

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet - 9th July 2019
Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23
Action Plan Update 2019

Accountable member	Councillor Peter Jeffries, Cabinet Member - Housing
Accountable officer	Martin Stacy, Lead Commissioner – Housing Services
Ward(s) affected	All
Key Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>The council's Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 was approved by Cabinet in July last year. This is a five year strategy that sets out both our vision and the priorities that we will focus on in order to achieve our key outcomes.</p> <p>This strategy is a living document. For this reason we will be updating the action plan annually to reflect the challenges and opportunities that have arisen, and will continue to arise, since the strategy was published. Our updated action plan is at Appendix 2 of this report.</p> <p>In addition, and in view of the increased emphasis on tackling rough sleeping both nationally and locally, we have taken the opportunity to create a clearer delineation within our action plan between our homelessness prevention activities and those activities that focus on reducing rough sleeping. It follows that we also propose to amend the title of our current strategy from 'Housing & Homelessness Strategy' to 'Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.'</p>
Recommendations	<p>To agree to the amendment of the title our Housing & Homelessness Strategy to read: 'Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23.'</p> <p>To approve the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan Update for 2019.</p>
Financial implications	<p>None as a direct result of this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Martin Burke, martin.burke@publicagroup.uk, 01594 812544</p>

Legal implications	<p>The applicable legislation is the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, Housing Act 1996 - Homelessness Act 2002. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new emphasis on early intervention and the prevention of homelessness. Authorities must now provide structured advice and assistance to everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, not just those who are considered to be vulnerable and in “priority need”. The Council is required to have a strategy in place and ensure that this complies with the relevant legislation.</p> <p>The Council should also have regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 when applying their strategy.</p> <p>Contact officer: donna.marks@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684272691</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>None as a direct result of this report</p> <p>Contact officer: Julie.McCarthy@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242</p>
Key risks	<p>Please see Risk Register – Appendix 1</p>
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>This action plan update supports the council’s corporate priority: ‘Increasing the supply of housing and investing to build resilient communities’, and the council’s place vision: ‘Cheltenham is a place where people and communities thrive’.</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	<p>None as a direct result of this report</p>
Property/Asset Implications	<p>None as a direct result of this report</p> <p>Contact officer: Dominic Stead@cheltenham.gov.uk</p>

1. Background

- 1.1** The Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 was approved by Cabinet in July last year. This is a five year strategy that sets out both our vision and the priorities that we will focus on in order to achieve our key outcomes.
- 1.2** This strategy is a living document. For this reason we will be updating the action plan annually to reflect the challenges and opportunities that have arisen, and will continue to emerge, since the strategy was published. Our updated action plan is at Appendix 2 of this report.
- 1.3** Whilst we must look forward, this report also provides us with an opportunity to look back at some of the most notable achievements during the first year of our strategy. These are summarised in section 2 of this report below:

2. Progress against our Housing & Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018/23

2.1 Outcome 1 – Increasing the provision of affordable housing.

- 85 new affordable homes were provided during 2018/19; 43 of which were delivered over and above what would have been delivered through market forces alone. (23 new council homes, 10 new homes via YMCA - with the financial support of the council and Homes England grant funding - and a further 10 new affordable homes provided by Heylo, with the help of Homes England grant funding supported by the council.)
- Full Council approved a report in October 2018 supporting in principle a loaning facility of up to £100m for the provision of affordable housing and private rented homes to be let on a long term basis. Alongside this, a number of working groups have been set up to identify potential new supply opportunities and to oversee future delivery via Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH). We are currently examining new site opportunities.
- Following a successful bid for funding from Homes England, CBH commissioned a project looking at the potential regeneration of homes along Princess Elizabeth Way and surrounding areas. Consultation with residents has helped inform a high-level masterplan of the area, and work is now underway to carry out more detailed financial appraisals and potential phasing of the project.

2.2 Outcome 2 – Making best use of existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods

- Nearly 1,000 homes in the private sector in Cheltenham were made safer during 2018/19, and 38 long term vacant homes were brought back into use as a result of direct action by the council's Enforcement Team. The council has also increased council tax charges on long term empty homes in order to encourage owners to bring these properties back into use.
- The county-wide, jointly commissioned Warm & Well scheme advised nearly 300 households in Cheltenham on measures to improve the energy efficiency of their homes; and following 49 home visits, 38 energy efficiency measures were installed across 33 properties, generating annual savings of £10,000.
- CBH are rolling out new replacement windows, doors and boilers (930 homes benefitting from new windows, 873 new doors and approximately 500 new boilers fitted during 2018/19) all of which have contributed to an improved SAP (energy efficiency) rating of our homes compared with the previous year.

