Cheltenham Borough Council
Draft Housing & Homelessness Strategy
2018-23
Foreword

It is a privilege to introduce Cheltenham Borough Council’s Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23.

Everyone should have the right to a decent, affordable home; this is something I passionately believe. At present Cheltenham doesn’t have all the homes that local people need, so in order to address some of these issues the Council will be launching a £100m building programme to provide around 500 homes, with the needs of families and young people especially in mind.

This step change in delivery will include:

- Homes for affordable rent and shared ownership
- Leasing and open market purchase
- Acquiring long term empty homes
- Buying back homes lost through right to buy
- Investing in and developing smaller sites that would not otherwise trigger an affordable housing requirement if delivered by a private landowner
- Private rented accommodation has its limitations and we are proposing direct investment in homes for market rent. Longer term security for young professionals and families is much sought after. Providing homes for market rent in the private sector is a new and key priority.

In addition to providing more new homes, our strategy also focuses on making better use of our existing stock. This includes bringing empty homes back into occupation and raising standards in the private rented sector.

Despite a loss of income over four years to 2020 because of changes to the Government’s rents policy, the Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes together will continue their programme of maintenance and improvements to council homes, including works to improve the energy efficiency of houses and flats.

With Austerity, and the continuing impact of national policies, our strategy also provides a strong focus on preventing homelessness and seeks to alleviate some of the key issues in our communities that can put pressure on our housing. Much of what we will seek to achieve within this strategy will require strong partnership and collaboration, but none more so than our work in preventing homelessness.

Councillor Peter Jeffries
Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member Housing
Executive Summary

This Housing & Homelessness strategy sets out how we intend to meet the housing needs of our communities within Cheltenham over the next five years. Our vision is to increase the availability, quality, suitability and affordability of accommodation, and to create communities that are safer, stronger and healthier.

We will seek to achieve this by focusing on the following four outcomes:

- Increasing the provision of affordable housing;
- Making best use of existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods;
- Tackling homelessness; and
- Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Beneath each of these outcomes sit a number of key priorities, which are in turn supported by a range of activities, many of which will require significant partnership working and collaboration in order to bring about their delivery.

The table below summaries our priorities and includes an outline of the activities that we will undertake (as at 2018) in order to make progress towards our priorities and outcomes.

For more details about the range of activities that we will undertake to support this strategy, please refer to our action plan at Appendix 1. This action plan will be updated annually to reflect progress made, and also to consider new initiatives in light of any changes to national policy and/or local needs.
### Increasing the provision of affordable housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Key activities to support delivery (as at 2018)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the provision of affordable housing</td>
<td>We will undertake measures to facilitate the supply of housing in sustainable locations, in accordance with the Joint Core Strategy and emerging Cheltenham Plan</td>
<td>We will establish an internal coordinating group between planning policy, development management, property services and housing strategy and enabling services, to understand key pressure points and risks, and to identify and work with our partners to provide solutions. This will also coincide with a working group between Cheltenham Borough Council and Cheltenham Borough Homes to support delivery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will secure additionality in the provision of affordable housing</td>
<td>We will identify funding opportunities and work with housing providers to secure the provision of homes that would not otherwise be delivered as affordable housing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We will increase the supply of long term private rented housing</td>
<td>We will work with Cheltenham Borough Homes to agree a business model to facilitate the delivery of private rented accommodation on a long term let basis</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We will ensure that our affordable homes remain affordable</td>
<td>We will investigate affordability issues in relation to Affordable Rents and capture our position within a Supplementary Planning Document, or such other planning documentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will make best use of our commuted sums (payments received in lieu of affordable housing)</td>
<td>We will seek to create greater flexibility in its use in order to maximise opportunities, with the potential to alleviate housing need through the private rented sector as well as through the provision of more affordable housing, subject to appropriate approvals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will improve the affordable housing offer for older people, and those with physical disabilities and other specialist housing needs</td>
<td>We will work with our partners to agree a county-wide Housing with Care Strategy, which in turn will be supported by its own action plan for Cheltenham</td>
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### Making best use of existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<th>Key activities to support delivery (as at 2018)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making best use of existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods</td>
<td>We will improve standards in the private rented sector</td>
<td>We will undertake a range of activities, from implementing the extension of mandatory licensing of HMOs and exploring new powers to tackle rogue landlords, through to identifying health and safety hazards in peoples’ homes and promoting good practice via our Landlords’ Accreditation Scheme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will reduce the number of empty homes</td>
<td>We will identify empty homes and work with owners to bring those properties back into use, taking enforcement action when necessary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will promote affordable warmth and tackle fuel poverty</td>
<td>We will monitor the jointly commissioned Warm &amp; Well Scheme and review outcomes. We will also implement a programme of works to improve the energy efficiency of our council homes</td>
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### Tackling Homelessness

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<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<th>Key activities to support delivery (as at 2018)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>➢ We will maintain the quality of, and make better use of, our council homes</td>
<td>➢ We will improve the performance analysis of our homes by implementing an asset management modelling toolkit and by undertaking a commissioning review of our sheltered housing, with a view to developing a new Asset Management Strategy. We will also undertake activities to incentivise downsizing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ We will develop a range of prevention offers for homeless households and improve access into the private rented sector</td>
<td>➢ We will implement new initiatives, such as a lodgings scheme for young people, and empower front line officers to find innovative solutions via a ‘prevention purse’. We will also review the Homeseeker Plus Allocations Scheme and referral/pathway arrangements for specific groups.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ We will tackle debt and benefits issues, support financial and digital inclusion, and ensure the provision of housing rights advice</td>
<td>➢ We will continue to commission the delivery of debt, benefits and housing rights advice and review their outcomes. We will also ensure best use is made of Discretionary Housing Payments for households who are in a short term crisis, and seek additional funding opportunities, should this be required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ We will support and develop initiatives to tackle youth homelessness</td>
<td>➢ We will commission and promote the use of alternative options to B&amp;B for young people who are homeless; review pathways and protocol arrangements for care leavers, and be involved in the county council’s future commissioning requirements for Accommodation and Community Based Support services.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ We will support and develop initiatives to reduce homelessness as a result of domestic abuse</td>
<td>➢ We will review funding requirements for the recommissioning of target hardening services and the sanctuary scheme in order to protect those who wish to remain in their homes. We will also monitor and review our places of safety arrangements to ensure alternative housing options are available for those who need to move home as a result of domestic abuse.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>➢ We will undertake activities to reduce rough sleeping</td>
<td>➢ We will review funding arrangements and plan for the recommissioning of assertive outreach services. We will also monitor and review the outcomes of ACTion Glos, a jointly commissioned, outcomes based funded service focusing on supporting entrenched rough sleepers into accommodation, treatment services, and into training, education and/or employment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>➢ We will support vulnerable people in accessing and maintaining suitable housing</td>
<td>➢ We will review Homeseeker Plus Allocations Scheme and current pathways for move-on accommodation. We will inform the county council’s future commissioning arrangements for accommodation and community based support services. We will also undertake a new risk-based approach to tenancy management for our council tenants, identifying risks early, so that appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities</td>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>Key activities to support delivery (as at 2018)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We will undertake activities to help support healthy and sustainable communities</td>
<td>We will work with housing providers, through our Affordable Housing Partnership, to support good practice in lettings and housing management policies. We will also support the implementation of ‘Welcome to the Future – A local model for building socially sustainable communities’ on new, large housing developments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will create a sense of place through estate regeneration and renewal</td>
<td>We will deliver affordable housing on under-utilised, council-owned garage sites. We will also consider options regarding the potential regeneration of parts of west Cheltenham</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We will support people into training, education and employment</td>
<td>We will develop initiatives that will assist tenants and young people into employment through, for instance, apprenticeships. We will also explore how new development and refurbishment initiatives of our council homes can support this priority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We will undertake initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>We will continue to develop partnership arrangements via Solace to reduce anti-social behaviour. We will also undertake a preventative approach by developing diversionary and educational activities, particularly with young people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We will take steps to support independent living for older people, and people with physical disabilities</td>
<td>We will undertake activities to reduce the effects of social isolation, such as the provision of community hubs. We will ensure adaptations are provided for households with disabilities who wish to remain in their existing homes and develop greater consistency across the county. We will also work with health partners to reduce delays in hospital discharge, and support other initiatives that facilitate independent living</td>
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1. National Priorities – local impact

1.1 Introduction

There is significant interest in housing at the national level. The recent Housing White Paper - Fixing our Broken Housing Market sets out the government’s current position by outlining plans for how developers and councils can assist in increasing supply, primarily through changes to the planning system and through increased funding opportunities.

Alongside increasing the supply of new homes, the government is also keen to see improvements in standards within the private rented sector. It is planning to extend mandatory licensing to include more Houses of Multiple Occupation, and, through the Housing & Planning Act 2016, it is providing councils with new powers to tackle rogue landlords.

There is also a focus on tackling homelessness, with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 setting out new duties on councils to prevent homelessness for everyone, regardless of their priority need status.

Cheltenham Borough Council will take steps to capitalise on these measures through the priorities that we have identified within this Housing & Homelessness Strategy, working alongside the policies of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the emerging Cheltenham Plan (i.e. our local planning policies).

