

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	24 January 2017
Subject:	Housing Strategy 2017-2021
Report of:	Housing Strategy Review Working Group
Corporate Lead:	Robert Weaver, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Cllr D M M Davies, Lead Member for Built Environment Cllr R E Allen, Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

The Housing Strategy 2017-2021, which includes the Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Tenancy Strategy, has been developed by Officers with a Member Working Group made up of eight representatives from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Four key priorities have been concluded from the challenges facing Tewkesbury Borough Council in the foreseeable future. A number of objectives under each priority will be the areas of focus for annual action plans. The first year action plan for the calendar year 2017 has been set by the Member Working Group and endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. For each year of the Strategy an annual action plan will be produced and taken to the Executive Committee for approval. The Strategy and action plans will be monitored by the Lead Members together with bi-annual reports for monitoring to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Housing Strategy 2017-2021 can be found in Appendix 1 along with an Equalities Impact Assessment in Appendix 2.

Recommendation:

To ADOPT the Housing Strategy 2017-2021 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

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.

The Council is required to have an up-to-date five year Homelessness Strategy and therefore has developed, through an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group, an overarching Housing Strategy that includes the Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy.

Once adopted by Council, the new Housing Strategy 2017-2021 will be regularly monitored in accordance with the arrangements set out at Paragraph 2 of this report.

Resource Implications:

Staff 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 it, and the associated action plan, continues to be relevant in the future.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The Strategy will include the Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy and will be monitored in accordance with the arrangements set out at Paragraph 2 of this report.

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 Council is required to have an up-to-date five year Homelessness Strategy and therefore has developed, through an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group, an overarching Housing Strategy that includes the Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy.

2.0 HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-2021

2.1 The Member Working Group met monthly with the first meeting on 18 August 2016 and the final meeting on 12 December 2016. Officers presented the housing and homelessness evidence base to Members to inform them of the whole picture of needs and challenges in Tewkesbury Borough. Members agreed priorities and objectives for public and stakeholder consultation.

2.2 The Housing Strategy 2017-2021 is an overarching strategic document that takes into account the principle national and local issues that are likely to affect Tewkesbury Borough in the foreseeable future.

2.3 Key Challenges

2.3.1 The evidence base found there were an extensive number of challenges for Tewkesbury Borough Council; these can be found in Section 4 of the Housing Strategy. Some of these challenges have been summarised below:

- 2.3.2** Affordability of housing varies across our Borough with average house prices at £225,000 and average incomes at £23,524. This means the income to house price ratio as of 2015 was 9.56. The east of the Borough is the most expensive with the highest values fetching £600,000.
- 2.3.3** The number of households registered for affordable housing to rent and buy in the Borough is steadily increasing as the disparity between incomes and house prices continues to rise.
- 2.3.4** Ensuring adequate supply of affordable housing will be an increasing challenge for Tewkesbury Borough unless we can implement robust local planning policies through the Borough Plan.
- 2.3.5** We will need to work even more closely with our residents and partners including housing associations to mitigate the effects of Welfare Reform on tenancy affordability.
- 2.3.6** Ensuring that adequate accommodation is available for people in crisis i.e. emergency situations, and who are homeless or who may become homeless continues to put pressure on the Council. However we will continue to tackle this with a preventative approach; this will also aid Tewkesbury Borough Council in implementing the forthcoming Homelessness Reduction Bill.
- 2.3.7** Achieving the GOLD Standard - based on the Government report 'Making Every Contact Count', the challenge is a local authority, sector-led peer review scheme designed to help local authorities deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services. The challenge follows a 10 step continuous improvement approach local authorities in front line housing services.
- 2.3.8** Limited access to specialist accommodation within the Borough that is accommodation-based supported housing, temporary and emergency accommodation such as bed and breakfast, and so on that makes it difficult for our residents to access the support they need.
- 2.3.9** We will need to ensure we address the needs of specific groups such as older people, people with disabilities, travellers and the needs of our most rural communities in accordance with our strategic accommodation assessments.
- 2.3.10** Working with private landlords will be essential and developing a close working relationship with our private rented sector has become more prevalent as we will seek opportunities to discharge our homelessness duty into private rented accommodation, seek increased housing standards in our Borough to ensure the homes are safe and ensure landlords and tenants have adequate support.

2.4 Four key priorities

2.4.1 The Strategy sets out the housing and homelessness challenges and explains how the Council intends to address these issues through four key priorities:

- Priority 1 - Increase the supply of housing.
- Priority 2 - Homelessness and homelessness prevention.
- Priority 3 - Meeting the housing needs of those who need it most.
- Priority 4 - Improving the health and wellbeing of local people.

2.4.2 Key objectives are detailed within each of the priority areas where targets and outcomes for delivery will be detailed in the annual action plan. Our targets and outcomes for delivering the objectives will be shaped annually in order to be proactive as well as re-active to the changing needs of our community and the challenges facing us when new government policies are implemented. The action plan is to be as flexible as possible so that the Council can continue to take action where necessary and start new actions when appropriate to do so over the five year Strategy period.

2.4.3 Included in the Strategy documents are the evidence base, the Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2021 and the Tenancy Strategy 2017-2021. The Strategy and associated documents can be found at Appendix 1.

2.5 Monitoring and future action plans

2.5.1 Action plans for each year of the Strategy will be produced annually and taken to the Executive Committee for approval.

2.5.2 The Strategy and action plans will be monitored by the Lead Members together with bi-annual reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.6 Equalities Impact Assessment

2.6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and it is felt that there is a range of customers already accessing the housing services provided across the Borough. It is acknowledged that there are some residents who could potentially benefit from our services who do not apply for housing. Through the consultation process, we have also endeavoured to consult with particular groups in addition to the general consultation activities for all other stakeholders. This has provided an opportunity to identify specific housing issues for Tewkesbury Borough.

2.6.2 It is believed that no groups are directly or indirectly discriminated against as all customers have been considered in the Strategy in accordance with wider policies such as the HomeseekerPlus Allocations Policy and legislative requirements.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 A six week public consultation on the evidence base for the Housing Strategy commenced on 6 September 2016 and ran for a period of 6 weeks. It asked all stakeholders to identify gaps, to give support to the four priorities and input on the objectives under each priority.

4.2 The Housing Services Team held a stakeholder event for partners and an open public session on 12 October 2016.

4.3 The results from the consultation were publicised and responses considered as part of the development of the Housing Strategy.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 The main documents are:

- Council Plan 2016-20.
- Emerging Joint Core Strategy and Tewkesbury Borough Plan.
- Housing Strategy 2017-2021.
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014.
- Gypsy Traveller and Traveller Showpeople Assessment 2016.
- Enforcement Policy.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 The main documents driving government housing policy and legislation are:

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

6.2 Forthcoming relevant legislation:

- Homelessness Reduction Bill.

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 and, through consultation and the Member Working Group, all relevant groups have been considered.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 The Housing Strategy 2017-2021 has been endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 January 2017.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy 2017-2021.
Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment.