

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet - 7th July 2020
Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23
Action Plan Update 2020

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 & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 was approved by Cabinet in July 2018. This is a five year strategy that sets out both our vision and priorities in order to achieve our outcomes.</p> <p>This strategy is a living document. For this reason we are updating our action plan annually to reflect the challenges and opportunities that have arisen, and will continue to arise, since the strategy was published.</p> <p>Our updated action plan is at Appendix 2 of this report.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Cabinet:</p> <p>Approves the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan Update for 2020.</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>
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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. 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: vikki.fennell@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272015</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	None as a direct result of this report
Key risks	Please see Risk Register – Appendix 1
Corporate and community plan Implications	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’.
Environmental and climate change implications	None as a direct result of this report
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 and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23 was approved by Cabinet in July 2018. This is a five year strategy that sets out both our vision and priorities in order to achieve our outcomes.
- 1.2** This strategy is a living document. For this reason we will continue to update our 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.
- 1.3** Whilst we must look forward, this report also provides us with an opportunity to look back at some of our most notable achievements during the second year of our strategy. These are summarised below:

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

2.1 Outcome 1 – Increasing the provision of affordable housing.

- 79 new affordable homes were provided during 2019/20; of which 41 homes (i.e. 52%) were delivered over and above what would have been delivered through market forces alone. This 'additionality' – a key aim of our housing strategy - is made up of 27 new council homes delivered via Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH), along with a further 14 new affordable homes provided by Rooftop, with the help of Homes England grant funding.
- Significant progress has also been made over the last 12 months to identify a wide range of sites for the potential delivery of council-owned affordable housing across the Borough. What's more, the scale of our ambition is clear: in February 2019 our Housing Revenue Account projected a £95m spend on the provision of new affordable housing over the 4 years from 2019 to 2023. This investment has the potential to create a pipeline of up to 500 new council-owned affordable homes for the Borough, delivered via CBH.
- In the meantime, and following our successful funding bids to Homes England, the development of two affordable housing schemes on council-owned land is now underway: one at Monkscroft Villas, Hesters Way (27 affordable homes); the other at Holy Name Hall, Lynworth (8 affordable homes).
- In addition, the council is in the process of acquiring, via CBH, three s.106 affordable housing schemes, which combined are expected to deliver up to a further 33 new affordable homes. Negotiations are also underway for the acquisition of 'land and development' opportunities. These land-led acquisitions will enable the council to have greater control over the design and the timing around when these homes can be delivered. This is particularly important in view of these current uncertain times.
- All the above are in addition to the exciting new opportunities currently underway in West Cheltenham as part of the proposed Cyber Park/Golden Valley development. This will see the provision of up to 3,000 new homes alongside a new cyber innovation hub. Please see the following link for more information:

<https://www.goldenvalleyuk.com/>

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

- During the last 12 months, nearly 900 homes in the private sector in Cheltenham have been made safer. 8 long term empty homes have also been brought back into use as a result of direct action taken by the council's Enforcement Team, whilst the county-wide, jointly commissioned Warm & Well scheme undertook 36 energy efficiency measures, generating annual savings of over £10,000 for households. All of these have contributed to improving outcomes for the

Borough's existing housing provision.

- In addition, CBH are continuing to roll out their new replacement windows, doors and boilers programme, with over 1,500 replaced this year. All of this has contributed to an improved SAP (energy efficiency) rating of our homes (now 72.8, compared with 72.02 last year).
- Improvements have also been made to our 37 homes at Midwinter and Elmfield Avenue. (These homes were built shortly after the Second World War using non-traditional methods.) These improvements via CBH have extended the life of these properties for a further 40 years and improved their insulation, thereby saving our tenants money in energy bills.
- CBH have also successfully enabled 19 households to downsize from family-sized council accommodation, via CBH's Help to Move Scheme - which provides practical support and assistance to enable older people to move home, thereby releasing larger council-owned accommodation for households who most need it.

