

Cheshire West & Chester Council

# Council Housing

## Draft Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2024-2029 Consultation Summary



## What is the consultation about?

The new draft Council Housing Asset Management Strategy sets out how the Council, working with its strategic housing partner Forhousing, will maintain and improve its housing stock. The draft strategy details how we will make sure our stock meets the requirements set out in the Building Safety Act 2022 as well as meeting all the requirements around gas, electrical and fire safety. The draft strategy also proposes a programme of refurbishment works, measures to tackle climate change and an overview of our plan to continue to build new housing to help meet the housing needs of our residents.

The draft strategy also compliments and supports our council housing vision statement, namely:

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to meet the housing needs of those who are unable to meet their own needs in the housing market now and in the future.

We will work in partnership to support our tenants to prosper and improve their wellbeing and ensure neighbourhoods and communities are sustainable, safe and pleasant”.

We would like to hear your views on our draft Council Housing Asset Management Strategy. We are keen to hear what you think of our aim and key objectives, as well as the commitments we will make to you.

## What is the draft Council Housing Asset Management Strategy?

Cheshire West & Chester Council benefits from retaining ownership of 5,500 homes in the borough, concentrated in the areas of Ellesmere Port, Neston and Winsford. Although as a council we are both the owner and landlord, the management and maintenance of the stock is carried out by ForHousing who have signed a 10-year contract with the council which runs from 2017 to 2027, with the option to extend for a further 2 years.

The draft strategy describes the approach we will take to maximise the performance of our residential housing and other housing stock assets, deliver intelligence-based investment, maximise the positive impact of resources, and deliver sustainable neighbourhoods, thriving communities, and quality homes.

## What are the objectives of the new draft Council Housing Asset Management Strategy?

The draft strategy reflects, compliments and supports our vision statement for all council owned housing which states:

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to meet the housing needs of those who are unable to meet their own needs in the housing

market now and in the future. We will work in partnership to support our tenants to prosper and improve their wellbeing and ensure neighbourhoods and communities are sustainable, safe and pleasant”.

To help embed the above aim, the strategy details six objectives which will oversee our work over the next five years as follows:

**Ensure homes are fit for purpose** - The draft strategy explains how maintaining the quality of our housing stock is a key principle behind our approach to asset management and our investment plan reflects this. The plan places a high priority on safety and the renewal of essential components in a timely manner with the aim of ensuring our housing stock meets the Decent Homes Standard.

**Ensure homes are safe to live in** - The draft strategy places a huge importance on maintaining compliance and driving forward improvements in the standard of safety in our housing stock. To ensure we continue to do this we have extended our comprehensive approach around safety in line with more stringent requirements introduced by the Building Safety Act 2022, with the introduction of a dedicated building safety team

**Ensure homes help meet housing needs** - The draft strategy states how we will use evidence-based data to understand the future needs of our housing stock that is based on predicted economic and demographic change, and we will deliver investment to ensure our housing stock meet these needs. By understanding our existing stock, we will be able to tailor our provision and direct people towards the most suitable accommodation for their needs, including reusing previously adapted properties.

**Help contribute to social and environmental wellbeing** –The draft strategy details how our approach to planned neighbourhood investment is led by the Neighbourhood Scheme which aims to contribute to both the social and environmental wellbeing of our neighbourhoods. We have set aside a budget to focus on the external environment and the common areas of the homes we manage, assessing the most beneficial set of works to a specific neighbourhood each year and providing proactive works.

**Reduce carbon emissions & environmental impact** - The draft strategy aims to build on the Council's strategic aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2045. In 2019 Cheshire West and Chester Council voted unanimously to declare a climate emergency and focus on climate change as an organisational priority. At present around 14% of the borough's carbon emissions are from domestic properties, a proportion of which will be derived from our own housing stock. To meet national and local carbon reduction targets, developing low-carbon housing and retrofit schemes will be pivotal to our future delivery plans.

**Ensure there is effective financial control overseeing our work** - The draft strategy makes clear the need for us to balance competing demands on our investment programme, particularly at this time where inflation and supply chain disruption has increased the cost of building works. The quality of our homes impacts

their financial viability, and through proper investment we can improve void turnaround and reduce repair costs.

## How will we deliver on the objectives?

To ensure we achieve our objectives, we have developed an action plan which is featured on pages 23 – 31 of the draft strategy. The action plan details specific actions to be achieved against the above objectives. We have also developed performance indicators to ensure we deliver on these objectives.

## How will we invest in our housing stock?

We have developed a 30-year investment plan in line with our priorities, details of which can be found on pages 31 – 34 of the draft strategy.

## How can I get involved and share my views?

- You can tell us your views by completing our online survey
- You can also request a paper version by calling Housing Strategy on 0151 356 6410 and quoting 'Council Housing Asset Management Strategy Consultation'
- Email your views to: [housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:housingstrategy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
- Telephone: 0151 356 6410, to speak to someone in the Housing Strategy, team and quote: 'Council Housing Asset Management Strategy Consultation'
- Write to us at: Council Housing Asset Management Strategy, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Housing Strategy, The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BA

The closing date to submit your views is 5.00pm on Sunday 3 December 2023.

## What happens next?

Your feedback is important as it will be used to help inform the development of the new Council Housing Asset Management Strategy. Findings from this consultation will be used to shape the final version of the strategy. They will be shared with the Council's Cabinet in March 2024 to help them make an informed decision about whether or not to implement the changes which, if agreed, will be made by Forhousing who manage the Council's housing stock.

The results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website in January 2024.