



Date: Tuesday, 23 April 2024

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

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## **ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)**

#### **7 Progress against the actions from the New Housing Developments Work (Pages 1 - 8)**

The Assistant Director Economy and Place will provide an update on progress against the actions from the New Housing Development report that was considered by the Committee at their meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023. **(REPORT TO FOLLOW)**.

Contact: Tracy Darke ([tracy.darke@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.darke@shropshire.gov.uk))

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**Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024**

Item

Public



## New Housing Developments Task and Finish Group Action Plan update

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Tracy Darke		
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<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>	Cllr Chris Schofield		

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Economy and Place Overview and Scrutiny committee an interim update on the progress being made on the action plan agreed at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The review period was 12 months.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Task and Finish group evolved from a Place Scrutiny committee discussion regarding the quality of housing development in Shropshire. Concern was raised primarily regarding poor internal finishings, lack of good quality open space provision and the lack of timely adoption of access roads to properties. Members wanted to explore with officers where responsibility for these issues sat and what influence they may have over improving the quality of housing developments, consequently improving the lives for occupiers of new homes in Shropshire.
- 2.2. The review concluded with a decision for officers to report back to the committee with an action plan.

### 3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the committee note the progress being made on the agreed action plan which is highlighted in red on Appendix A.

## Report

### 4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. There are no human rights or equalities implications as a result of this report.
- 4.2. The work of the task and finish group and the subsequent action plan continues to provide the opportunity to increase members and the public's understanding of the role and influence the Council has in areas such as building control, for example, Shropshire Council's Building Control service is in direct competition with the private sector.
- 4.3. It provides an opportunity to strengthen the role of planning services in ensuring new residential developments feature well-designed open spaces which improves the appearance of the developments, but also enhances the health and well-being of residents living in these areas.

### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### 6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. There are no specific climate change implications arising from the recommendation. However, when implementing the action plan, officers should also set out whether there are any impacts on climate change because of their suggested course of action. In particular, there is the opportunity through the improved communications for Building Control to share the requirements for developments to produce significantly less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to meet the governments targets on net zero, which is an important step for the industry ahead of the Future Homes and Buildings Standard in 2025. It is better to build in the efficiencies within the initial design rather than retrofit later.

### 7. Background

- 7.1. The task and Finish group considered a number of concerns and complaints about poorly designed developments and the impact they were having on creating attractive places for our residents to live. A list of issues were gathered and the review which involved members, officers and developers gave an opportunity to gain a better understanding of roles and influence and how collectively we can tackle some of the difficult issues to improve the environment. This also included the construction of homes and explored how building control works so that this was better communicated to residents.

- 7.2. The findings of the task and finish group resulted in a list of recommendations that were approved by Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and an action plan was approved later in the year.
- 7.3. Cabinet required the progress on the action plan to be reported back to Scrutiny committee 12 months from the date of approval, ie. November 2024.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1. Therefore, officers will continue to progress the action plan and report back to Scrutiny committee in November 2024.

### **List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**

Report of the Housing Development Completion Task and Finish Group Feb 2023 to Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Housing Development Completion Task and Finish Group 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 to Cabinet

Report of the Housing Development Completion Task and Finish group 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Local Member:** Cllr Chris Schofield – Portfolio Holder for Planning