Notwithstanding these opportunities, there are nevertheless a number of constraints which comprise the supply affordable housing. These are as follows:

- The National Planning Policy Framework, which has introduced a policy that enables developers to reduce their affordable housing contributions, potentially to zero, where they can demonstrate that the financial viability of a scheme would otherwise be compromised. Whilst this policy may have the benefit of stimulating the market and bringing about development on what might otherwise be stalled sites, the consequence is that fewer affordable homes are being provided locally. This can be particularly so where developers have overpaid for their sites.

- Recent relaxations in the Right to Buy criteria, which have led to greater discounts for tenants and a shortening of the period (from 5 years to 3 years) for which a tenant needs to reside in social housing in order to be eligible to buy their home, have incentivised the take-up of right to buy, which in turn has reduced the supply of affordable homes.

- Whilst councils are able to retain an element of their Right to Buy receipts on homes sold, there are restrictions over how these receipts can be used, and this has the effect of limiting our options to increase supply.

- The cap on how much councils are able to borrow against their Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) means that delivery of affordable housing through the councils’ HRA is restricted.

- Government rent policy change (from Consumer Price Index (CPI) +1%/year to a rent decrease on social and affordable rents of 1%/year over 4 years to 2020) has resulted in an estimated £6.7m loss of projected investment in social housing from Cheltenham Borough Council’s HRA business plan over this 4 year period. The government has recently announced that from 2020 rents will now revert back to CPI + 1% over the following 5 year period. It is therefore hoped that this will provide
some stability to the affordable housing market and create opportunities to refocus more investment in this sector.

1.2 Future government direction

There are a number of other government initiatives, captured within the Housing & Planning Act, which require further regulations before they can be implemented. These include - the ending of lifetime tenancies; the extension of the Right to Buy to Registered Providers; and the introduction of the Higher Value Levy on councils, which, it is proposed, would be used to fund the discount that Registered Providers would have to offer through Right to Buy. We will keep a watching brief on these, and seek to capitalise on any opportunities and manage any risks arising from these initiatives, if implemented.

We will also await details of the government’s forthcoming Social Housing Green Paper, which promises to provide a wide-ranging review of the issues facing this sector.

1.4 Local pressures

The number of new affordable housing completions has fallen in recent years, largely due to our reliance on delivery through s.106 provision. These pressures have been compounded by high house prices, which have led to more households seeking private rented accommodation as a solution to their housing needs. This in turn has pushed up the price of the private rented market. The government’s introduction of the freeze on welfare benefits, most notably Local Housing Allowance, has meant that benefits have failed to keep pace with these increases in rents, forcing many low income households out of the private rented sector.

In addition, the implementation of Universal Credit is also likely to have an adverse impact on those households who are less able to manage their financial affairs. Safeguards have been put in place to help those who are most likely to struggle to make online claims and manage their finances, but there are risks that in spite of these safeguards some households will fall into rent arrears and become homeless.

More detailed information about the specific pressures experienced locally is set out in our Housing & Homelessness Strategy Evidence Base at Appendix 2 of this strategy.

1.5 Strategic Context

The Council’s Place Strategy has a clear vision, which is to ensure that our businesses, communities and people can thrive. A key role for the Council’s Housing & Homelessness Strategy is to support this vision. We will seek to achieve this by bringing forward housing that is affordable, accessible, safe and secure.

Our Housing & Homelessness Strategy also informs, and is informed, by the Joint Core Strategy and the emerging Cheltenham Plan,
as well as our HRA Business Plan. The HRA Business Plan sets out the Council’s high level priorities in relation to the management of our council homes and the services we provide to our tenants. It also sets out our aspirations to deliver a new supply of affordable housing. These plans, and this Housing & Homelessness Strategy, will guide Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) in setting out their medium term priorities.

Taking account of issues highlighted in the evidence base to this strategy, we consider there is a need for a step change in how we approach housing delivery. This strategy sets out our approach and the targeted interventions which we use to drive forward our priorities over the next 5 years.

1.5 Partnerships

Cheltenham Borough Council cannot deliver a successful Housing & Homelessness Strategy in isolation. As a commissioning authority, much of our success in meeting our outcomes will be dependent upon the efforts of a number of organisations, including CBH, who manage the council’s housing stock and provide housing options and statutory homelessness services on our behalf.

We also operate within a number of key strategic partnerships, both county and borough-wide. These partnerships are made up of: district and other statutory authorities, Registered Providers, and the voluntary sector. We will use these partnerships, and our commissioning arrangements, to ensure that we are across key issues and trends as they emerge, so that effective solutions can be found in a timely manner.
2. Our Vision, Outcomes and Priorities

Our vision is to increase the availability, quality, suitability and affordability of accommodation, and to create communities that are safer, stronger and healthier.

We will seek to achieve this by focusing on the following outcomes:

- Increasing the provision of affordable housing
- Making best use of our existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods
- Tackling homelessness
- Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities

The following sections focus on each of these outcomes in turn, identifying key priorities that will help us to support this vision.
Outcome 1
Increasing the provision of Affordable Housing

1. Introduction

Cheltenham has some of the highest house prices in the south west. In its ‘Home Truths’ Report 2016/17, the National Housing Federation cited Cheltenham as having an average house price of £274,000 and a ratio of house price to income of 9.9%. Real earnings are failing to keep pace with house price rises, and these pressures are set to grow, as the population both within Cheltenham and more generally within the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) area continues to increase.

In order to keep pace with the projected growth in population, the JCS sets out the number of homes that need to be delivered over the plan period (2011-2031) to meet the Objectively Assessed Needs of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury. For Cheltenham alone there is a housing requirement of 546 homes/year to meet the required 10,917 additional homes. The JCS’s Housing Implementation Strategy has set lower delivery targets for the first half of the plan period (450/year to 2022), but to date actual delivery has so far fallen short of this target. (Net completions over the period 2011/12 to 2016/17 were only 63.9% of the 450/year target).

2. Affordable Housing Requirements

Affordable housing includes Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Intermediate accommodation, such as Shared Ownership (i.e. part rent/part buy). These terms, and affordable housing generally, is defined at Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2015 sets out Cheltenham’s affordable housing requirements for the JCS area. It shows a requirement for 639 affordable homes/year across the JCS area, of which 231 affordable homes/year should be delivered to meet Cheltenham’s needs (or 3,696 homes over the 16 year period from 2015). Matched against this is a potential affordable housing supply of 2,654 homes (derived from various planning commitments, district plans and strategic allocations assumptions). Taking this into account, there is an additional affordable housing requirement of 1,042 homes between 2015 and 2031, which is as yet unmet. This number may increase if viability issues are presented on s.106 sites, resulting in a loss of affordable housing, or if s.106 sites generally become stalled, etc. Affordable housing delivery in the last 3 years in particular has been poor, with the number of completions for 2014/15, 2015/16, and 2016/17 being 24,
34 and 52 respectively. This simply cannot be allowed to continue.

3. Meeting Cheltenham’s Affordable Housing Requirements

The Council relies significantly on the market to provide affordable housing through landowners’ s.106 obligations. If sites do not come forward in a timely manner, then housing supply generally will be affected, and this in turn will affect the delivery of the majority of our affordable housing supply. It follows that all practical steps must be taken to ensure there is a timely delivery of housing in accordance with the supply trajectories as detailed within the JCS’s Housing Implementation Strategy.

We have therefore set the following priorities to bring about the delivery of affordable housing:

We will track our progress of housing supply against our projected delivery trajectory to understand whether or not we are on target for the delivery of these new homes. If we are off-target, then we will set out what action we need to take to address any supply/delivery issues.

These will include:

- Working with developers and infrastructure providers to remove obstacles to the delivery of sites.
- Seeking alternative sources of funding if problems with infrastructure provision are delaying the development of key strategic sites.
- Exploring the potential for early release of safeguarded land.
- Working with other authorities under the Duty to Cooperate to address any unmet needs.
- Identifying alternative sites.

In addition, we will commit to undertaking a range of activities to minimise against site delivery risks at various stages of the planning process. The specific risks, and the activities we will undertake, are detailed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risks</th>
<th>Potential Actions to Minimise Risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning application for allocated sites not submitted</td>
<td>➢ We will ensure there is regular contact with the agents to encourage timely submission of applications.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline applications submitted without clear implementation strategies</td>
<td>➢ We will encourage the submission of hybrid applications with outline applications accompanying detailed phase 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning application validation delay</td>
<td>➢ We will ensure there is extensive pre-application contact with developers and prioritise resources for major site submissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of application takes longer than anticipated</td>
<td>➢ We will undertake targeted pre-application contact with developers and establish Planning Performance Agreements for strategic sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application refused</td>
<td>➢ We will ensure that planning policies are addressed during pre-application discussions, which should encourage developers to adhere to the plan policies. ➢ We will undertake Member training and engagement to ensure</td>
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</table>
that Members are aware of the decision-making framework for allocated sites and potential impacts on the overall housing land supply

- We will adopt an enabling role to support strategic conversations with statutory consultees.
- We will adopt a co-ordinated approach across the specialisms required to assess the detail of planning applications. The focus will be on finding solutions in line with the approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

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<tr>
<th>Delay in anticipated start date or where construction on site is stalled.</th>
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<tr>
<td>➢ Where specific factors can be identified, we will seek to work with the site owner/developer to identify ways to restart or bring forward development. This will include consideration of Homes England funding and potential renegotiation of planning conditions.</td>
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**Priority 2: Securing additionality in the provision of affordable housing**

We want to bring about a step change in the delivery of affordable housing. In order to do this, we cannot simply rely on private landowners/developers delivering through s.106 obligations. Viability issues, stalled delivery and other delays have all contributed to poor affordable housing supply in recent years. While we will take steps to tackle supply issues we also need to have a clear focus on bringing about the delivery of affordable housing over and above what we might anticipate through the timely delivery of financially viable s.106 sites. By increasing supply in this way, we will aim to meet the needs of low income households and provide greater opportunities for households, young and old, to find stable, long term secure and affordable housing.

