

COMMUNITY POLICY & REVIEW PANEL

14th September 2017

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Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing

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REPORT NO: EHH 1711

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2017

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides the Panel with an overview of the progress made in the delivery of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy over the six-month period from March 2017 to September 2017. The Strategy is designed to be a rolling document to enable it to be adapted to reflect changes in national housing policies.
- 1.2. Members are asked to note that the council has, over the given period, made good progress in delivering its housing objectives and targets and, in view of the progress to date, together with changing policy contexts, has updated the strategy and delivery plan.

2. BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy was approved by the council in February this year. For reference, a copy of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy document is attached at **appendix 1**, whilst the associated Delivery Plan is given at **appendix 2**.
- 2.2. With reference to policy and local context, the strategy sets out the council's housing objectives for Rushmoor; whilst the delivery plan sets out the steps to be taken to deliver and monitor the council's objectives. Collectively, these are established under the following strategic housing themes;
 - (a) The right homes in the right places;
 - (b) Making the best use of housing stock;
 - (c) Helping people solve their housing problems and provide a suitable home when needed; and
 - (d) Enabling people to live in good quality accommodation that is right for their needs.
- 2.3. Generally, delivery of the strategic themes, objectives and plan is undertaken by the council's housing officers in association with partners. Together, progress is subject to review at six weekly housing strategy meetings.

Monitoring is also undertaken by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health, who receives a monthly briefing.

- 2.4. However, as part of the approval of the strategy, a commitment was also given to report updates and delivery progress twice yearly to the Community Policy and Review Panel. This report is submitted in part fulfilment of this commitment and provides an overview of key achievements, opportunities and challenges arising for each strategic theme over the first six month period since adoption of the current strategy.

NB: In providing a summary update on these issues, it is not the intention of this report to cover any specific housing issues or projects in detail. However, the Housing Service can provide supplementary reports on any specific issues as required. The next update is scheduled to come to Community Policy and Review Panel in March 2018.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

3.1. Theme 1: The right homes in the right places

What has changed? Achievements and opportunities

- (a) An increasing number of affordable homes being completed. Rushmoor's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), published in 2016, set an affordable housing delivery target of 163 homes a year. The Affordable Housing Delivery programme for 2017/18 indicates that the council is on target to deliver 229 homes, compared with 106 units in 2016/17 and 54 units in 2015/16 with 313 units provisionally programmed for 2018/19 onwards. (Action 2.4)
- (b) Housing and planning officers are working closely to secure policy compliant schemes supported by the publication of the Affordable Housing Development Guidance note in August 2017. (Action 4.1) **Appendix 3.**
- (c) Good sized housing sites are being brought forward through the planning process, for example Queensgate, Farnborough providing a further 80 new homes. (Action 2.6)

What has changed? - Challenges

- (a) Removal of prioritisation for those buying shared ownership (other than those from a military background), except on schemes with a section 106 agreement already in place. (Action 1.3)
- (b) Universal Credit, which affects being able to deliver homes for under 35 year olds. Mainstream, preferred partner Registered Provider's (RP's) are pulling out of this area and officers are looking at who will deliver this in the future. Changes to the supported housing funding model, also makes this form of housing less attractive for RP's to deliver. (Action 4.2 and 4.7)

- (c) Viability challenges by developers seeking to reduce or eliminate affordable housing. Housing and Planning are working to secure policy compliant schemes wherever we can.

