

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	1 December 2015
Subject:	Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy Review Monitoring Report
Report of:	Val Garside, Environmental and Housing Services Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Cllr D M M Davies
Number of Appendices:	1

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.

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 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 should be reviewed in approximately 12 months 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. 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 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, that have been achieved since April 2014:

2.1.1 145 new-build affordable homes were completed. 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 145 completed affordable homes 24% 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.

2.1.3 In terms of innovative solutions to funding or delivering affordable housing, a total of 13 new affordable properties have been delivered using the cross-subsidy model in Winchcombe and Badgeworth. Further to this, 2 rural exception developments are in the planning system for the Parishes of Minsterworth and Sandhurst. Both will achieve new affordable housing as well as market housing for families and smaller accommodation

for downsizers.

- 2.1.4** We have completed 132 Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) between April 2014 and March 2015 at a value of £772,410.
- 2.1.5** Partnership working across all six Gloucestershire Districts continues to facilitate solutions to health improvements, crime reduction and housing matters.
- 2.1.6** Our Housing Advice Team continues to provide advice and assistance via a drop-in service to over 600 customers annually.
- 2.1.7** Even though the Mortgage Rescue Scheme was discontinued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) at the end of 2013, Tewkesbury Borough Council continues to offer housing advice, negotiations, money advice in association with advice agencies, and homelessness assistance to this group. Two households facing possession action in mortgaged properties were able to remain in their own home during 2014-15 and one household was accepted as homeless and assisted to find alternative accommodation.
- 2.1.8** 424 properties were let in the borough in this financial year; the majority of households, 39%, were in silver band and 36% in gold band. 23% of households were in bronze band 2% were in emergency band.
- 2.1.9** With regards to the under-occupation charge (commonly known as 'bedroom tax') housing associations have reported to us that more households were willing to 'stay and pay' than initially anticipated. We are currently 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. All those who are claiming DHP and are under occupying by two bedrooms in Tewkesbury Borough have been contacted to offer housing advice, and 5 households have now moved to more suitable accommodation.
- 2.1.10** At March 2015, Chapter 1 Housing Association manages 12 properties with 24 units of accommodation in total in the borough as part of the Gloucestershire Private Sector Leasing Scheme.
- 2.1.11** At May 2015, there were 6 landlords with 9 properties awarded 'Fit to Rent' status.
- 2.1.12** The council's Anti-Social 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. 39 young people and their families have been engaged with over the course of the year 2014/15.
- 2.1.13** A greater emphasis on Homelessness Prevention has been successfully implemented within the Borough in line with the Government's 'Gold Standard' to enable those threatened with homelessness to avoid homeless crisis by staying in their existing home (where reasonable and affordable), and to move to a property of their choice in the private rented sector without the need for costly emergency accommodation.
- 2.1.14** A snapshot of applicants in B&B accommodation as at 4 November 2015 shows 10 households in B&B in Gloucester, of which seven are single men (five are over the age of 35), two are single women and one is a pregnant woman.
- 2.1.15** St Mungo's Broadway was awarded the contract to provide an Assertive Outreach Service for Rough Sleepers in May 2015. This is funded through DCLG 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.

2.1.16 Following on from the presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the re-deployment of financial housing options, we have successfully assisted our first applicants with deposits to move to alternative accommodation in areas where they want to live near to existing support (i.e. families and schools). We have now assisted three family households with a deposit to move to private rented accommodation within the borough, alleviating pressure on social housing within the area.

2.1.17 County Sanctuary Scheme:

- The six District Councils in Gloucestershire and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) piloted a 12 month sanctuary scheme in 2014 to offer target hardening and sanctuary room measures to residents wanting to remain in their homes and at risk of domestic violence. This was very successful and is due to come to an end. Both the PCC and the District Councils have agreed to extend this scheme until March 2017.
- Seven households from Tewkesbury Borough accessed assistance through this scheme during the pilot year and all continue to remain in their homes. All received target hardening measures (lock changes and minor adaptations) funded by the PCC. No households required Sanctuary Measures which would have been part funded by TBC. All those who benefited were female households. One household declined assistance.

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

2.1.19 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. In Tewkesbury Borough, Severn Vale Housing Society has agreed to provide two properties within the borough. The legal contracts have now been finalised and it is hoped that the first of these properties will be available in December 2015.

2.1.20 Eight Category 1 housing health and safety hazards (the most serious) were removed in privately rented accommodation in 2014/15 as a result of interventions by Tewkesbury Borough Council Officers.

2.1.21 The total number of measures installed through the Warm and Well Scheme in the period was 99, in 96 properties. The Council continues to contribute to the actions of the Board through support of the Warm and Well Scheme and Safe at Home Scheme and through removing Category 1 hazards in properties.

2.2 A comprehensive update on the activities achieved to date against each of the objectives outlined in the strategy, can be found in Appendix 1 (Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 Action Plan Update).

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 & 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

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 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.

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Appendices: Housing, Renewal and Homelessness Strategy 2012-16 Action Plan
Update May 2015