As a minimum, we have set ourselves an ambitious target of delivering 1,000 affordable homes, over and above what the market will provide without our intervention, during the plan period.

We will seek to achieve this through a range of mechanisms, which include:

- Focusing on s.106 schemes that are failing to meet the full affordable housing obligations for viability reasons, by purchasing additional dwellings that would take the number of homes acquired up to (and potentially beyond) the full affordable housing requirement for the scheme.
- Buying back homes previously lost through Right to Buy. Going forward, we will develop a policy position to provide greater clarity around the circumstances when we will do this.
- Acquiring long term empty homes - if necessary through Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- Acquiring land for development. This will include large sites, and also smaller sites that would not otherwise deliver affordable housing.
- Focusing on stalled sites with planning consent, and if necessary acquiring these sites through Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- Encouraging proposals that bring vacant floor space above shops back into beneficial use.
- Acquiring homes from the open market.
Developing and maintaining a pipeline of affordable housing on Council owned land (i.e. both HRA and General Fund land).

In addition, we will use these opportunities to deliver a range of tenures and dwelling sizes, including potentially specialist housing provision, where needed, and in accordance with the SHMA. Where we buy land for future development, it will also be in our gift to provide quality homes over and above minimum space and design standards to better meet the needs of older people and those with physical disabilities, should these emerge as specific priorities for a particular site.

To turn our vision into a reality, we will work with CBH to explore the most appropriate delivery vehicle, and funding requirements, to bring about this step change in affordable housing provision.

**Priority 3: Increasing the supply of long term Private Rented Housing**

Private rental rates in Cheltenham have increased significantly in recent years, reflecting the fact that demand is outpacing supply. This is hardly surprising given that home ownership is now out of reach for many, in particular young people. Whilst we will seek to address this by taking concerted action to ensure there is a timely delivery of housing generally, and by focusing on the supply of more affordable homes through additionality, we will also take the opportunity to deliver our own supply of private rented housing.

This will offer the following benefits:

- **Security.** Tenancies will be offered on an assured shorthold basis, but our intention is that residents will be able to stay in their homes for as long as they wish, provided the standard tenancy conditions are met. This will ensure that all those households seeking a home, including young families, will have a level of security that is generally absent in the private rented sector. We consider this is not just important for helping deliver security of tenure, but also to support stable and balanced communities. We want our residents to feel part of their community and take pride in their home. We consider that providing greater certainty will encourage this.

- **Choice.** The provision of more affordable housing is our main priority; however, by providing additional homes as private rented accommodation we will also be able to ensure there is a greater choice of longer term housing for residents across a wider range of budgets and needs. We anticipate that this in turn will help to attract and support the retention of young people and families in Cheltenham, thereby supporting the growth of our town.

- **Quality.** We will provide quality homes for rent, absent of defects and health and safety hazards that can sometimes be found in the private rented sector, particularly at the lower end of the housing market.

- **Affordability.** It is our intention to let most of our homes at market rents. However, any surpluses generated will be used to support the delivery of more affordable homes, and/or to provide private rented homes at subsidised rents, in order that we can increase choice for lower-income households, particularly those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
The government introduced the Affordable Rent product in 2011 as means by which Registered Providers could deliver new affordable homes without public subsidy. Affordable Rents are generally set at 80% of market rents, though this is an upper limit. For some, the Affordable Rent product is not affordable. This is particularly the case for larger homes, such as 4 bedroom houses. We will keep this under review, but our intention is to ensure that new, larger homes, and in particular 4 bedroom homes, are set below 80% of market rents and ideally at social rents (i.e. target rents as determined through the national rent regime). We acknowledge this can affect the financial viability of schemes, so any decisions about rent levels will be taken with this consideration in mind.

In any event, we will seek to ensure that all Affordable Rented homes are capped at no more the Local Housing Allowance levels.

Committed sums are payments made in lieu of affordable housing. The Council will only accept committed sums on an exceptional basis - i.e. where the provision of affordable housing on a particular site would be wholly unsuitable, or potentially where a committed sum could be used to help facilitate the delivery of an otherwise unviable local estate renewal/regeneration programme, or where we are looking to make targeted interventions against the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.

It is also our intention to use committed sums to enable the Council to provide good quality private rented homes, and to increase their accessibility for low income households, particularly for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

We will seek to achieve the use of committed sums for these purposes by capturing our requirements within s.106 agreements and in our Cheltenham Plan.

**Priority 6: Improving the Affordable Housing offer for Older People**

Both nationally and locally we have an ageing population. The population of older people (over 65s) is set to rise in Cheltenham by 39.1% over the plan period to 2031. This has an impact on how we evolve as a community and the demands on specialised housing and services. In Cheltenham, the impact is exacerbated by the increasing aged ageing population (those over 85).

The updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (September 2015) states that 9.2% of the total Objectively Assessed Need for the JCS area as a whole should cater for older people; and that approximately 40% of this supply should be affordable housing. The SHMA also identifies specific requirements for the provision of specialist older people’s accommodation for Cheltenham over the plan period to 2031.

We know from national research that the majority of older people would prefer to stay in their family homes. To release these larger homes for families, we must therefore create an affordable housing offer that meets not simply the needs of older people, but their aspirations also, whilst remaining affordable.

Much research has been undertaken at the national level around what older people want. Supported by the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England), the Housing
our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) undertook research to understand and make recommendations on ten key design principles that ought to be captured when providing new accommodation for older people. These are as follows:

- Good space standards and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and ‘care ready’ design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and ‘hubs’
- Plants, trees and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings and mobility aids
- External shared surfaces and ‘home zones’ giving priority to pedestrians rather than cars

These are general design principles that we support and subscribe to; however some of these are likely to come at a cost. These design principles therefore need to be balanced with affordability, so that everyone, including low income households, can enjoy a good quality of life and independent living right through to the end of their lives.

In partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and surrounding district authorities, we will support further research into understanding the needs and aspirations of older people in our area, and work with the County to ensure that we are aligned on the type of provision that is required, including helping to meet the needs of households with dementia. We will also commission a new SHMA to capture the needs of older people in the context of housing needs as a whole, and then seek to identify a target proportion of new housing that should be developed for older people on suitable, well-connected sites, close to local amenities.

In 2017 we developed a social sustainability model. The principles within this model will be used to better plan for our ageing population, by thinking about not just the type of housing, but the environment around it and the support networks needed to maintain independence.

Priority 7: Supporting new provision for households with physical disabilities and other specialist housing needs

The last Census (2011) revealed that 15% of Cheltenham’s residents considered themselves to have a long term health problem (17,506 out of a population of 115,732). 6.5% of these residents considered themselves to have a condition that limited their day-to-day activities a lot.

The last commissioned Private Sector Condition Survey (2011) estimated that of the 45,272 households living in the private sector, 15% were considered to have an illness or disability, and of these, 7% were considered to have mobility issues.

Of those households with mobility issues, it was estimated that approximately 70% were living in un-adapted homes. This represents about 5% of households living in the private sector. 95% of these households were estimated to be over 55 years, and 85% were over 65 years.

It stands to reason that the older we get, the more likely it is that we will have mobility issues. We therefore expect all new accommodation for older people to be adaptable so that their accommodation remains suitable as older people become less mobile.

We will also regularly review from our housing list (i.e. via Homeseeker Plus) the specific...
accommodation needs of younger households (under 65s) and families with disabilities so that we can better cater for their needs on a site by site basis through our s.106 negotiations, and through our own pipeline of new affordable housing.

In addition, we will work with Gloucestershire County Council to better understand the accommodation needs of other households with specific needs, such as individuals with learning difficulties, to ensure that potential future developments are aligned with the County Council’s commissioning requirements.

- **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople**

Under the Housing Act 2004 the local authority must assess and plan for the housing needs of all communities residing in their area. The new Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015) states that only those travellers that travel for work are defined as Gypsies, Travellers or Travelling Showpeople in planning terms. We will therefore review these needs look to build any new, identified needs within our Cheltenham Plan. All other accommodation needs, for those members of the community that have ceased travelling permanently, will need to be considered in the context of the SHMA.

- **Student accommodation**

The University of Gloucestershire projects that student numbers in Cheltenham and Gloucester will increase by 50% in the period up to 2031, resulting in approximately 4,000 additional students. Both Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council have worked closely with the University to explore the provision of additional student accommodation, with a focus on expansion within existing sites. We will continue to explore opportunities for increasing provision of student accommodation to meet this anticipated growth in population.
Introduction

Increasing the supply of affordable homes isn’t just about building new homes. It’s also about us making better use of the homes we’ve got, and ensuring that they are safe and free from serious health hazards. We know that poor quality housing has a direct impact on our communities – on their health, wellbeing, education, prosperity and safety.