3.2. Theme 2: Making the best use of housing stock

What has changed? Achievements and opportunities

- (a) Local housing income research has been completed and was presented to the Community and Policy Review Panel in June 2017, details are included in appendix 4 of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. (Action1.1)
- (b) RP's have agreed in principle to share household profiling data which will help improve understanding of the make-up of households living in the affordable housing stock. (Action1.2).
- (c) Lettings plan targets have been achieved on the Maida phase of Wellesley ensuring maximum movement/occupancy for each unit available. (Action 3.2)
- (d) In August, a new Empty Homes Policy was published. Officers across the council are providing additional support in the form of making inspections and providing information to empty homes lead officer. The policy is attached as **appendix 4** and will form part of the strategy when it is next updated in March 2018. (Action 4.1)
- (e) Dialogue has started with Hampshire County Council on the Open House Scheme, to let the properties of those going into residential care to homeless households. (Action 4.5)

What has changed? Challenges

- (a) Mismatch between household sizes and accommodation available; under occupation in the owner-occupied sector and overcrowding in the private rented sector. A new project will be scoped at the end of the financial year to provide advice and support to people wanting to downsize. (Action 5.3)

3.3. Theme 3: Helping people solve their housing problems and provide a suitable home when needed

What has changed? Achievements and opportunities

- (a) Trailblazer project roll-out in Hart and Rushmoor to prepare for the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and develop a person-centred approach to homelessness prevention. This project includes the recruitment of new staff, the Trailblazer manager and three health and well-being officers all funded by DCLG and detailed on pages 31-32 of the Rushmoor Housing and Homelessness Strategy. (Action 1.2)
- (b) Scheduled officer and member review meetings should improve understanding of the demand from armed service personnel. (Action1.3)

- (c) The private tenancy officer is working with landlords to secure private rent properties, including identifying vacated private rent properties from households being housed through the allocation pool, detailed on page 31 of the Rushmoor Housing and Homelessness Strategy. (Action 2.1)
- (d) North Lane Lodge has been open for seven months and has achieved positive outcomes for street homelessness in Aldershot town centre, detailed on page 32 of the Rushmoor Housing and Homelessness Strategy. (Action 3.3)

What has changed? Challenges

- (a) The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, notably around the lengthening of the trigger time for the statutory homelessness duty from 28 to 56 days and a widening of the duty to encompass those who are not in priority need and those who are homeless because of their own actions (intentionally). This widening of the statutory duty is likely to increase the numbers of people approaching the council for advice, assistance and temporary accommodation. (Action1.1)
- (b) Increasing vulnerability of clients; including their ability to be able to access employment to improve their own circumstances. (Action1:1)
- (c) The Vine Day Centre now only accepts clients proactively engaging. (Action 3.2)

3.4. Theme 4: Enabling people to live in good quality accommodation that is right for their needs

What has changed? Achievements and opportunities

- (a) In April 2017 the Home Improvement Agency contract ended and the caseworker was TUPE'D across to the council as a grant support officer supporting vulnerable residents through the Disabled Facility Grant process. (Action 2.1)
- (b) A Financial Assistance Policy is being drafted to enable the council to extend the scope of works that can be carried out with grant assistance.(Action 1.1)
- (c) The Private Sector Housing Survey was completed in March 2017 and presented to Community and Policy Review Panel in June 2017. (Action 3.1)

What has changed? Challenges

- (a) Time spent dealing with fire safety issues following the Grenfell Fire.
- (b) Evidence from the Private Sector Housing Survey suggests Welfare Reform is pushing people into cheaper, poor quality accommodation. (Action 3.1)
- (c) There is a general lack of understanding about tenants' rights and responsibilities.

- (d) The Housing and Planning Act 2016. Central government guidance on the implementation of both civil penalties and rent repayment orders and a policy will need to be published on this in due course. (Action 3.5)
- (e) Awaiting guidance on the extended Mandatory Licencing Scheme for HMOs. (Action 4.2)

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. Over the past six months, the housing team has made good progress toward the delivery of its housing objectives and targets. There are however a number of notable challenges to the delivery of the original strategy. These arise mainly on account of changes to Government policy and will continue to necessitate some review. As the Strategy is a rolling strategy, the main strategy and delivery plan have consequently been amended to reflect progress and the changing policy context as outlined in this report.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. Members are asked to note the content of this report.

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Background papers: Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-22; Housing and Homelessness Delivery Plan; Affordable Housing Development Programme

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