### **Appendices**

**Appendix A – Action Plan**

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Recommendation	Planned works	Responsible officer/s	Completed by
Always encourage the local authority to use its own building control service for its own developments or those of its ALMO.	Ensure that all departments of the Council consider using our in-house Building Control service by giving the opportunity to bid for all work. It is essential to retain the service to give customers choice. Our service competes directly with the market. This will include working with procurement and legal as well as Council services that procure building works.	Tracy Darke – AD Economy and Place Tabitha Lythe – Planning and Development Services Manager	On-going
Request its building control and communications services to collaborate to develop a plan to increase awareness of building control, the New Homes Quality Board and the Housing Ombudsman, to would-be homeowners in Shropshire.	Campaign to help residents be more aware of the importance of building safely and ensuring that they ensure that any developer they have to carry out works to their property meets the required standards. Work with the Communications team to develop a strategy to work with the press in promoting better awareness for customers.	Tabitha Lythe – Planning and Development Services Manager –Communications team – Nigel Newman	This work has been delayed due to the need for all Building Control Officers to go through the mandatory competency requirements that the government has introduced. There has been a specific deadline for all practicing surveyors to reach this by April 2024 otherwise they cannot carry out their role. This has been achieved but involved training and examinations. As a consequence of this, a revised date is proposed for the preparation of a communications plan of August 2024

<p>To include building control in the programme of induction training provided to elected members following all-council elections in 2025.</p>	<p>Supporting Councillors in understanding how building control works and the implications when building regulations are not met. Updating them on the national changes to competency requirements following Grenfell which has had a significant effect on the industry. This training will be part of the wider induction for members and will enable them to have a good understanding of the importance of building control in building safely.</p>	<p>Tabitha Lythe – Planning and Development Services Manager Miranda Garrard – Head of Legal Services Amanda Holyoak – Democratic Services Team Leader</p>	<p>After 2025 elections to be part of wider induction programme for members</p>
<p>Support Cornovii and Star Housing’s work in creating their own open space management company.</p>	<p>Explore the opportunity with the Housing Company and ALMO to understand whether it is feasible to set up the management company. This will give developers a further option to transfer the management of open space and enable our housing company and ALMO the opportunity to develop this as a business opportunity as well as ensuring open spaces are well managed.</p>	<p>Harpreet Rayet – CEO Cornovii and Star Housing Tracy Darke – AD Economy and Place</p>	<p>STAR Housing in partnership with Cornovii Developments Limited has begun the process of understanding the process of setting up an organisation which would act as management company. STAR Housing have two work streams which are being undertaken simultaneously which will report back to STAR Housing board during Q3 of this financial year. The first is a service charge review, this review is considering the cost of delivering all service charge related works (these are normally the services and associated costs which a management company would undertake for a new development). This will allow STAR Housing to</p>



			<p>consider its cost base position a key requirement of any management company.</p> <p>The second work stream is in relation to legal structure associated with setting up a management company. STAR Housing would undertake the role of a management agent for a management company which would be setup by a developer such as CDL.</p> <p>CDL and STAR Housing are working with a specialist PRS and management company consultant to consider the most appropriate company structure and how services can be delivered in the most effective manner.</p> <p>Revised date December 2024</p>
<p>Proceed to recruit a dedicated officer with a specific remit of ensuring well-designed, high-quality, coherent, biodiverse open space on new developments.</p>	<p>Job description and person specification prepared to cover breadth of role. Decision on management of role. This will provide a resource that can influence well designed open spaces and ensure that they are integral to the development. The role will also provide a more</p>	<p>Andy Wigley – Policy and Environment Manager Clare Featherstone – Head of Leisure, Tourism and Culture</p>	<p>Completed. Officer now in post.</p>

	strategic approach to green infrastructure.		
Review its Section 38/278 process to create a greater focus on securing legal agreements early in the planning process.	Resourcing of S38/278 work needs attention as it has been under-resourced for more than 10 years, resulting in a lot of legacy cases. Processes and procedures to be improved to enable works to proceed more quickly, to avoid many of our estates being occupied before the road works are completed/adopted. This will drive in more income and significantly reduce concerns and complaints about roads not being completed.	Tabitha Lythe – Planning and Development Services Manager Miranda Garrard – Head of Legal Services	March 2024 Progress has been made on this by securing an agency person for a three month period to focus on processes and procedures, primarily setting up templates and speeding up the process. We are also trying to deal with our legacy cases, as well as improving awareness regarding the length of time it takes for the adoption process. Partially completed