Priority 1: Improving standards in the private rented sector

The private rented sector is the least regulated part of the rental market, and yet it has become increasingly the tenure of choice for many, particularly for those who are unable to afford to buy their own home. At the time of the last census in 2011, over 10,000 of our homes were let as private rents, representing approximately 18% of the market. With private rents increasing significantly in recent years, we can be confident that the sector has continued to grow in Cheltenham since then.

We want the private rented sector to be seen not as a last resort, but as a good option for residents wanting flexibility and wishing to access a range of housing types across the Borough. We are therefore keen to improve standards in this sector by reducing the number of homes with Category 1 Health and Safety Hazards, and by ensuring that all landlords fulfil their responsibilities to their tenants, as most do.

- Houses of Multiple Occupation

A particular focus for the Council is on Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs). These tend to be in older properties in central areas of the Borough. The last Private Housing Stock Condition Survey (carried out in 2011) identified that HMOs are more likely to be of a poorer standard of accommodation. In order to improve these standards, the Council is rolling out a programme of identification and inspection of HMOs across the Borough, to ensure that any remediation works are carried out and that management standards meet the regulatory requirements.

- Article 4 Direction

The Council began its rollout of this work on HMOs in the ward of St Pauls. As a result, 350 HMOs were identified in this ward alone. This translates into approximately 12% of households. We know that areas with relatively high concentrations of HMOs can often be associated with:
Antisocial behaviour, noise and nuisance,
- Imbalanced and unstable communities,
- Negative impacts on the physical environment and streetscape,
- Pressures on parking provision,
- Increased crime,
- Etc.

The National HMO Lobby states that the ‘tipping point’ for HMO dominance in a neighbourhood is 10% of properties, or 20% of the population, suggesting that the St Paul’s ward may have too many HMOs, and that steps should be taken to address this. Through the Cheltenham Plan, we will seek to implement an Article 4 direction in the St Pauls ward. This will mean that instead of there being permitted development for conversion of a property into an HMO, there will in future be a requirement for the owner to obtain planning permission before conversion into an HMO can proceed. This will enable the Council to have greater control over the formation of all new HMOs in the St Pauls ward.

The Council will also keep under review other areas of the town at risk of high concentrations of HMOs, and we will take action where necessary.

As part of the government’s measures to improve the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector, it is planning to rollout a wider definition of a licensed HMO. This will mean that shared houses of any size and some flats which are occupied by five or more persons in two or more households will also be required to have mandatory licensing. This change to the legislation will extend the standards of the existing mandatory licensing scheme, with the aim of improving the overall standard of accommodation across a wider range of HMOs. We will implement these changes as soon as the new regulations and guidance are provided.

- **Category 1 Health and Safety Hazards**

Hazards in our homes are assessed according to how serious they are using the government’s Housing Health and Safety Ratings System. Category 1 hazards are the most serious. In Cheltenham, the most common types of Category 1 hazards relate to excess cold and risk of falls.

We will therefore take measures to reduce the number of Category 1 hazards in Cheltenham, with the Council’s Enforcement team, CBH’s Housing Options Team and with housing advice and health services working closely to ensure that these properties are identified and that appropriate action is taken.

- **Landlords Accreditation Scheme**

We want to encourage landlords to provide good quality private rented accommodation. We believe that the majority of landlords want to do the right thing, but may not be entirely across their responsibilities as a landlord. In return for a fee, our Accreditation Scheme enables there to be dialogue between the Council and private landlords to improve standards. In return, landlords can receive Accredited Status which in turn can attract and give assurances to potential tenants.

Clearly, the most important relationship in the private rented sector is that between a landlord and a tenant, with council intervention only as a last resort. The Council and its partners can facilitate this relationship by providing advice, education and guidance to landlords, agents and tenants. This will enable landlords to manage their properties and tenants more effectively, self-regulate and become more professional and provide tenants with the knowledge required to maintain their tenancy.

- **Tackling Rogue Landlords**
We are keen to clamp down on rogue landlords. The Housing & Planning Act 2016 enables councils to tackle rogue landlords, with powers to identify, ban and fine unscrupulous landlords and lettings agents. Measures in the Act include:

- Council access to tenancy deposit data, thereby giving councils an indication of the size of the Private Rented Sector and to help us target resources on tackling rogue landlords as part of our enforcement work.
- Empowering councils to blacklist rogue landlords who have been fined or convicted of an offence, by entering their names on a database of rogue landlords.
- Empowering councils to obtain and issue bans for the most serious offenders to stop them from letting a property or engaging in letting agency work for a period of time, and new civil financial penalties for breaching a banning order.
- Empowering councils to make management orders which will allow us to seize or take control of the management of a property.
- Giving tenants living in poor housing the ability to claim back some of the rent they have paid to rogue landlords (who neglect to maintain their home in good repair) and for councils to also get back rent on behalf of benefit recipients.

The Act also allows councils who carry out their enforcement powers to keep the fines that are imposed, thereby enabling councils to target resources where needed to hold rogue landlords and lettings agents to account. We will therefore investigate how we can best tackle rogue landlords using the new tools that are now available.

The Borough has approximately 350 long term empty homes currently, (i.e. homes that have been empty for 6 months or more) and this number is gradually increasing. We are keen to renew our efforts to reduce the number of empty homes in our Borough. We will do this by:

- Working with the owner with a view to getting their property back into use again, either through their own sale, let or occupation.
- Seeking to purchase the property ourselves, with the cooperation of the owner, with a view to either resale or the Council keeping the property within our stock and renting it as affordable or private rented housing, managed on our behalf by CBH.
- Use of Compulsory Purchase Orders when all other options have been exhausted.
- Review Council Tax charges on empty homes, and increase them if appropriate.

### Priority 2: Reducing the number of Empty Homes

### Priority 3: Affordable Warmth and tackling fuel poverty

- **Raising awareness of energy efficiency measures**

Improving the energy efficiency of our homes not only provides environmental benefits as a result of reduced carbon emissions, it also helps to reduce fuel bills and makes homes warmer, and our residents healthier.

The Council currently jointly commissions Severn Wye Energy Agency to provide a Warm and Well Service. Severn Wye provides energy advice, and supports residents with the installation of a range of energy saving measures, such as loft installation and cavity wall insulation.

It is our intention to continue commissioning
a Warm and Well service to benefit the residents of Cheltenham.

- **Improving the energy efficiency of our Council homes.**

The Council is keen to improve the energy efficiency of our own Council housing stock. We are currently in the second year of a six year programme to install new more thermally efficient windows and doors throughout all of our homes. In addition, and following the completion of our programme to install solar energy technology (PVs), we will continue to work with our tenants to ensure they maximise the benefits of free electricity. We will also continue to improve energy performance through our boiler renewal programme, with the installation of ‘A’ rated boilers and through the installation/upgrade of loft insulation.

Via CBH, we are currently modelling the energy data of our housing stock. This will help us to understand better how we can further improve the energy efficiencies of our homes and assist in tackling fuel poverty.

- **Making the right investment decisions**

CBH have recently procured software that will be used to calculate the net present value of all our council homes. The information gained will enable us to make more informed decisions around future investment options and give us the potential to achieve greater value for money.

- **Maintaining Decent Homes Standard**

Maintaining compliance with the Decent Homes Standard remains one of our top priorities. Over 99% of our homes meet this standard, and the few that don’t are because they form part of our stock of non-traditional build, some of which require more extensive work in order for them to reach this standard. We have recently considered our improvement options on a significant number of these homes, and we will be looking to implement improvement works from 2019 onwards. We will also consider potential options for the remaining non-traditional build with a view to progressing with the most appropriate solutions.

- **Keeping our homes safe**

We will ensure that our council homes are well maintained and comply with all current legislative requirements, as a minimum.

- **Sheltered housing**

We want to be sure that our sheltered housing meets the needs and expectations of current and future older tenants. Through CBH we are commissioning a review to help inform future investments decisions regarding our sheltered housing dwellings.

- **Under-occupation Strategy**

We want to increase the options available to our tenants, so that if they wish to downsize there is sufficient choice, and ease, to do so – thereby freeing up larger homes for families who most need them. We already give priority to those wishing to downsize through our Choice Based Lettings allocations scheme. Going forward we will consider how the design of new build affordable accommodation can support these aims. We will also review our Help to Move Scheme, which is a scheme that provides financial assistance and practical support to help those who wish to downsize within our council homes.

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**Priority 4: Maintaining the quality of, and making better use of, our council homes**

- **Making the right investment decisions**

- **Maintaining Decent Homes Standard**
1. Introduction

This section sets out how the Council aims to tackle homelessness across the Borough. It details how we will ensure there is access to a range of housing and support services for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in order to help them rebuild their lives.

A holistic approach towards homelessness is vital since the causes and effects are complex and intertwined. Solutions need to be more than the simple provision of accommodation. We need to seek to address the underlying issues also, such as poor health, loss of income and relationship breakdown.

Our strategic approach to tackling homelessness recognises the important role that other partners and stakeholders have to play in harnessing skills and delivering tailored solutions to some of these issues within our communities.

2. Review of Homelessness

2.1 Understanding Needs

Below is a summary of our key findings which have helped shape our priorities for tackling homelessness in Cheltenham. For more details please refer to our Housing & Homelessness Strategy Evidence Base at Appendix 2 of this strategy.

