - sustainability</b></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>

## Appendix

### LHS Operational Plan 2009-2012