2.3 Outcome 3 – Tackling Homelessness

- CBH's Housing Options Service have successfully implemented key changes to the service brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act, leading to a reduction from 106 households becoming statutorily homeless during 2017/18 to 31 households in 2018/19.

- Following additional grant funding provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), Cabinet approved the commitment of new homelessness prevention funding into CBH's Housing Options Service, the result of which has contributed to an increase in positive outcomes, through homelessness prevention and relief work, from 145 households during 2017/18 to 230 households during 2018/19.
- A number of additional funding streams have been secured from MHCLG to tackle rough sleeping - much of this success being due to the strong strategic partnerships we have developed across the county. These can be summarised as follows:
 - Cold Weather Funding – used to extend the provision of the newly created winter provision at the YMCA and which contributed towards the provision of 2 additional outreach workers.
 - Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding – used to pilot Somewhere Safe to Stay and Navigator roles. This was used to enhance the winter provision by providing year round emergency short term accommodation for rough sleepers.
 - Rapid Response Funding – used to expand the jointly commissioned county-wide Assertive Outreach Team, whose focus is on helping rough sleepers to access accommodation and support services.
 - Additional funding from the MHCLG to expand the number of entrenched rough sleepers the ActionGlos project is able to support.
- Successful enhancement of the county-wide SWEP (severe weather protocol which triggers the emergency accommodation of rough sleepers) as a result of other districts across the county agreeing to adopt the 'Cheltenham Standard' (which had been piloted in Cheltenham during the previous winter). This means that in addition to very cold spells, SWEP will be triggered when a severe weather warning has been called.
- CBH's Housing Options Service's Benefits and Money Adviser has generated an additional £2m income over 2018/19 as a direct result of her involvement in helping residents with their benefits issues.
- CBH has also introduced a Supporting Successful Tenancies matrix of indicators, which has been used to provide greater understanding of the support needs of our tenants so that help can be targeted to those who most need it, thereby helping to maintain their tenancies and prevent homelessness.

2.4 Outcome 4 – Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities

- CBH have continued to tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) successfully, with 117 new cases recorded during 2018/19, all of which were resolved with 100% satisfaction and without the need for evictions. Preventative work has also been underway through CBH's Alternative Provision Project (APP), which has been relaunched as 'Thrive' – a 16 month programme that has seen 6 students at risk of exclusion from local schools attend weekly sessions with various CBH teams and partner agencies looking at the repercussions of ASB, impacts of knife crime, money and budgeting skills, with the aim of keeping young people in mainstream education.
- CBH have developed and launched a suite of two year Community Investment Plans across the borough to support social sustainability and community cohesion; the outcomes of which will be followed as part of our ongoing review of this housing strategy.
- To support tenants back into work, CBH's Employment Initiatives Service has enabled 225 people to access training locally, and a target has been set to enable 5 people into paid

employment each month – 60 per year. This is supported through work clubs and workshops, looking at a range of issues that promote employability.

- The council's Lifeline Alarm service has carried out nearly 200 new installations over the last 12 months, with a further 78 key safes being fitted to allow for ease of access to both care and emergency services. In addition, a fast-track installation service has been introduced for patients who want to return home but who do not have access to carers or family members; and a new 'vibby falls detector' has also been introduced, which automatically activates the alarm if the customers trips, falls or faints.
- Finally, the council has continued to work collaboratively with our partners across the county in order to develop greater consistency in the delivery of disabled facilities grant services. In fact, 75 major DFG adaptations were delivered this year, enabling disabled or frail people to remain in their homes.

3. Next steps for the year ahead

3.1 Appendix 2 of this report provides a detailed breakdown of the range of activities that will be undertaken during 2019/20 and beyond in order to support our strategy. As detailed in our strategy, our outcomes will continue to be focused on the following areas:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing (as well as providing private rented homes that will be let on a long-term basis);
- Making best use of our existing accommodation and improving our neighbourhoods;
- Tackling homelessness (including rough sleeping); and
- Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities

3.2 It is also worth noting that in view of the increased emphasis on tackling rough sleeping both nationally and locally, we have taken the opportunity to create a clearer delineation within our action plan between our homelessness prevention activities and those activities that focus on reducing rough sleeping.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 It is important that our strategy remains a living document. Issues around housing, both nationally and locally, will continue to evolve; and so the activities that support our outcomes need to be responsive and flexible to meet new challenges and embrace emerging opportunities as they arise. To illustrate the pace of change in the housing world, the last 12 months has seen the following key decisions being taken at the national level:

- Removal of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) debt cap, meaning that councils are now able to borrow more against the HRA to deliver more affordable housing, through the application of prudential borrowing criteria.
- Government decision to allow councils (and Registered Providers) to increase rents on affordable homes to CPI +1% post 2020 for the following 5 years. This reverses the four year period of austerity (2016-20) which have seen rents (and therefore revenues) reduce by 1% per year.
- Abolition of the previously proposed housing cost restrictions for 18-21 year olds.
- Decision to maintain the use of Housing Benefit for supported housing (management costs) rather than diverting this funding to a separate pot. This now provides greater certainty and overcomes concerns about the future financing of these schemes.

- The release of a Right to Buy receipts consultation paper, which shows the government is listening to the concerns local authorities have been raising regarding the restrictions over how these receipts can be used for the delivery of new affordable housing.
- The government's newly created Rough Sleeper Housing Strategy and its aim to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to eliminate it by 2027. As a result, opportunities have arisen during 2019 to bid for new funding to tackle rough sleeping locally. Cheltenham has been hugely successful in these bidding rounds, thanks to the strong strategic partnership working that cuts across all the districts throughout the county, including our partners in Health and the Police and Crime Commission.
- The government's release of the social housing green paper: a consultation paper on the review of housing standards in the social housing sector, including the review of the regulatory framework around customer standards.
- The government's announcement that it does not intend to force fixed term tenancies on local authority tenants – thereby aligning this to our own Tenancy Strategy which supports the provision of tenancies for life.
- The government's withdrawal of its previous intention to implement a 'high value levy' on local authorities that own council homes. The proposed levy had given councils significant concerns about its potential impact in terms of our ability to invest in our housing stock, provide services to the community and deliver new affordable homes.
- The introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act, which has had a significant impact in the way Housing Options Services assist those who are homeless, with greater emphasis on assisting all households who are presenting as homeless as a result of a new homelessness prevention duty. This has been coupled with a significant increase in homelessness prevention funding for the council.
- More generous grant funding conditions to support the delivery of affordable housing on non s.106 sites, with a particular focus on supporting the provision of social rented homes in areas such as Cheltenham where there are high unaffordability issues. A challenge remains for the council in that it is not possible to use our right to buy receipts in combination with grant funding; however we will explore the use of both options, taking decisions based on what makes best sense on a particular scheme.

4.2 It is clear that the world of housing is complex – a decision taken in one area can have adverse consequences in another. As such national policy will continue to evolve. What's more, significant challenges continue to be present. The decisions taken by the government over the last 12 months have, however, created relatively more benign conditions locally; it is now incumbent upon us to capitalise on these opportunities while they remain.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 To not update the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 action plan. It is proposed that this option is rejected for the reasons given above. Our action plan needs to be responsive to changes nationally and locally, and as illustrated above, housing is a fast-changing world.

6. How this initiative contributes to the corporate plan

6.1 The council recognises the importance of increasing the supply of housing and the need to build strong, resilient communities – indeed it is one of our top 5 priorities within our corporate plan. Our updated housing strategy action plan clearly supports this priority.

7. Consultation and feedback

7.1 This action plan has been updated in collaboration with key officers within the council, Cheltenham Borough Homes and our partners. It has also been circulated for feedback to a range

of organisations within our Housing & Support Forum, and updated accordingly.

8. Performance management –monitoring and review

8.1 Progress against the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually and brought to Cabinet for approval.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Risk Assessment2. Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan Update 2019
Background information	

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 the council does not regularly monitor progress against the activities and outcomes identified within the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23, then the effectiveness of the strategy will be unclear, and the opportunity to review activities in light of any emerging issues could be missed.	Martin Stacy	6.6.19	3	4	12	Reduce	Ongoing annual review and monitoring of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, as approved by Cabinet.	9.7.19	Martin Stacy	
<p>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</p>											

e it is impacting on