

**HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY
MEMBER UPDATE 2024**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The aim of this strategy is to set out the council's approach to ensure all residents can access good quality housing, whatever stage of life they are at and can access a range of appropriate support and advice to deal with housing related issues, including preventing homelessness and maintaining housing standards.
- 1.2 The strategy assists partnership working with other agencies, giving clarity on the council's approach.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress related to the implementation of the Housing & Homelessness Prevention Strategy published in October 2023.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing & Homelessness Prevention Strategy was published in October 2023. It is a statutory requirement to have a homelessness strategy in place and good practice to have a wider housing strategy to support the delivery of new homes. The strategy underpins the operational framework for officers and partner agencies responsible for delivering housing and housing related services to residents.
- 2.2 The published strategy sets out the council's strategic approach in three themes:

Theme 1- Increasing the supply of good quality homes for residents, and prospective residents, for every stage of life.

Theme 2- Support residents to access affordable, well managed and maintained housing in the private and social sectors.

Theme 3- Work proactively to improve the condition and energy efficiency of housing in the borough.

- 2.3 The document provides an overview of the council's position for each theme and sets out objectives and deliverable action points to form a Delivery Plan.
- 2.4 Future update reports will include data analysis to show the impact these actions are having. Officers would like members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to advise on how they would like the information presented to them which can be discussed in the meeting.

PROGRESS TO DATE

3.

- 3.1 Service and Technical Managers have included action points into their service plans to ensure progress is tracked and reported on appropriately. A project management approach is being applied to delivering actions with appropriate input from teams outside of the housing specialisms (Communications, IT, Policy, and Planning). This approach ensures all likely resourcing implications for delivering specific actions are considered.
- 3.2 The table below shows the objectives and actions set out for the three strategic themes.

Theme 1- Increasing the supply of good quality homes for residents, and prospective residents, for every stage of life.

| Objective 1 – Ensure up to date housing needs information to inform housing priorities in the Borough |
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| Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Utilise the council's housing allocation pool data to monitor the need for social rented and temporary accommodation.2) Source quarterly market information via Rushmoor Homes Ltd on need and demand for private rented and home ownership in the borough3) Access information from Registered Providers (RPs), Homes England and Hampshire Enabler's Network on need and demand for shared ownership and outright sale housing in the borough4) Engage with younger people (18–24-year-olds) on housing need and aspirations via colleges and other groups. |
| Progress To date: <p>The Strategic Housing team have access to housing allocation pool system and work with housing options on qualitative demand information. Rushmoor Homes information is shared</p> |

with the council on demand for private rented homes. Information is also shared with Neighbouring RPs and Homes England on wider housing demand and delivery.

Hampshire County Council has commissioned a consultant to work on Extra Care demand in the borough. This council's officers have arranged a workshop with Nepali community leaders to ensure the future housing needs of this group appropriately represented in this work. Evidence from Frimley Integrated Care system demonstrates that this population demographic experiences greater health inequalities than others due to a combination of being an immigrant community, a partially veteran community, and an older community. Appropriate Housing and healthcare combined will help reduce this.

A consultation with younger people is scheduled for the end of this year.

Objective 2 – Implement plans and policies which encourage the delivery of a diverse range of housing types and tenures, and which supports the local housing market.

Actions:

- 1) Through the existing Local Plan policies and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- 2) Through the emerging Local Plan policies

Progress to date:

Local Plan making process is not yet started. The council's affordable housing supplementary planning document does need to be updated. This will require a formal consultation; the planning policy team are considering appropriate timing for the work this municipal year.

Objective 3 – Work collaboratively with developers in the private and social sectors and other partner agencies to maximise a sustainable housing supply and overcome challenges

Actions:

- 1) The Council's housing enabling and planning functions will support developers to submit policy compliant applications through informal discussions and the pre application planning advice

Progress to date:

In 2023/24 the council was not able to deliver its target of 150 affordable homes. Over the last 3-year period 428 new affordable homes have been built. Housing delivery has been hit by the economic conditions over the last couple of years particularly the rapid increase in interest rates. As much of Rushmoor's affordable housing comes as a result of s106 the delays in starts and completions of schemes has substantially impacted delivery of affordable housing. Registered Providers have in the past compensated to some degree when there have been market slowdowns however the increases in interest rates and the pressures from investment required into existing stock, including building safety, and the impact on their income of previous imposed rent reductions has limited their investment capacity. This combination of factors has caused the underperformance.

In the last year nine of the homes delivered were as a result of direct provision by the council and Rushmoor Homes Limited delivering refugee and temporary accommodation using Department of Levelling Up Housing and Community (DLUHC) Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) rounds 1 & 2. Announcement on Round 3 funding application is awaited.

Theme 2- Support residents to access affordable, well managed and maintained housing in the private and social sectors.

