

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	14 June 2016
Subject:	Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy Review Monitoring Report
Report of:	Richard Kirk, Interim Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor D M M Davies
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 was developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and it was adopted by Council in September 2012.

The Overview and Scrutiny Working Group requested that outcomes identified in the strategy action plan be monitored and regular updates presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This report presents Committee with a summary of the key activities that have been achieved in the last 12 months (2014/15 financial year) against the 2012-16 action plan. A more comprehensive update of actions achieved against each of the action plan targets can be found at Appendix 1.

The strategy reaches end of life this year. A further Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 will be drafted using the same joint strategy format. The Homelessness element of the strategy will be progressed initially with a view to adoption before January 2017.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the achievements made to date in respect of the outcomes identified in the Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2016 Action Plan.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The Homelessness Act 2002 and Local Government Act 2003 require all District Councils to develop a strategy that sets out the Council's policies, commitments and programme for a wide range of housing matters. Following development of the Council's Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16, the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group requested that outcomes identified in the strategy action plan be monitored and regular updates be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resource Implications:

Staff time and Member time. Resource implications will be met from existing budget allocations and, where they cannot, will be subject to a growth bid within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and a separate report to Members.

Legal Implications:

The Council is required to have a Housing and Homelessness Strategy in place so that its duties under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and Homelessness Act 2002 and Local Government Act 2003 can be met.

Risk Management Implications:

The review of activities against the strategy action plan has identified that the aims and objectives of the strategy are being delivered in a timely way. This significantly reduces the risk of not meeting statutory housing and homelessness duties. The strategy should be reviewed in approximately 12 months to ensure that the strategy and associated action plan continues to be relevant in the future.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 reaches end of life at the end of December 2016. A new Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy for 2017-21 will be drafted in the next 6 months. The current format of a joint Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy will be maintained, but the homelessness element will be progressed as a matter of priority to ensure compliance with Gold Standard at the time of review.

Environmental Implications:

There are positive environmental implications in the delivery of the strategy objectives e.g. the strategy supports the delivery of new energy efficient homes and energy efficiency improvements in the existing housing stock across the borough. The development of more affordable homes, especially those to be developed in rural areas, may have a negative impact upon the environment, however the level of environmental impact and measures to mitigate them will be assessed as part of a formal planning application.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Homelessness Act 2002 (as amended) and Local Government Act 2003 require all District Councils to develop a strategy that sets out the Council's policies, commitments and programme for a wide range of housing matters. The Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 was developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and was adopted by Tewkesbury Borough Council in September 2012. A review of the activities against the strategy action plan has been undertaken as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group.

2.0 UPDATE AND KEY ACTIVITIES

- 2.1** The following is a summary of the key activities, identified within the Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012/16, which have been achieved since April 2015:

2.1.1 **New Homes**

229 new-build affordable homes were completed during 2015/16. This exceeds the target to achieve 150 new homes and 35-40% affordable housing was secured on qualifying sites over the last three years. There was a mix of property types and tenures across all of the sites and this supports the housing need of a range of client groups with different incomes.

2.1.2 Of the 229 completed affordable homes 31% were developed to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 or higher energy efficiency standards or equivalent standard. All other homes met the minimum requirement of Level 3, which is now the Building Regulations standard for all homes.

Year	Total AH	Social rent	Affordable rent	Shared ownership
2012/2013	139	51	42	46
2013/2014	155	70	36	49
2014/2015	145	40	78	23
2015/16	229	70	69	90

2.1.3 A total of 13 new affordable properties have been delivered using the cross-subsidy model in Winchcombe and Badgeworth. Further to this, two rural exception developments are in the planning system for the Parishes of Minsterworth and Sandhurst. Minsterworth has planning permission for 13 affordable homes and Sandhurst has eight affordable homes and eight market homes for families and smaller accommodation for downsizers.

The young person's supported accommodation within Tewkesbury Borough has been improved by G3/Rooftop this year. The housing association has replaced their outdated provision at Tolsey House with a redevelopment of 41 High Street in Tewkesbury Town to provide high quality self-contained accommodation for young vulnerable adults on a single site with Jubilee House.

2.1.4 **Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention**

Our Housing Advice Team provided assistance to over 1500 customers at the Borough Council offices during 2015/16 of which 1350 received housing advice and assistance for housing difficulties/homeless prevention.

2.1.5 A greater emphasis on Homelessness Prevention has been successfully implemented within the Borough in line with the DCLG's criteria for 'Gold Standard' to enable those threatened with homelessness to avoid homeless crisis by staying in their existing home (where reasonable and successfully affordable), and to move to a property of their choice in the private rented sector without the need for costly emergency accommodation if it not possible to sustain their current home. This is demonstrated in our performance:

Year	Successful homeless prevention cases	Homelessness approaches	Homelessness acceptances	Emergency accommodation (snapshot 31.3)
2014/15	94	124	111	22
2015/16	172	88	57	13

We are continuing to follow the Gold programme to implement continuous improvement to services with the DCLG and our peer review is timetabled for February 2017.

For more information on the Gold Standard and the requirements of Tewkesbury Borough Council you can visit <http://home.practitionersupport.org/> or discuss with the Housing Services Manager.

2.1.6 **Our prevention activities include:**

Housing Services are working with Revenues and Benefits to contact all those who are currently claiming discretionary housing payments (DHP) to cover the financial shortfall in their rent through under occupation. This work will be ongoing.

Welfare reform -We have also identified several cohorts of households likely to be affected by the forthcoming changes associated with the Welfare Reform Bill (2016) and will be working closely with Revenues and Benefits and partner agencies through the financial Inclusion partnership work to assist affected households in the forthcoming year.

Places of Safety -The six District Councils in Gloucestershire and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) pilot sanctuary scheme to offer target hardening and sanctuary room measures to residents wanting to remain in their homes and at risk of domestic violence was very successful and has been extended until March 2017. 13 households from Tewkesbury Borough accessed assistance through this scheme during 2015/16 and all continue to remain in their homes. All received target hardening measures (lock changes and minor adaptations) were funded by the PCC. No households required Sanctuary Measures which would have been part funded by TBC. All those who benefited were female households.

Financial housing options - Following on from the presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the redeployment of financial housing options in July 2015, we have successfully assisted our first applicants with deposits and rent in advance to move to alternative accommodation in areas where they want to live near to existing support (i.e. families and schools). We have assisted six households with a deposit to move to private rented accommodation within the borough and a further 20 without financial assistance, alleviating pressure on the households, homelessness, and social housing within the area. Our financial housing options are currently funded through reserves and we will be requesting a growth bid to request funding from the DCLG homelessness prevention budget to maintain our homeless prevention commitment in the next financial year.

Places of Safety - A joint bid from the six District Councils in Gloucestershire to the DCLG was successful in securing £500,000 for 'Places of Safety' to provide safe self-contained emergency accommodation for those fleeing Domestic Abuse in April 2015. 12 properties will be made available across the county for this purpose in partnership with Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Services (GDASS) and local housing associations. Four properties are currently available across Gloucestershire, and in Tewkesbury Borough, Severn Vale Housing Society is currently identifying two properties which will be available by July 2016.

ASB - The Council's Antisocial Behaviour Youth Diversion Worker has continued to engage with young and vulnerable (aged 11-19) members of the community. These cases cross over from ASB to Families First and also to projects such as sexual exploitation work. 37 young people and their families have been engaged with over the course of the year – and 17 have been resolved.

Homelessness

Emergency accommodation - Sourcing emergency accommodation within the Borough for homeless households continues to be problematic. Discussions, however, are ongoing with a new housing provider to source and lease emergency and temporary accommodation within our area. If successful, we hope to reduce dependence on unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation, facilitate continuity of support for homeless households, and reduce the impact of emergency accommodation costs on housing benefit.

Assertive Outreach - St Mungo's Broadway was awarded the contract to provide a Countywide Assertive Outreach Service for Rough Sleepers in May 2015. This is funded through Department for Communities and Local Government funding following a partnership bid from the District Councils in Gloucestershire to provide a local service which meets the Government's 'No Second Night Out' approach and the 'Gold Standard' for homelessness services. The rough sleepers estimate for Tewkesbury Borough in 2015 was zero. Whilst there is a low prevalence of rough sleeping within the borough, it does continue to occur and

cause concern. Since the inception of the Assertive Outreach project earlier this year 46 referrals made to St Mungo's from Tewkesbury Borough from via members of the public, Housing Services, or the Parish Councils (some of these may include referrals for the same individuals – as referrers often do not know the identity of those sleeping rough and they are not static). The Assertive Outreach funding will end in August 2016, and we are currently looking for alternative funding opportunities to maintain the service as this is a valued service.