- The relationship between homelessness preventions and acceptances

Whilst the total number of households presenting to CBH’s Housing Options Team has remained unchanged when taken over the longer term (there are approximately 300 approaches/year), our ability to prevent homelessness has diminished significantly.

One of the main areas where the team have become less effective in preventing homelessness is in securing alternative accommodation for low income households in the private rented sector. This is largely attributable to the rise in private sector rents as more households are squeezed out of the home ownership market and are having to rent privately for longer. As the supply of private rented accommodation has failed to keep up with demand, rent rises are inevitable. For low income households relying on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to help subsidise their rents in the private sector, the welfare reforms, which have placed a cap on LHA increases, means that more and more low income households are unable to afford private rents.

- The causes of homelessness

Not surprisingly, by far the main cause of homelessness in Cheltenham is loss of private rented accommodation (55% of all homelessness acceptances in 16/17). This is
followed by parents and other family members/friends no longer being able to accommodate (36%), followed by those experiencing domestic abuse (9%).

- **Young People**

Nationally, the number of young people (aged 16-24 years) who are accepted as homeless is approximately 20% of all homelessness acceptances. In Cheltenham, the percentage is higher at 25%, suggesting that we need to place greater emphasis on finding a wider choice of prevention solutions for this age group.

- **Rough sleepers**

Rough sleeping has increased in Cheltenham, from 1 rough sleeper identified in our street count in 2010 to 9 rough sleepers identified in our street count in 2017. These street counts/estimates are undertaken during a single night, between October and November, so they do not reflect the actual number of rough sleepers who will be present in Cheltenham during the course of a year.

What has also become clear in the last couple of years is that current pathways into accommodation (via Accommodation Based Support) do not work for everyone, particularly rough sleepers who have become entrenched. These rough sleepers will generally exhibit more complex issues, such as mental ill-health, drug and/or alcohol addiction, with the result that sharing supported housing with other individuals with similar needs can, and does, lead to tenancy failure. For entrenched rough sleepers in particular an alternative pathway into independent living is needed.

- **Use of Temporary Accommodation**

In spite of the increase in homelessness acceptances in Cheltenham, the number of households requiring temporary accommodation remains relatively low. This is attributable to the fact that the vast majority of households that are accommodated within temporary accommodation are there for less than 6 months. And the vast majority of those who leave this accommodation secure long term affordable housing either via the Council or through a Registered Provider.

The Council uses its own homes as temporary accommodation for homeless households. These are a mix of furnished/part-furnished to reflect the needs of different households. We will also use our temporary accommodation to house single people, in order to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation where possible. The benefit of using our own stock for temporary accommodation is that we can flex the number of dwellings to meet need more easily, with the homes being managed by CBH on our behalf. At present we have up to 17 dwellings within our council stock that we use for these purposes, and we will continue to monitor the number of temporary accommodation we need and either decommission or provide more, when necessary.

a. **Consultation with partners**

In October 2017, the Council undertook a consultation event with key partners, which make up our Housing and Support Forum, to help inform future priorities around tackling homelessness and the wider housing agenda. Invited partners are made up of: charities working with the homeless; advice agencies; supported housing providers; Registered Providers and other statutory agencies, including a commissioning officer from Gloucestershire County Council.

We used this consultation event to understand current gaps/issues which we should take into account when shaping our
priorities. We also wanted to understand a little more about the challenges facing individuals with complex needs, given that anecdotally we were hearing the numbers of individuals with these issues, and presenting with a housing need, is rising.

The key findings from the consultation were as follows:

i. Gaps/Priorities

- We should ensure there is greater focus on early intervention to improve life skills, including money management and digital inclusion, particularly with the implementation of Universal Credit.
- We should create a wider range of options to enable individuals to access private rented accommodation.
- We should make better use of existing stock by developing under-occupation strategies, and tackle empty homes.
- We should seek to improve communication across agencies to create a better understanding of each other’s priorities and to encourage greater strategic alignment.

ii. Addressing issues for individuals with complex needs

- We should seek to improve the service offer by providing a single point of entry where holistic service provision can be offered, with a focus not just on the accommodation needs of individuals, but also on the employment, training and educational needs, with a view to integrating individuals within their communities.
- We should seek to improve the accommodation offer. Accommodation Based Support doesn’t work for everyone. When individuals with highly complex needs are all under the same roof some are less able to cope, leading to a greater risk of tenancy failure. There are also challenges around individuals being able to access education and employment while residing in Accommodation Based Support, and concerns around lack of suitable accommodation for women (including older pregnant women) with complex needs.

We will use these findings to help shape our priorities and activities throughout the course of this strategy.

b. Future Trends (welfare reforms)

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced wide-ranging changes to the benefits system. These include:

- A benefit cap limiting the amount of benefit that working age people can receive.
- A ‘bedroom tax’ in social housing, which means that households who are deemed to be under-occupying receive reduced Housing Benefit.
- A limit on the amount under 35s (previously under 25s) could receive towards their rent if renting privately, limited to a ‘single room rate’ i.e. the rate of a room in a shared house.
- Community care grants and crisis loans abolished, and replaced by locally administered schemes.
- A freeze on welfare benefits increases to 2020, including Local Housing Allowance.
- The phasing-in of Universal Credit. This benefit will combine and replace a number of existing benefits for households both in work and who are out of work but on low incomes.

The continued freeze on Local Housing Allowance will create even more pressures on low-income households trying to access and
remain in the private rented sector, should private rents continue to rise. It is therefore anticipated that the loss of private rented accommodation will continue to remain the main cause of homelessness in Cheltenham. Equally, it will become even more challenging for our Housing Options Service to find homes in the private rented sector for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The implementation of Universal Credit began in Cheltenham on 6th December 2017, and will continue over the next few years as more households are migrated onto this benefit. Households will be responsible for making online claims, managing their money and paying their rent (rather than payments going directly from the local authority to their landlord) and for some this will be a new way of managing their financial affairs. For those who do not have access to the internet and/or have no suitable devices at home to make online claims for benefit, the challenges increase further. It stands to reason that the most vulnerable are the ones most at risk of falling into arrears and becoming homeless, in spite of the safeguards that have been put in place.

c. Opportunities – the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the Act), which went live from April 2018, significantly increases the statutory duties on councils to prevent and relieve homelessness.

The Act places a new duty on councils to help prevent homelessness on all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness.

There is an emphasis on intervention and acting quickly to provide advice and to take action to prevent homelessness, rather than only intervening at crisis point.

The Act also comes with ‘new burdens funding’ which this Council is using, in combination with other time-limited funding, from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). We will use this funding, and the opportunities arising from this Act, to support the priorities we have identified for this strategy. These are detailed below.

Priority 1: Developing the Prevention Offer and improving access into the private rented sector

- Increased accessibility and more prevention options.

The Council is using all the funding it has received from the MHCLG (new burdens funding of c.£60,000 and additional flexible homelessness support grant of c.£131,000, both over two years) to develop our prevention offer and to provide a robust housing options service that more than meets the requirements of the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

Via CBH, who manage the Housing Options Service on our behalf, we have recruited a new Housing Options Officer to provide more resilience to the team to be able to dedicate more time to households who are homeless, regardless of whether or not they are in priority need. We will ensure that this resource means that anyone who is threatened with homelessness has a clear personal housing plan detailing how their homelessness can be prevented. We will combine this work by being more accessible, and reaching out to communities by engaging in more home visits to understand better the issues households face when threatened with
homelessness and to work through a range of solutions.

To strengthen this prevention offer, CBH have also recruited a Preventions/Initiatives post. This role will be used to explore, open up and establish clear pathways to prevent and relieve homelessness across a range of areas. Part of this work will be to work with private landlords to establish trust and to provide solutions to enable low-income households to access the private rented sector more easily in the future. Initiatives will include: a landlord incentive scheme for the private sector, a prevention fund, a lodgings scheme for single people, additional literature and a communications package, along with a ‘prevention purse’ to enable the Housing Options Team to provide bespoke solutions to the issues that they are presented with.

- Monitoring the use of Temporary Accommodation

We will also regularly monitor demand for our temporary accommodation. Our priority is to restrict the use of Bed & Breakfast for all by making the most efficient use of our own supply of furnished temporary accommodation within our stock of council housing. Whilst current use of temporary accommodation remains low, we cannot be complacent: the new duties arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act may lead to more households being accommodated in temporary accommodation for longer. This may mean we will have to increase the number of temporary properties that we can make available, and/or make changes to the Homeseeker Plus Choice Based Lettings Allocations Scheme to take account of any new and emerging pressures.

- Gold Standard Service

We want to provide a service that is independently recognised as a Gold Standard Service. We want to be able to meet the 10 local challenges that are set by the National Practitioner Support Service, and funded by the MHCLG. We will therefore set out a plan within the term of this strategy to seek to reach this standard.

- Duty to Refer

During 2018 the Government will be providing more detailed regulations to support the new Duty to Refer. Essentially, this duty will require other public bodies to notify local housing authorities if they identify anyone whom they believe is homeless or threatened with homelessness, provided the homeless person agrees to being referred. In order to ensure compliance with the regulations, we will:

- Review existing protocols, joint working arrangements, referral arrangements and housing and support pathways,
- Consider any gaps in protocols and notification arrangements with local partners and public sector services,
- Ensure relevant partners are fully briefed on responsibilities and processes,
- Review our existing recording mechanisms to ensure incoming and outgoing referrals are managed.

