

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – Tuesday 10th July 2018
Housing & Homelessness Strategy

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| Accountable member | Peter Jeffries – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member Housing |
| Accountable officer | Martin Stacy – Lead Commissioner Housing Services |
| Ward(s) affected | All |
| Key Decision | Yes |
| Executive summary | <p>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.</p> <p>We will seek to achieve this by focusing on the following four outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the provision of affordable housing (which will also include facilitating the supply of homes generally and the provision of private rented homes on a long-term let); 2. Making best use of existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods; 3. Tackling homelessness; and 4. Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities. <p>Beneath each of these outcomes will 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.</p> <p>For more details about the range of activities that we will undertake to support this strategy, please refer to the Housing Strategy at Appendix 2 of this report, and our Action Plan at Appendix 3. 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.</p> |
| Recommendations | To approve the adoption of the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 |

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| Financial implications | <p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any priorities and initiatives identified within this report that have a financial bearing will require the usual approvals in accordance with the council's Constitution.</p> <p>Contact officer: Paul Jones, paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264365</p> |
| Legal implications | <p>Pursuant to section 2 of the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities have a duty to review homelessness in their district and formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of the review. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3rd April 2018 and requires that local housing authorities must take “reasonable steps” to either maintain or secure accommodation for eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, known as the prevention and relief duties. In addition, pursuant to section 182 of the Housing Act 1996, local authorities are also bound to have regard to the Secretary of State's Homelessness Code of Guidance. A revised code was published on 22 February 2018. Failure to have an updated Homelessness Strategy may impact the council's ability to defend challenges to decisions made under the Housing Act 1996 as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p> <p>Contact officer: Vikki Fennell vikki.fennell@teWKesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272015</p> |
| HR implications (including learning and organisational development) | <p>None as a direct result of this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Carmel Togher, carmel.togher@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242</p> |
| Key risks | As identified at Appendix 1 of this report (the risk register) |
| Corporate and community plan Implications | This decision will support our community vision to help people and communities to thrive. |
| Environmental and climate change implications | This strategy includes a commitment to tackling fuel poverty and providing affordable warmth by improving the energy efficiency of peoples' homes. |
| Property/Asset Implications | <p>The Housing & Homelessness Strategy includes a commitment to explore opportunities for land and/or property acquisition. Any decisions to acquire land/property will require the usual approvals in accordance with the council's Constitution.</p> <p>Contact officer: Dominic Stead, dominic.stead@cheltenham.gov.uk</p> |

1. Background

- 1.1** There is significant interest in housing both nationally and locally. At the national level, the Government has introduced a number of measures that seek to facilitate the supply of housing in general. They have also set out plans to improve standards in the private rented sector by providing councils with new enforcement powers to tackle rogue landlords, and plans are underway to extend mandatory licensing to more Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs). In addition, the Government has recently implemented the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, introducing a new duty on councils to prevent homelessness for all, regardless of whether or not they are in priority need.
- 1.2** Nevertheless, there are some real challenges that remain. The supply of affordable housing through s.106 obligations can sometimes be curtailed as a result of viability reasons, or where vacant building credits can be applied to the land – i.e. where employment land is no longer in use and there is a planning application for the land to be converted to residential use. In addition, there are greater pressures on homelessness as a result of the austerity measures that have been introduced as part of the welfare reforms. In particular, access into the private rented sector has become increasingly difficult in recent years as the Local Housing Allowance has failed to keep pace with the increase in private rents.
- 1.3** The proposed Housing & Homelessness Strategy seeks to both embrace the opportunities and to tackle the challenges that we currently face in ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home.

2. Vision & Outcomes

- 2.1** 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.

- 2.2** 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. Some of our key priorities are outlined below.

3. Key Priorities

- 3.1** We will maximise the delivery of affordable housing by taking steps to facilitate the supply of housing in general, and seek to deliver more affordable homes than we would otherwise receive through market forces alone. This could be, for example, through the use of commuted sums and grant funding from Homes England, and through the delivery of our own pipeline of new development. In particular, and subject to the necessary approvals, we intend to launch a £100m building programme to provide around 500 homes, with the needs of families and young people especially in mind. This programme would also include the provision of private rented accommodation on a long-term let basis, which we envisage will be managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes; again, subject to the necessary approvals.
- 3.2** We will improve standards in the private rented sector, from implementing the extension of

mandatory licensing of HMOs and using powers to tackle rogue landlords, through to identifying health and safety hazards in people's homes and promoting good practice via our Landlords' Accreditation Scheme. We will also reduce the number of empty homes and undertake activities that will promote affordable warmth and tackle fuel poverty.

