

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	16 January 2018
<b>Subject:</b>	Housing Strategy Monitoring Report
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Community Services
<b>Corporate Lead:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Lead Member for Built Environment Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	One

## **Executive Summary:**

The Housing Strategy 2017-21 was developed by an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group and 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:

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 the 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 the Executive Committee with the action plan for 2019-20, which formulates the actions to continue to meet the above priorities in line with the strategy will cover the period April 2019-March 2020; and a summary of the key activities which have been achieved in the second year of the strategy. The proposed activities for year 3 can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Recommendation:**

**To CONSIDER and SUPPORT the Housing Strategy Action Plan for 2019-2020.**

## **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 was implemented in April 2018. 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 2020 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. 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 April 2019-March 2020) (year 3 of the strategy).

2017-18 has been a period of significant change which included legislative change such as enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017), new Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) criteria, the local implementation of Universal Credit and embedding of other welfare reforms.

Many of the actions in the previous action plan were focussed on implementing these changes and have been completed and deleted from the current plan. Others have been amended to reflect ongoing challenges.

The full detailed action plan outlining all the actions is available in Appendix 1.

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

**3.1** One action has been changed in priority one following completion during 2019-2020. This was regarding guidance notes for commuted sums. The process is now mapped and engagement with registered providers to maximise the opportunities for commuted sums will commence in year 3. Progress made during year 2 on actions associated with priority 1 are outlined in the action plan but activities of note are outlined below.

**3.2** *P1.2 – Identify TBC owned land suitable for future affordable housing development and consider the use of modular housing where suitable:*

Projects have commenced on two former garage sites at Staverton and Winchcombe – both of which are proposing modern build methods. A planning application has been submitted for Staverton for seven homes, and an application for the Winchcombe site is anticipated in the new year.

**3.3** *P1.5: Evaluate potential for promotional activities in private sector to boost availability of homes in the borough:*

A bid for £750,000 has been submitted to the MCHLG in November 2018 by Housing Services for the Homeseeker partnership (Gloucestershire and West Oxon). The project is to incentivise landlords to accommodate homeless people in suitable accommodation as well as advertise participant landlords on the Homeseekerplus website. If successful, it is anticipated that this funding will have a very positive impact on the availability of accommodation for this group.

### **4.0 Priority 2 – Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention (for full details see action plan)**

**4.1** Several actions have been changed or removed priority 2 following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the associated end of the gold standard programme. Similarly changes to actions associated with the impact of welfare reform have been introduced to counter the effects noted. Progress made during year 2 on actions associated with priority 2 are outlined in the action plan but activities of note are outlined below.

**4.2** *P2.1 Implement changes associated with the forthcoming Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA).* This action has been completed following the successful introduction of the new legislation, database, as well as the associated duty to refer, and the appointment of a new member of staff (.5 fte) using new burdens funding. Whilst there is further work to improve our processes as well a further development with the database provider, the service was prepared for change, and Housing Services staff managed the transition seamlessly; delivering the prescribed increased service to homeless households within timeframes outlined in the codes of guidance.

**4.3** *P2.1d Work with county local authority partners to find solutions for high risk/high support/multiple needs homeless households –*

Our partnership work with local authority partners has continued to grow and yield positive results for residents. Activity of note last year included the successes of the social impact bond (SIB) housing first model, places of safety, the homeless outreach project, target hardening and sanctuary.

It is thought that the success of the SIB reduced the numbers of rough sleepers across the county from 33-40 (on previous years) to 19 in 2018. Whilst media concerns have been raised regarding the MCHLG methodology of rough sleeper counts, it is worth noting that the methodology has not changed for many years. It is reasonable to conclude this year's estimate, therefore, is comparable with previous counts and indicates significant progress.

**4.4** *P2.3a Evaluate the implications of the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) and other forms of welfare reform on housing costs. This was a new action in year 2 to monitor the effects of welfare reform on residents – and in particular on homelessness.*

The demand on discretionary housing payments has increased significantly - largely as a result of Universal Credit and demand is likely to exceed the allocation for the year.

No significant rise in homeless presentations have been noted through the introduction of UC alone (without other interactive factors).

New UC claims during homelessness are causing higher costs to the authority whilst in emergency accommodation.

Benefit capped larger households remain problematic whilst homeless as registered providers are reluctant to accept the large households who cannot afford their rents.

**4.5** *P2.3 Establish options to minimise the risk of homelessness and costs associated with welfare reform:*

The Revenues and Benefits Service has offered a personalised budgeting advice for all those affected by welfare reform. This will be ending in April 2019 but will continue through Citizens Advice.

Actions are proposed to limit the number of long term discretionary housing payment (dhp) claimants through case management meetings and robust joint action between Revs and Bens and Housing to ensure that households move on to more affordable accommodation and dhps funds remain available for those in crisis.

Prevention initiatives for the private sector for those on Universal Credit will be developed and formalised.

Housing Services will continue to encourage social landlords to notify housing if considering eviction – particularly for arrears associated with welfare reform.

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

**5.1** All actions from 2017-18 for priority 3 have been retained for the new action plan but some have been amended to reflect the progress undertaken to date. Significant progress and actions are outlined below.

**5.2** *P3.1 Support the completion of the Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (previously known as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.(SHMA):*

The LHNA has been commissioned and tenders to provide the service are currently being assessed. It is anticipated that the assessment will be complete by December 2019.

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

**6.1** All actions have been retained for 2019/20 – although the partnership working to encourage resident take up of employment has been broadened to incorporate additional partners (4.3) – significant changes/ progress are outlined below.

**6.2** *4.1d Identify existing houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and implement new regulations concerning HMOs.*

New regulations came into force in October 2018 altering the definition of HMOs which require mandatory licencing. The HMO license fee has been revised to ensure full cost recovery and 11 new applications are currently being processed.

As part of these activities an unlicensed HMO in very poor condition was identified in Tewkesbury – resulting in seven prohibition notices on individual units and an improvement notice on the entire building. Affected households needing assistance were rehoused through Housing Services and a preliminary plea hearing is scheduled for January 2019.

**6.3** *4.3 this action has been broadened to reflect the breadth of partnership working:*

*Work with our partners to actively encourage individuals to take up education, employment or other activities to support independence and create a sense of worth.*

The personalised housing plans associated with homeless applications involve active referrals and engagement by applicants with many community based support providers. Active engagement with support is monitored as part of our new statutory duties.

In year 3 Housing Services will continue to engage with the job centre during applications and with the partner agencies within the Financial Inclusion Partnership. The service is also committed to developing a strong relationship with the Bromford Neighbourhood Coaches to support vulnerable individuals in housing crisis.

**6.4** 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).

**7.0** **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

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

**8.0** **CONSULTATION**

**8.1** None – updates and new actions have been provided by the relevant Service Managers.

**9.0** **RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

**9.1** Housing Strategy 2017-21.

## **10.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**10.1** 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.

## **11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)**

**11.1** 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.

## **12.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**

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

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

**13.1** Housing is a basic human need. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to the Council's adoption of the strategy in September 2016, this is still relevant.

#### **14.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**

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

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**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 Review and proposed actions Year 3 2019-2020.