In view of the continuing welfare reforms (in particular the implementation of Universal Credit) and the issues identified at our consultation event, reducing debt and improving the capacity for individuals to manage their financial affairs and adapt to the
digital revolution is a key priority for the Council in tackling homelessness.

- **Commissioning of debt, benefits advice and housing rights advice**

Currently, we commission CCP (Caring for People and Communities) to deliver debt and benefits advice for all our residents. Particular focus is placed on supporting the most vulnerable, through budgeting advice, help with online claims for Universal Credit, and help with applications onto the Council’s online Choice Based Lettings Scheme, Homeseeker Plus.

We also commission CCP to provide independent housing rights advice. This applies not only to the services landlords provide to tenants in the private rented sector, but also on social housing providers, ensuring they are working with tenants to find solutions to issues such as arrears and anti-social behaviour, so that eviction is the last option once all other avenues have been pursued. In addition, CCP are commissioned to challenge decisions made by CBH’s Housing Options Team when it is appropriate to do so, ensuring the best quality decisions are made.

- **Discretionary Housing Payments**

We want to ensure that we make best use of Discretionary Housing Payments to support households who are in a short term crisis. These payments can be used to meet the difference in rent and the amount received in benefits for a time limited period, and is particularly useful for households who are affected by the Benefit Cap and Bedroom Tax, thereby preventing homelessness.

We also intend to make our Discretionary Housing Payments go further. We are therefore committed to applying to the MHCLG for approval to allocate funding from the Council’s Housing Revenue Account to top up Discretionary Housing Payments for our council tenants, in the event of our MHCLG allocated DHP funding running out.

- **Options into Employment**

The Council funds a dedicated Benefit and Money Advice Officer advisor within the Housing Options Team to focus on preventing homelessness. Measures taken include: ensuring households in the private rented sector can access Discretionary Housing Payments; providing budgetary advice, and advice about alternative housing options through Homeseeker Plus and other private rented accommodation; and assisting generally in the take-up of benefits for low-income households. In 2016 alone our single officer raised more than £1.5 million for low-income households in this way. In addition, the role also looks at supporting longer term solutions, by providing practical advice about how accessing employment can reduce the pressures some families face when affected by the Benefit Cap.

We will continue to give priority to the delivery of this service and develop initiatives to support individuals into work, as well as helping to tackle their immediate benefits issues.

- **Early intervention prevention**

With the implementation of the welfare reforms, we have invested significantly in CBH’s services for our tenants. As with the Housing Options Team, we also have dedicated Benefit & Money Advisors working with tenants, helping them with benefits claims and ensuring the most vulnerable can adjust to the welfare reforms. In addition, we are investing resources into reducing digital exclusion, and helping tenants into training, education and employment.

- **Mortgage repossessions**
Whilst mortgage repossessions are currently very low in Cheltenham, we will keep a watching brief on any new trends, taking action to support households affected where appropriate.

- **Help with Food Parcels**

Whilst not a long term solution, help with food provision can resolve a short term crisis. Our Housing Options Team, CCP and other providers facilitate the provision of food parcels throughout the year for those who need them.

- **In debt – a way to pay scheme**

In debt – a way to pay is a scheme run by the Council to assist households with debts owed to the Council, such as council tax or former rent arrears. Provided a regular payment plan is agreed and maintained, a proportion of the overall debt can be written off. Referrals into the scheme are made by the provider of our debt advice contract. Currently there is little take-up of the scheme, as other mechanisms can be more favourable – i.e. Debt Relief Orders – however, we will keep this scheme open to maximise the choices available to households who are in need.

We need to do more to reduce youth homelessness. A poor start in early adult life is likely to lead to poor outcomes in later life, in terms of life choices, health and so on. We know that young people can struggle to access good quality housing and because of their age can be vulnerable and need extra support. Whilst returning to live at home is often the best option for young people, there are circumstances when this is not appropriate or safe. In such instances, we need to ensure there is suitable, alternative accommodation available, and that appropriate support is in place. We will therefore focus on the following initiatives to help tackle homelessness.

- **Emergency housing provision**

We will seek to avoid using Bed & Breakfast provision where ever possible. We will also seek to ensure that young people, regardless of whether or not they are in priority need, have the opportunity to be accommodated safely on an emergency basis, with a view to either returning home, if it is appropriate to do so, or accessing alternative accommodation, such as Accommodation Based Support.

We will therefore continue to fund Nightstop (or equivalent services) to provide host family accommodation on a temporary basis for 16-25 year olds.

- **Home visits and greater accessibility**

Where it is appropriate do so, we will carry out more home visits on young people to understand the issues affecting the family household as a whole. If remaining in the family home is the most suitable option for young people, we will try to help the family find solutions that support this. If remaining in the family home isn’t likely to be solution, then we will explore alternative options, making sure the young person is clear about what these are.

- **Southwark Protocol and care leavers’ protocol**

For 16/17 year olds we will keep under review our joint arrangements with the County Council’s 16+ Assessment Team, ensuring that our Southwark protocol (which sets out our joint working arrangements with the County
on 16/17 year olds who are homeless) is followed and remains fit for purpose.

We have recently reviewed the care leavers’ protocol to ensure that care leavers have adequate opportunities for alternative housing provision once they are ready to live independently. We will continue to keep this under review and, again, ensure that it remains fit for purpose in light of any changing needs.

- **Pathways into and out of Accommodation Based Support**

Housing advice agencies and supported housing providers work closely and meet regularly to consider the accommodation needs of young people requiring Accommodation Based Support. This multi-agency working is well established, though funding arrangements can change and this has the potential to affect future provision. At present, it is considered that there is broadly sufficiently supply to support demand.

Going forward, we will maintain close working relationships with Gloucestershire County Council so that we can understand any potential future changes to funding, and ensure that we feed into the County any issues we experience on the ground which might influence the design and specification of future service provision via our county-wide partnership meetings. Relevant commissioning officer(s) from the County Council will also continue to be members of Cheltenham’s Housing and Support Forum.

We will also ensure that move-on from Accommodation Based Support continues to work effectively, and should issues begin to emerge from our partnership meetings, then we will seek to address them in a timely manner.

- **Access into the Private Rented Sector**

Access into the private rented sector is particularly challenging for young people. We will work with CBH’s Housing Options Team to ensure that as initiatives are developed to enable households to access private rented accommodation more easily, these extend also to young people, for example through the development of a lodgings initiative.

- **Early Prevention intervention**

CBH recently undertook a study on a couple of our housings schemes which have a relatively high turnover of vacancies. The study found that a significant proportion of tenancy failures in our Council homes involved young people as tenants. We will therefore take steps to identify these risks at the point of sign-up, and place greater focus on working more proactively with tenants at greater risk of losing their homes, to ensure they are getting the help, support and advice they need in order to make their tenancies a success.

**Priority 4: Tackling domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse is one of our main causes of homelessness. We intend to take the following measures to tackle it:

- **Commissioning of Gloucestershire’s Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS)**

GDASS is commissioned by the County Council. It is a county-wide service designed to reduce the level of domestic abuse, and improve the safety of victims and their families, offering a variety of support programmes for women and men over 16 years old. This includes offering protection and supporting people through legal action, if appropriate.
As part of the recommissioning of this service we will ensure that the intelligence we gather via Housing Options and other agencies across Cheltenham via our Housing & Support Forum, is used to input into the shaping of future service provision. We have strong strategic partnership arrangements across the county, working closely with other districts within Gloucestershire.

- **Places of Safety**

As the funding arrangements for domestic abuse services changed from mainly refuge provision to more flexible support provision, the need for more places of safety began to emerge to support the council’s emergency/temporary housing provision. We have since worked across the county to build up a portfolio of accommodation (up to 12 dwellings) to support this need, following a successful, county-wide bid for funding for approximately £500,000. We will keep under review these arrangements, and address any issues as they arise, through our strategic partnership arrangements.

In addition, we will work with CBH to keep open the option of alternative housing outside the normal recourse of homelessness legislation, should our tenants be affected.

- **Sanctuary Schemes and Target Hardening**

We intend to continue to support initiatives that will enable households experiencing domestic abuse to be able to remain safely in their homes, if they wish to do so. One initiative is to provide a sanctuary scheme and target hardening measures to make the dwelling physically more secure, and we will continue to fund these works, as needed.

- **Enforcement action against perpetrators**

We will seek to ensure that enforcement action is taken against perpetrators of domestic abuse who are our council tenants, in partnership with the police. This can include an extension of the Introductory Tenancy or possession proceedings. Through CBH we will also consider seeking injunctive action against perpetrators, although it is expected that GDASS will provide a route through to this type of action, if it is considered appropriate.

- **Multi-agency arrangements and partnerships**

Operationally we will ensure our multi-agency arrangements work effectively for everyone, with the Housing Options Team feeding into MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings, when appropriate, to assist GDASS’s Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) in assessing and reducing the risk of harm to those who are at high risk of experience domestic abuse. In addition, CBH operate a Domestic Abuse Forum. The key responsibilities of the forum are to raise awareness of domestic abuse and its impact and support the delivery of key initiatives and activities.

