

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	3 January 2018
Subject:	Housing Strategy Monitoring Report
Report of:	Peter Tonge, Head of Community Services
Corporate Lead:	Robert Weaver, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Cllr E J MacTiernan, Lead Member for Built Environment Cllr J Greening, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

The Housing Strategy 2017-21 was developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and it was adopted by Council in January 2017. The comprehensive Housing Strategy incorporates renewal, as well as two distinct sub strategies: the Homelessness and Prevention of Homelessness Strategy and the Tenancy Strategy.

The Strategy contains four key priorities to meet the housing needs of the borough. These are:

Priority 1: Increasing the supply of housing.

Priority 2: Prevent homelessness.

Priority 3: Meet the housing needs of specific groups.

Priority 4: Improving the health and well-being of local people.

Annual action plans are agreed by Executive Committee with regular reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review of achievements and future challenges. The action plan priorities focus on developments in the service rather than service performance which is outlined in the performance tracking.

This report presents Committee with the action plan for 2018-19 which formulates the actions to continue to meet the above priorities in line with the strategy and is attached at Appendix 1 (please note this action plan will cover January 2018-end of March 2019) and a summary of the key activities which have been achieved in the first year of the strategy which can be found in Appendix 2.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER and SUPPORT the Housing Strategy Action Plan for 2018-19.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The Homelessness Act 2002 and Local Government Act 2003 require all District Councils to develop a strategy which sets out the Council's policies, commitments and programme for a wide range of housing matters. Following development of the Council's Housing Strategy 2017-21, the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group requested that outcomes identified in the strategy action plan be monitored, regular updates be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that the Annual Action Plan is refreshed and agreed by the Executive Committee on an annual basis.

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 Homelessness Act 1996 (as amended) and Local Government Act 2003 can be met. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to publish a strategy setting out how it will address homelessness and the Localism Act 2011 places a duty on all local authorities to produce a tenancy strategy.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is expected to be implemented in April 2018 and the local authority is awaiting the associated Local Authorities Code of Guidance (the consultation document has been circulated and consultation closed on 11 December 2017). The current strategy incorporates the Homelessness Reduction Act, and the action plan is renewed annually to enable the strategy to flexibly respond to legislative changes.

Risk Management Implications:

The review of activities against the strategy action plan identifies the aims and objectives of the strategy and ensures they are being delivered in a timely way. The action plan supports the local authority in meeting statutory housing and homelessness duties, gives direction for improvement, and ensures that focus in housing development and private sector housing remains in line with housing need.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The Housing Strategy 2017-2021 and associated action plan should be reviewed in April 2019 to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in the future.

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.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and Local Government Act 2003 require all District Councils to develop a strategy which sets out the Council's policies, commitments and programme for a wide range of housing matters. The Housing Strategy 2017-21 was developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and was adopted by Tewkesbury Borough Council in January 2017. A review of the activities against the strategy action plan January – September 2017 has been undertaken, as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group, and was included at Appendix 2 to the report.

The action plan has been reviewed and updated for the period January 2018 – March 2019 and is summarised below.

2.0 UPDATE AND KEY ACTIVITIES

2.1 The following is a summary of the key activities, identified within the Housing Strategy 2017-21, which will be the focus for January 2018- April 2019. Many of the actions have been renumbered from the previous action plan following completion of some of the actions. The full detailed action plan outlining all the actions is available in Appendix 1 to the report:

2.2 Priority 1 – Increasing the supply of housing (for full details see action plan)

2.2.1 Two actions have been removed from Priority one following completion during 2017-18. These were the investigation of alternative construction methods to deliver new affordable housing on Council owned land along with detailed affordable housing policies which have also been completed for the Tewkesbury Borough Plan. One new action has been identified and is summarised below:

2.2.2 *P1.1 – Implement JCS housing policies through the development management process.* This is an additional action which has been incorporated into the current action plan to reflect the acceptance of the Joint Core Strategy by all three local authority partners in December 2017. Planning, development, and enabling services will provide consistent advice to developers through pre-application and application discussions, and consistent use of JCS policies in decision making.

2.2.3 *P1.4: Bringing empty homes back into use using enforcement and incentive options.* Long term empty homes have been identified and a current list of empty homes will be maintained. In addition, a range of tools to bring homes back into use will be identified.

2.2.4 *P1.5: Evaluate potential for promotional activities in private sector to boost availability of homes in the borough:* A plan of engagement with private sector landlords will be drawn up to incorporate promotional activities to reinvigorate the fit to rent scheme. The number of landlords participating in the scheme within the borough will be monitored to evaluate success.

2.3 Priority 2 – Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention (for full details see action plan)

2.3.1 Several actions have been removed from Priority 2 following completion. These include the improvement prevention paperwork associated with the Gold peer assessment, the prevention protocol with housing associations, improvements to the housing services website, updating the homelessness and housing options paperwork. New actions have been incorporated to meet the strategy and are identified in the report below.

2.3.2 *P1.1 Implement changes associated with the forthcoming Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA).* This is an ongoing action and considerable activity has already taken place to

prepare for the new legislation but work is ongoing. This action will be retained until after the HRA has become embedded in the service. Housing Services will continue to develop a compliant homeless database with our Homeseekerplus partners and IT provider and allocate the new burdens funding for additional staff resource and IT upgrades.