- 3.3** We will maintain the quality of, and make better use of, our council housing stock by enhancing the NPV analysis of our homes (through a new asset management modelling toolkit). We will also undertake a commissioning review of our sheltered housing, and undertake activities to incentivise downsizing.
- 3.4** We will tackle homelessness by focusing on its main causes: the end of private rented accommodation; young people leaving the family home; and households having to flee domestic abuse. We will implement new activities, and keep under review existing ones, to ensure that opportunities for preventing homelessness are fully explored and that they deliver value for money. In particular, we will roll out new initiatives to enable low income households to access the private rented sector more easily. We will also keep under review the services we commission to support households in debt and/or who need benefits advice.
- 3.5** We will tackle the more visible forms of homelessness – rough sleeping – through the re-commissioning of Assertive Outreach services, and through the newly commissioned ACTion Glos, a jointly commissioned, outcomes-based funded service focusing on helping entrenched rough sleepers into accommodation, treatment services and education, training or employment. We will also review the current severe weather protocol for rough sleepers.
- 3.6** We will seek to influence future commissioning decisions by Gloucestershire County Council over the provision of Accommodation Based Support and Community Based Support Services, taking account of local intelligence around needs. We will also review the county-wide (plus West Oxfordshire) Homeseecker Plus Allocations Scheme and seek to implement any necessary changes to take account of the potential impact arising from the introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act.
- 3.7** We will take steps to alleviate housing need generally by focusing on early prevention activities, such as tackling anti-social behaviour in communities, supporting people into training, education and employment and supporting best practice in delivering social sustainability on the urban extensions. We will also seek to create a sense of place through potential estate regeneration activities across parts of west Cheltenham, along with estate renewal activities such as the delivery of new affordable housing on under-utilised, council-owned garage sites.
- 3.8** We will take steps to support independent living for older people and people with physical disabilities by undertaking activities to reduce the effects of social isolation. We will also work with our partners in health and social care to bring about a more joined up and cohesive approach to supporting these shared outcomes.
- 3.9** For further details of the range of activities that we will undertake to support this strategy, please refer to our Housing and Homelessness Strategy at Appendix 2 of this report, and our Action Plan at Appendix 3. 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.

4. Our Tenancy Strategy

- 4.1** We intend to continue to provide lifetime tenancies for our social housing tenants. Our rationale for this is detailed within our Tenancy Strategy (Appendix 5 of this report).

Registered Providers with housing stock in Cheltenham must have regard to our Tenancy Strategy when formulating their own Tenancy Policies; although they are free to implement fixed-term tenancies if they wish to. We have therefore specified guidelines for Registered Providers to

adopt when they are seeking to end a tenancy for a resident in Cheltenham. These guidelines are there to minimise any risk of homelessness.

5. Alternative options considered

There is no statutory requirement to develop and publish a housing strategy; however there is a statutory requirement to produce a homelessness strategy every five years. Given the importance we consider housing is to the Borough we consider that it is imperative the council has a document which clearly states its housing ambitions and goals for the future. Moreover, many of the links between housing generally and homelessness are intertwined. It follows that a strategic approach to housing in the wider sense will in turn support our aims in tackling homelessness.

6. Consultation and feedback

6.1 In October 2017, the council undertook a consultation event with key partners who make up our Housing and Support Forum, to help inform future priorities around tackling homelessness and the wider housing agenda. Our partners are made up of: charities working with the homeless; advice agencies; supported housing providers; Registered Providers and other statutory agencies, including Gloucestershire County Council. The findings from the event have been captured within our Housing & Homelessness Strategy, and we have taken them into account when shaping our priorities.

6.2 Early drafts of the strategy have been shared for feedback with key officers internally, responsible for: Property Services, Planning Policy, Development Management, Public Protection, private sector housing, and community engagement. All these teams will have a role to play in supporting the delivery of this strategy.

6.3 We have also consulted on our draft with a wide range of organisations outside the council, including Cheltenham Borough Homes, Registered Providers, the voluntary sector and with colleagues in health and social care, and our proposals have been positively received.

7. Performance management – monitoring and review

7.1 We are keen to ensure our Housing & Homelessness Strategy is and remains a collaborative strategy across a number of organisations, and not simply a Cheltenham Borough Council strategy. We have sought to reflect this within our Action Plan.

7.2 We will review the Action Plan annually, and will seek to use our Housing & Support Forum to review progress and to hold each other to account.

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| Report author | Contact officer: Martin Stacy, martin.stacy@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264171 |
| Appendices | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Risk Assessment2. Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-233. Action Plan4. Evidence Base/Needs Analysis5. Tenancy Strategy 2018-23 |
| Background information | None |

Risk Assessment

Appendix 1

| The risk | | | | Original risk score (impact x likelihood) | | | Managing risk | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|-------------|--|----------------|-------|---------------|--|-----------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Risk ref. | Risk description | Risk Owner | Date raised | Impact 1-5 | Likelihood 1-6 | Score | Control | Action | Deadline | Responsible officer | Transferred to risk register |
| | If we do not publish a homelessness strategy at least every 5 years, then we will fail to meet our statutory obligations. | Martin Stacy | 7.6.18 | 3 | 6 | 18 | Reduce | Cabinet approves the adoption of our Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 | July 2018 | Martin Stacy | |
| | If we produce a strategy that focuses on only tackling homelessness, then we will fail to develop a clear and cohesive approach to delivering against our wider housing priorities. | Martin Stacy | 7.6.18 | 3 | 5 | 15 | Reduce | As above | July 2018 | Martin Stacy | |
| Explanatory notes Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical) Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability) Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close | | | | | | | | | | | |