**Priority 5: Tackling Rough Sleeping**

- **Assertive Outreach Service**

Rough sleeping has increased in Cheltenham in recent years. Nationally there has been an increase in rough sleeping by 169% since 2010. In 2012, the Council commissioned an Assertive Outreach service to tackle rough sleeping. The aim of the service is to work proactively with rough sleepers, with a view to them engaging with relevant advice, support and treatment services, and to secure suitable accommodation. Since then we have moved to a jointly commissioned service across the county, with all the districts,
Gloucestershire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner funding this initiative. We remain committed to providing assertive outreach services to tackle rough sleeping.

- **Entrenched Rough Sleepers**

Since the commissioning of county-wide assertive outreach services, it has become clear that for some rough sleepers, particularly those who have become more entrenched, the current pathway to independent accommodation is less successful, with a number of rough sleepers being evicted from supported accommodation as a result of their behaviour. For some, the pathway to independent accommodation via high-level supported housing does not work.

In 2017, the districts were successful in a county-wide bid for c.£1m funding from the MHCLG to commission an outcomes-based/payments by results service which focuses on working with a cohort of entrenched rough sleepers (110 across the county) with a view to getting them into independent accommodation, drug and alcohol free, and into training, education or employment.

P3 were successful following the tendering of this contract at the end of 2017. They will now work with this cohort of rough sleepers over 4 years to achieve these key outcomes. Our role will be to monitor and review their successes or otherwise, and where relevant, to establish any lessons learnt in order to inform any future commissioning opportunities.

- **The local authority’s power to accommodate**

In October 2017 the Council agreed to pilot an initiative to accommodate rough sleepers with little or no support needs directly into temporary accommodation, regardless of whether or not they have a priority need. We envisaged this would assist those new to rough sleeping; and we estimated our approach could assist around 4-6 rough sleepers a year. We will continue to use this power to accommodate, and we will continue to monitor and review the outcomes with CBH’s Housing Options Team to ensure that rough sleepers who have become homeless through no fault of their own in Cheltenham, and who are able to live independently because they have few or no support needs, are not precluded from accommodation simply by virtue of them failing to be in ‘priority need’.

- **Severe Weather Protocol**

All the districts across the county work together to support the delivery of the severe weather protocol. This protocol ensures that rough sleepers, regardless of their circumstances, are accommodated during periods of cold weather (zero degrees or under for three consecutive nights, or -3 degrees for one night). Through our Service Provider, we will use the opportunities that come with accommodating rough sleepers to engage with them so that they can access mainstream advice and support services, thereby getting them back on the pathway to independent living.

In addition, the Council is committed to going further by developing its own Cheltenham Standard, which means that during the winter we will seek to accommodate rough sleepers during times of yellow weather warnings (or higher) where it is deemed these warnings present additional risks to rough sleepers. We have piloted this approach during the early part of 2018, and we will use our findings to help inform future decisions. This will include discussions with our district partners over whether there can be alignment over our new approach across the whole county.
Appendix 2

Priority 6: Supporting vulnerable people

- **Pathways into and out of accommodation based support**

Many agencies who work with vulnerable people come together on a weekly basis to consider the housing needs of their clients, and to secure accommodation based support. More often than not, demand exceeds supply. We will therefore work Gloucestershire County Council, the commissioners of accommodation based support, to help inform needs and to influence the future specification requirements when it comes to the recommissioning of this provision.

We will also keep Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus, our choice based lettings allocations scheme, under review to ensure that those who are ready for independent housing are able to access it on a timely basis. We will use our monitoring meetings with CBH’s Housing Options Team, and intelligence gleaned from members of our Housing & Support Forum to inform our understanding of emerging pressures and outcomes.

In addition, we will keep under review the county-wide reconnection policy to ensure that move-on from accommodation based support is delivered fairly across the county.

- **Enhancing the way we support our tenants**

CBH already provide good management services on the Council’s behalf, with high levels of customer satisfaction. However, we want to reduce the risk of tenancy failure further within our council homes. Through CBH, we intend to implement a risk-based approach to managing our tenancies. This will mean that we will place greater effort on understanding our tenants’ needs and aspirations at the start of their tenancies. This may include helping them into work, education or training, or ensuring that we can provide our tenants generally with greater help and support so that their tenancies can get off to a great start and remain sustainable.

- **Community Based Support**

The County Council commissions community based support services to enable more vulnerable households gain the skills and confidence to be able to live independently without further need of support. We will continue to use the intelligence we receive from our partners within the Housing & Support Forum, as well as from the providers we commission, to help inform our understanding of any issues on the ground in order to help inform future commissioning decisions, via our county-wide strategic housing partnership arrangements.

- **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding the wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and adults is of paramount importance to all agencies involved in the delivery of the Housing & Homelessness Strategy. Sometimes decisions taken by one agency may seem obvious when taken in isolation. However, in instances where safeguarding issues are likely to arise, it is critical that partners work collaboratively in order to ensure that the decisions taken are done so in a manner that reduces the risk of harm to children and to vulnerable adults. This also means working within their agencies’ respective safeguarding policies and within agreed processes of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Childrens’ Board and the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board.

- **Alternatives to begging**
We know, from the intelligence gathered from a number of agencies, that many individuals who beg in Cheltenham are adequately housed. We also know that the overwhelming majority of these individuals have complex needs, often coupled with drug and/or alcohol addiction. The risk is that if these needs are not properly addressed, then they will become homeless. We therefore intend to continue working with agencies to find ways that will encourage those who do beg to seek and maintain support and, where appropriate, receive treatment to address their complex needs. One initiative will be to ensure there remains Assertive Outreach Services from the county council’s commissioned drugs and alcohol support and treatment services. Another is to give residents who want to give money the option of doing so via contactless donation point(s) within Cheltenham, with any revenues raised going to charities that support rough sleepers with food, company and clothing.

- **Ex-offenders**

Housing ex-offenders comes with its challenges. Some will be excluded from the housing list as a result of their previous actions, whilst others may be deemed to be intentionally homeless and so will not be owed a long-term housing duty, even if they are considered to be vulnerable. We will however work with these households if they are homeless to help them to explore alternative housing solutions. For those who have demonstrated a change in behaviour so that they qualify for the housing list, we will work with agencies to ensure that suitable housing solutions can be found, balancing risks, and taking account of the needs of the local area.

- **Veterans of the Armed Forces**

We will also work with organisations that support veterans to ensure that pathways into accommodation are clear, and so that veterans within our accommodation are able to access additional support, should they need it.
Appendix 2

CBC Housing & Homelessness Strategy

Outcome 4
Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities

Whilst Cheltenham generally is an area of affluence, it also has significant areas of deprivation. For instance, there are 3 wards: St Marks, Hesters Way and St Pauls, that are in the most 10% deprived areas of the UK (based on the National Indices of Deprivation).

We are committed to ensuring that all our communities are healthy, cohesive and sustainable, so that good life outcomes can apply to everyone.

Whilst our second outcome focused on improving the fabric of housing to help address issues such as fuel poverty and the risks of residents being exposed to excessive cold and falls, etc., this outcome focuses more on what we and our partners can do improve the fabric of our communities to make them become more sustainable.

Urban Extensions to the West and North West of Cheltenham

The Joint Core Strategy identifies two large strategic sites in or near to Cheltenham: one to the west and the other to the north west of Cheltenham. These Strategic Allocations have been identified to help support Cheltenham’s housing need up to 2031. Together they have the potential to deliver more than 5,385 homes, including 1,885 affordable homes.

With any development of significant scale, we know that there can be challenges in helping new communities forge and become cohesive. It is for this reason that the Council led on the creation of a new Affordable Housing Partnership, made up of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury district authorities and a number of Preferred Registered Providers, which were selected on the basis of their experience of providing good quality housing management and community involvement. We will continue to work with our Preferred Registered Providers to share insights and experiences so that all our Preferred Providers take a more consistent approach in their lettings and housing management policies, reflecting best practice. In particular, we support, ‘Welcome to the Future – A local model for building socially sustainable communities’ which was developed by a number of our Preferred Providers working collaboratively, and was endorsed by the Council in 2016 as a model for social sustainability. The approach is being followed in master-planning key sites across the Borough with the aim of supporting people to live in strong, safe and healthy communities.
We are committed to working with the developers/landowners of these Strategic Allocations to ensure that they only contract with one or more of our Preferred Providers.

- **Local lettings plans**

Our Choice Based Lettings Allocations Scheme, Homeseeker Plus, enables the Council to agree with Registered Providers local lettings plans on new developments, or where there are, for instance, pockets of high levels of anti-social behaviour which are affecting a particular neighbourhood. These lettings plans seek to strike a balance between housing those with the greatest housing need, against the requirement to ensure that our communities are, and can remain, sustainable. Most of the time that balance is served without the need for intervention through a lettings plan - and our priority is to ensure that households with the greatest housing need are offered accommodation when it becomes available. We will therefore review these lettings plans to make sure they remain fit for purpose, and remove them if they are no longer deemed necessary for that community.

- **Review of our Choice Based Lettings Allocations Scheme, Homeseeker Plus**

We will review our Choice Based Lettings Allocations Scheme, Homeseeker Plus, to ensure that we still have the right balance of priorities to reflect households’ differing needs. In particular, changes to the homelessness legislation could lead to new pressures, and it is important that we keep a close watch on any emerging trends following the implementation of the new Act.