2.1.7 Choice Based Lettings

Lettings - 409 social housing properties were let in the Borough in this financial year. A breakdown of the housing need of successful applicants indicates that 79% of these lettings were to households in: emergency, urgent or significant housing need.

Choice Based Lettings Software - There has been a re-procurement of the County Choice Based Lettings software provider this year and the contract has been awarded to Locata which is considered to offer a better service to applicants and a more cost effective solution to the current Gloucestershire Homeseeker partners – there will be an update on this to Executive Committee in July 2016.

2.1.8 Home Improvements and Adaptations

Safe at Home - The "Safe at Home" Home Improvement Agency continues to provide advice, information and help to the most vulnerable households in the Borough. They continue to provide assistance in finding builders and contractors when someone qualifies for a Disabled Facilities Grant and help to ensure the work is carried out to a good standard.

Handyman - A popular aspect of the Safe at Home service is the handyman service who not only provide a service to install minor adaptations to properties if a homeowner needs it, for instance grab rails and key safes, but they also provide a private service at a small cost to a defined client group who may need help with small jobs around the home. This helps keep the householder safe. In the 12 months to April 2016, 254 private small repair jobs were completed by the Safe at Home handyman service.

Warm and Well - Tewkesbury Borough Council, along with the other six District Councils in the county and South Gloucestershire, has been awarded £3 million government funding to help residents to keep their houses warm and lower their energy bills. The "Central Heating Fund Scheme", run by Warm and Well, is predominantly aimed at properties that are currently heated by costly 'on peak' electric systems or solid fuel, although the replacement of other forms of heating systems will also be considered. The aim is to replace these with modern energy efficient condensing boilers, which could save a household on average £250 a year, based on a family in a three bed semi-detached house. The grants are an opportunity for households which have previously been stuck with more expensive forms of heating to have new efficient gas central heating installed. This will help lower bills and potentially bring people out of fuel poverty. It is estimated up to 1,000 homes could be installed with new heating systems across Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire with the government funding. Households most at need will be targeted first with the funding so that their homes are warmer and cheaper to heat. There are qualifying criteria for the scheme and if households are either in receipt of certain benefits or have considerably high fuel bills in comparison to their household income then they may be eligible.

Householders may be entitled to a grant for cavity wall and loft insulation through the Warm and Well scheme, which can save £160 per year on fuel bills. The Warm and Well advice line dealt with 74 enquiries from households in the Borough between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None – this is an update on progress made to date.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 None – updates have been provided by the relevant Service Managers.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 The main documents driving Government Housing Policy and Legislation are:

- National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
- Homelessness Act 2002 and Housing Act 1996 (as amended) (Housing Standards).
- Local Government Act 2003.
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (Housing grants, loans and home improvement assistance).
- The Future Home Improvement Agency (CLG 2009).
- Equality Act 2010.
- Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England (Nov 2011).
- Localism Act 2011.
- The Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013.
- The Welfare Reform Bill (2016).
- The Housing and Planning Bill (2015).

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 None directly associated with this report other than staff and Member time. Any resources associated with the actions in the strategy will form part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Asset Management Plan. Resource implications will be met from existing budget allocations and, where they cannot, will be subject to a growth bid within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and a separate report to Members.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 The strategy includes considerations of sustainability and energy efficiency in addition to the social and economic implications.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 Housing is a basic human need. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to the Council's adoption of the strategy in September 2012, this is still relevant.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

- 10.1** The Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 has been approved and adopted by Council in September 2012.

Background Papers: Existing strategies and policies are available on the Council's website.

Contact Officer: Richard Kirk, Interim Environmental and Housing Services Group
Manager Tel: 01684 272259 Email: richard.kirk@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: 1. Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 Action Plan
Update June 2016.