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| Objective 1 – Continue to focus resources on preventing homelessness |
| Actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) to be prioritised to resource specialist, homelessness prevention roles.2) Working with statutory and voluntary partners to support people at risk of homelessness.3) Plan for the changes to the Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant which ends in 2025. |
| Progress to date: <p>Work on budgeting has been carried out at senior level to ensure HPG is preserved for specialist roles. Intensive prevention work is being carried out with partner organisations, including placing people into temporary accommodation. Housing Options Manager is working through the impact of RSIG and alternative grant funding options. Hampshire County Council's proposals for changes to supported housing funding are on hold until after the general election.</p> <p>Work continues to seek a solution to find an alternative site for Clayton Court Managed by Mears, now available to the council for placements until the end of 2026. Airport Lodge, managed by The Society of St James (SSJ), has replaced North Lane Lodge as stage 1 homeless accommodation. SSJ are taking Oak Tree House through planning and have submitted a bid for capital funding to Homes England to convert into stage 2 move on accommodation from Airport Lodge, next door. Low level support to independent living will be provided by Airport Lodge staff to residents at the proposed accommodation in Oak Tree House at no additional cost to the council.</p> |
| Objective 2 – Re imagine the housing advice front line to increase accessibility by proactively communicating information and advice to residents to prevent them getting into crisis situations |
| Actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Prepare a social media communications plan for specific groups at risk of homelessness, for example young people.2) Further develop and promote the council's digital systems to increase the council's self-service provision, whilst continuing to support more vulnerable residents to access support services in more traditional ways |
| Progress to date: <p>The council's communications team have scheduled in a programme of work. Housing options are reviewing reasons why households are contacting them, including reasons people are becoming homeless, and will be prioritising updated information/guidance, based on greatest demand. Additional work is being carried out to improve the digital self-serve offer.</p> |
| Objective 3 – Work collaboratively with partners in the private and social sector to ensure homes are accessible and well managed. |
| Actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Ensuring households are aware of and able to access adaptations to support them to remain in their own home through the day-to-day work of the Private Sector Housing Team2) Continue to run the Registered Provider Review Process of RP scrutiny |

Progress to date:

Work on aids and adaptations continues and the RP Review process is completed for 2023/24 with a report to OSC. It is expected that a further round of reviews will be approved for 2024/25.

Theme 3- Work proactively to improve the condition and energy efficiency of housing in the borough.**Objective 1 – Focus staff resource on enforcing standard and housing conditions in the knowledge that good housing conditions usually means good thermal efficiency****Actions:**

- 1) Continue the regulatory and enforcement work of the Private Sector Housing Team
- 2) Scrutinise our RP partners through the work of the Annual Registered Providers Review Group

Progress to date:

Regulatory & enforcement work continues and the RP's attending the Review meetings are appropriately challenged by members where the level of service to residents is unsatisfactory. Members continue to work with officers on overcoming problematic complaints. It is proposed that the RP Reviews take a more strategic approach with RP partners.

Objective 2 – Communicate effectively, including via digital platforms to residents and landlords about the support, advice, and funding available to them to install energy efficiency measures in the existing, older stock**Actions:**

- 1) Seek to ensure funding is focussed on the properties and households most in need.
- 2) Implement an annual communications plan so that landlords and residents are aware of their rights and responsibilities, how to get help accessing grants and loans available to assist them to improve housing conditions.
- 3) Ensure website information is up to date and linking to appropriate energy efficiency information and schemes

Progress to date:

Vivid are investing £10million to retrofit 800 homes in Fernhill ward. The council is supporting Vivid to encourage the take up of retrofitting measures to the most vulnerable households.

The council is part of the Warmer Homes Consortium, led by Portsmouth City Council to deliver energy efficiency measures in private domestic properties, this is published on the council's website. The consortium targets off gas properties with an Energy Performance Certificate rating of D or below. Data for Rushmoor shows to date:

- Applications Received: 18
- Properties Partially Completed: 0
- Properties Completed: 1
- Active Measures: 7
- Measures Completed: 1
- Funding spent: £7275.00.

The Communications team have scheduled further communications work into their Service Plan to encourage residents to take up the opportunities available to them.

Objective 3 – Work with partner organisations to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and seek innovative to achieve retrofitting (for example working with businesses to carbon offsetting through carbon credits to RPs for retrofitting) to improve residents health and wellbeing and reduce carbon emissions.

Actions:

- 1) Ensuring that the communications plan promotes the services and funding packages available to partner organisations.
- 2) Explore the development of the Carbon Offsetting Scheme currently being piloted by RP partners and HACT

Progress to date:

The Communications team have scheduled work into their Service Plan. HACT have been invited to re-engage with the council and discuss options to link businesses with RPs in the borough.

6. CONCLUSION

The teams involved with implementing the new strategy have made a good start with most of the objectives now being progressed. Cross team collaboration and a project management approach to delivery ensures the actions are appropriately planned for and resourced across the organisation and ensures appropriate oversight by Executive Heads of Services and greater transparency of monitoring and reporting.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the progress made so far.

Members are asked to give direction on the way data is presented in the next update report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Housing & Homelessness Prevention Strategy [Rushmoor Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2023 - 2027](#)

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