- **Syrian Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

Cheltenham prides itself on being an open and accepting Borough. In December 2015 we made a commitment to help Syrian Refugees with accommodation (i.e. up to 20/year over a 5 year period to December 2020). We stand by this commitment. The actual number of households assisted will be determined by the supply of suitable accommodation, balanced against local housing needs.

In addition, we will consider supporting the accommodation of asylum seekers in private rented accommodation within the town, liaising with relevant bodies such as the Home Office and the County Council to ensure that any such placements are well managed and effectively coordinated.

- **Homes for Veterans of the Armed Forces**

In 2017 we built 10 new homes, giving priority to veterans of the Armed Forces. We will keep under review our Lettings Plan arrangements to ensure that these homes remain available for our veterans, thereby enforcing our commitment to them and to Gloucestershire’s Armed Forces Covenant.

- **Big Local**

In December 2012 St Peter’s and The Moors was selected as one of the 150 Big Local areas in England to receive at least £1 million from the Local Trust over 10 years. Big Local is a resident-led project that brings together all the local talent, ambitions, skills, and energy from individuals, groups and organisations who want to make their area an even better place to live. The long term vision for St Peter’s and The Moors is to be ‘An inspiring community of supportive neighbours; helping residents to make ends meet; making the area safer and cleaner; and developing more things to do and places to go in our community. A community plan is currently in place and will be reviewed regularly to ensure key outcomes are being delivered.

- **Oakley**
CBC has secured funds from the Gloucestershire NHS Prevention and Self-Care fund for a transformational project that is strengths-based and puts local residents at the forefront of providing wellbeing support and advice to their communities. This is one of six similar projects being delivered in communities throughout Gloucestershire. Based in Oakley, this is a community-based project that creates the right culture, environment and conditions to enable more people to look after their health and wellbeing themselves. The project is based on a multi-agency partnership that includes CBH, the Cheltenham Trust and P3, as well as the active involvement of local residents. A new fixed term post is being created to help coordinate the delivery of these outcomes.

**Priority 2: Creating a sense of place through Estate Regeneration and Renewal**

We want Cheltenham to be a great place to live, where businesses, people and communities thrive. The built environment plays an essential role in creating a sense of place for people and communities.

The Council and CBH have already taken action to increase the supply of affordable housing, whilst at the same time improving the built environment, by delivering a number of new homes on underutilised garage sites; and we will continue to do this as and when suitable sites are identified as part of our pipeline of new supply.

In addition, the Council, in partnership with CBH, have embarked on an ambitious drive to review potential future options for improving the housing offer across parts of west Cheltenham, particularly around Hester’s Way. A series of stakeholder events have been underway during 2017/18 with a view to reaching a preferred option for the potential regeneration of this area.

**Priority 3: Supporting people into training, education and employment**

Whilst we have initiatives to support financial inclusion and to help households with their claims for benefits, etc., we know that the best way to help residents out of poverty is to support them into work. We therefore want to complement our financial inclusion and debt prevention initiatives outlined in Outcome 3: Tackling Homelessness, by focusing also on initiatives that will assist our tenants who are looking to get into training, education and employment. We will also support and encourage our other Registered Providers with affordable housing in our area to undertake similar initiatives for their affordable housing tenants through our Housing & Support Forum.

Our work as part of the west Cheltenham urban regeneration project, and more generally across our new build aspirations and the refurbishment of our stock, we will also look at opportunities under this priority. In addition, our emerging Economic Development action plan will identify ways in which we can support skills and training across the Borough.

**Priority 4: Tackling anti-social behaviour**

Antisocial behaviour (ASB) can have a significant negative impact on our communities. It covers a range of nuisances, public disorder and crimes that affect people’s
lives on a daily basis. If ASB is not dealt with appropriately, and in a timely manner, it can have a devastating impact on the lives of individuals, families and communities. It is widely recognised that single agencies cannot tackle ASB alone and there is a need to work in partnership to address these issues.

- **Solace**

Solace is a partnership between Gloucestershire Constabulary and the Council that seeks to improve the sharing of intelligence and expertise in dealing with ASB, to reduce the number of repeat incidents and victims. The partnership focuses on any ASB that is assessed as having a high risk to the victim and/or high impact on the community. These can range from neighbour nuisance, disputes, verbal abuse, harassment, mental health, drug and/or alcohol issues, through to begging and street nuisance.

The partnership will agree on what multi-agency responses are required to tackle these issues, drawing in resources from organisations such as CBH, mental health services, and so on, where appropriate. The partnership also provides support on cases where urgent civil action is needed (e.g. closure orders), attaching these to criminal investigations.

Whilst victim-led, the partnership includes within its remit a support element to those who commit ASB, with a view to changing their behaviour by tackling the root causes of ASB and associated criminality.

Solace is currently in its infancy in Cheltenham. We will therefore seek to develop this partnership and ensure that it meets its key objectives in tackling ASB and its root causes.

- **The role of Cheltenham Borough Homes**

Not all complaints of ASB will fall within the remit of Solace, given that their role is to focus on high risk/impact cases. In order to tackle the wider elements of ASB, CBH have a team of officers: the ASB Team, that deal with ASB complaints relating to our tenants and leaseholders, and will work in partnership with other agencies where ASB issues arise that go across tenures. As the Council’s ALMO (managing agent) CBH exercises most of our housing-related ASB powers on our behalf, and they will seek to put in place a range of potential solutions to address these issues, from Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, through to injunctions, and where necessary, eviction.

In order to prevent ASB from escalating within neighbourhoods, we are keen to bring about early reporting of issues, so that they can be addressed more quickly and sooner. We are also keen to ensure that a preventative approach is taken to tackling ASB, along with rehabilitation of perpetrators. We will therefore continue to focus on and develop diversionary and educational activities, particularly with young people to address some of the root causes of ASB.

- **Reducing social isolation**

An absence of social capital and support can lead to individuals becoming isolated. Loneliness and social isolation can lead to poorer health outcomes for individuals. Those most vulnerable to social isolation are carers, people with long-term health problems or disabilities, and older people. The County Council have, and will continue to develop, a range of initiatives to combat social isolation.
We will also continue to support initiatives that reduce social isolation, such as CBH’s ‘community hubs’, which provide venues for a range of activities and support for older people living within our communities.

- **Use of Lifelines Alarms and Assistive Technology**

The Council has its own Lifeline Alarm service, which enables users to get help via their telephone quickly and efficiently, offering independence and peace of mind 24 hours a day.

We will continue to promote awareness and take-up of this service. We will also look to support initiatives that promote the awareness and uptake of assistive technology to help improve the wellbeing, safety and independence of our residents.

- **Reducing delays in hospital discharge**

Longer stays in hospital can have an adverse impact on an older person, as they quickly lose their mobility and their ability to do everyday tasks. Much of the work required to reduce delays in hospital discharge requires a more integrated approach to team-working within hospitals and coordination across health and social care partners; however, housing can also play a role by ensuring that suitable alternative accommodation can be made available for individuals who are unable to return to home, but who can nevertheless continue to live independently given the right type of accommodation.

Through the Better Care Fund, district authorities and the County Council have agreed to fund two new posts that will work alongside frontline health teams in the acute hospital settings to increase the knowledge about housing options. We will closely monitor how this initiative supports these outcomes.

We will also support other initiatives that will enable older and frail people to be discharged from hospitals on a timely basis into suitable alternative housing.

- **Adaptation of homes**

Not everyone wants to move to alternative accommodation as they become older, or if they develop a disability. Whilst we will look to see how we can support their move through the use of our Relocation Grant, many will prefer to have their homes adapted instead. We can facilitate large scale adaptations through the availability of means-tested Disabled Facilities Grants, and for smaller adaptations, these are facilitated through the County Council, or through CBH on council owned homes. All the districts are currently working together with the County Council to bring about a more consistent approach to how adaptations are provided across the county.

- **Home improvement and handyperson services**

The County Council currently commissions a Home Improvement Service to help older people, and households with disabilities, to access minor adaptations and repairs to their homes. We also want to ensure that older people and the disabled are aware of and can access trusted handyperson services when they need them. We will therefore explore with CBH the potential for them to develop and deliver a handyperson service across the town.

- **Identification of poor quality, unsafe housing**

We know that for people who are frail, living in a cold home can cause chronic and acute
illnesses and can lead to reduced mobility, falls and depression. The consequences of falls at home, caused often by trivial hazards can be catastrophic, precipitating serious decline in their physical and mental health. Both the effects of excessive cold and risks of falls have resultant costs to the NHS and social care.

We will therefore keep under review arrangements with our partners in social care, health and advice agencies to ensure there is sufficient awareness and reporting of these potential hazards to the Council in order that the most appropriate housing solutions can be explored.

Performance and Monitoring

We will deliver against our outcomes and priorities through our action plan at Appendix 3 below. This plan will be reviewed regularly and updated annually, taking account of any emerging local needs and pressures, as well as any shifts and/or developments in housing and planning policies nationally.

Throughout the period of this strategy, we will embrace new opportunities for partnership working and will ensure that members of our Housing & Support Forum play an active role in shaping, and contributing towards the delivery of, our annual plan.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Action Plan
Appendix 2 - Evidence Base/Needs analysis
Appendix 3 –Tenancy Strategy 2018-23