- 2.3.3** *P2.1b Reduce statutory homeless acceptances and increase homeless preventions and reliefs.* This is new action which has been introduced for this year to monitor the performance of the service on the new statutory duties and ensure they are successfully introduced.
- 2.3.4** *P2.1d Work with county local authority partners to find solutions for high risk/high support/multiple needs homeless households* – activity on this last year included a social impact bond housing first model being introduced across Gloucestershire, and the continuation of the target hardening and sanctuary scheme. Housing services will continue to work with partners on recommissioning domestic abuse services and monitor delivery from above projects for residents of the borough as well as rough sleeping in the area to ensure that the projects are delivering results.
- 2.3.5** *P2.2 – Work with local authority partners on the Gold standard programme.* Tewkesbury Borough Council Housing Services was peer reviewed in June 2017 by the DCLG and the Forest of Dean District Council and achieved **73%** in the peer review. The borough is now able to make an application for our first Bronze award. Housing Services aims to successfully submit 4 of the 10 challenges associated with the Bronze award during by March 2019 with a view to applying for silver status in 2019-20.
- 2.3.6** *P2.3a Evaluate the implications of welfare reform and establish options to minimise the risk of homelessness.* This is a new action to monitor rises in presentations from residents threatened with homelessness as a result of welfare reform. Housing services will identify causes and seek to find housing options to minimise risks based on the monitoring results.
- 2.3.7** *P2.4 Procure cost effective temporary accommodation within Tewkesbury Borough.* This action is carried forward and will become increasingly important following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act and the roll out of Universal Credit in the Borough. Following on from previous work on this action, the working group will recommend temporary accommodation solutions, and seek funding to increase the temporary accommodation within the borough to reduce financial loss on placements out of district through the new benefit regime.
- 2.3.8** *P2.5 Stop the use of private bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation except in emergencies.* This action is linked to P2.4. Previous activity has reduced the average length of time households stay in B&B to 39 days. The number of households approaching the service and needing emergency accommodation, however, has risen. Any further reduction of B&B use is likely to be effected through an increase in suitable temporary accommodation. The use of B&B will continue to be minimised as far as possible and monitored to understand the need for temporary accommodation within the borough

2.4 Priority 3 Meeting the housing needs of those who need it most (for full details see action plan).

2.4.1 All actions from 2017-18 for priority 3 have been retained for the new action plan.

2.4.2 *Commissioning a Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).* Action was delayed through 2017 pending Government consultation. Action will be progressed when guidance is received.

2.4.3 *P3.2 Establishing a local connection policy to ensure development via rural exception is prioritised for needs of local community.* The publication of the document through One Legal and Corporate Services will be progressed.

2.4.4 *P3.4 Profile accommodation based support that the Council has access to in the County.* Accommodation profiled and housing services will continue to work with the county regarding suitability by monitoring access to provision for those from the borough who approach in housing need.

2.5 Priority 4 Improving the health and well-being of local people (for full details see action plan)

2.5.1 One action has been removed from the previous action plan as it is now a service standard. This is to respond to customer complaints about housing conditions within 3 working days.

2.5.2 *P4.1b Work with RPs and partners to offer advice and assistance with grants, loans and support services to vulnerable and older people to help insulate, adapt and maintain homes.* Environmental services will develop action plan in conjunction with providers identifying what services and support can be provided. Develop and maintain communication plan setting out how vulnerable residents can be made aware of support available.

2.5.3 *P4.1c Monitor levels of private sector housing complaints.* Environmental Services will identify a basely to compare quarterly, review current way of recording complaints to allow for the production of a monthly report.

2.5.4 *P4.1d Identify existing Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and implement the new regulations concerning HMOs.* This action has been updated to incorporate new regulations. Environmental services will develop HMO strategy to: identify potential HMOs, contact landlords to confirm status. Licence those which fall within current definition, risk assess and implement an inspection programme.

2.5.5 *P4.2 Reduce poor quality housing by taking appropriate action to deal with HHSRS category 1 hazards.* Environmental services will continue to ensure that enforcement action is in line with enforcement policy and monitor how landlords resolve category 1 hazards. Housing services will monitor the outcomes for residents affected by Prohibition Notices.

2.5.6 A comprehensive update on the activities planned against each of the objectives outlined in the strategy, can be found in Appendix 1 (Housing Strategy 2017-21 Action Plan Update).

An update on the activities undertaken during 2017-18 can be found in Appendix 2.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None – this is an update on forthcoming actions following progress made to meet strategy to date.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 None – updates and new actions have been provided by the relevant Heads of Service.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Housing Strategy 2017-21.

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 & 2004 (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.
- Deregulation Act 2015.
- Welfare Reform Acts 2012 and 2016.
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- Housing and Planning Act 2016.

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. Resources 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 consideration 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 2016 and this is still relevant.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 The Housing Strategy 2017-21 has been approved and adopted by Council in January 2017.

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

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Appendices:

1. Housing Strategy 2017-21 Action Plan 2018-19.
2. Housing Strategy 2017-21 Action Plan Update September 2017.