2.3 Outcome 3 – Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- Following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, there has been a significant increase in homelessness approaches to CBH's Housing Options Service. As a result, statutory homelessness has increased from 31 households in 2018/19 to 48 during 2019/20 – though this increase was anticipated and within targets, and less than half of the 106 homelessness acceptances reported in 2017/18, prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. In addition, and following a number of key investment decisions taken by Cabinet using the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) homelessness prevention funding, there has been a significant rise in homelessness prevention and relief outcomes: from 145 households during 2017/18, through to 230 households in 2018/19, increasing further to 394 for the last 12 months.
- Cheltenham's Housing Options Service is one of the few homelessness services that also includes a much valued Benefits and Money Adviser. During the last 12 months alone, our Adviser has generated an additional £1.5m income for low-income households as a direct result of her involvement in supporting residents to resolve their benefits issues.
- In addition, a number of new funding opportunities have been secured from the MHCLG during 2019/20. These can be summarised as follows:
 - Domestic Abuse Funding - £44k has been awarded to the council to lead on work across the county to better understand needs (for future commissioning purposes) and to provide interventions for the more complex domestic abuse cases. This will be implemented via CBH's Housing Options Service.
 - County-wide Private Rented Sector Access Fund. This funding has helped homeless households access private rented accommodation. At the time of writing this report, CBH's Housing Options Service had secured by far the most accommodation, in that of the 96 households that have been accommodated across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire, close to half (i.e. 44 households) have been accommodated by our Housing Options Service within this Borough. This is equivalent to approximately £49,000 in funding secured for Cheltenham.
 - Rough Sleeper Initiative & Rapid Response Funding – a further £1m has been secured for the county to continue the Somewhere Safe to Stay hubs across Cheltenham and Gloucester, in conjunction with a number of Navigator posts, whose role is to connect those with complex needs to appropriate support services.
 - Cold Weather Funding (£2,352). This was used to extend the provision of emergency accommodation for rough sleepers during periods of cold or severe weather up until

March. We continue to work hard to find appropriate support and accommodation solutions for those who are either on, or who face, returning to the streets.

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

A lot of work has been undertaken by the council and our partners, including CBH, to help improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and to support independent living. Here are a few highlights:

- CBH have continued to tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) successfully – with all 120 cases being successfully resolved, and with 100% tenant satisfaction in the way the cases were handled.
- To support tenants back into work, CBH's Employment Initiatives Service has enabled 99 people to access training locally, and a further 61 people into work. Satisfaction levels are high too, with 99% of those attending CBH's work-clubs stating they were satisfied with the help, and 97% reporting an increase in employability skills.
- CBH have now completed year one of a two year Community Investment Plan across the Borough to support social sustainability and community cohesion. During this time over 1,800 project activities have been delivered by CBH and external partners, and over 4,000 volunteer hours have been delivered across the community, generating an estimated £10m of Social Value throughout the Borough.
- Working with our partners in Health and Social Care, we have been supportive of the implementation of a new Home-sharing Scheme, which brings together older people who have spare rooms with people who need affordable accommodation, and who are happy to chat and lend a hand if needed. This scheme is at its early stages, but initial feedback is very positive, with more pairing expected during 2020/21.
- The council's Lifeline Alarm service has carried out 221 new installations over the last 12 months, with a further 91 key safes being fitted to allow for ease of access to both care and emergency services, all of which contribute to our collective aims of supporting independent living.
- Finally, the council has continued to work collaboratively with our partners across the county to develop greater consistency in the delivery of disabled facilities grant services. In fact, 76 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. Highlights include:

- Creation of a new Development and Regeneration Strategy to prioritise and help shape future standards, having regard to our carbon neutrality aspirations;
- Continued focus on creating a pipeline of up to 500 affordable homes over the next few years.
- West Cheltenham/Cyber Park – progression with the Golden Valley project that will lead to the creation of a new cyber innovation hub and potentially 3,000 new homes.
- Renewed focus on reducing long term empty homes, using compulsory purchase powers and working in collaboration with CBH.
- Further investment in the Housing Options Service, utilising MHCLG homelessness prevention grant funding, to create a deeper, more resilient service that will enable

greater emphasis on tackling rough sleeping, particularly following the covid pandemic, as well as supporting people more generally to be able stay in their homes.

- A broader review of rough sleeper pathways as we continue to adapt to the challenges arising from the covid pandemic.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 It is important that our strategy remains a living document by way of annual updates to our action plan. Issues around housing, both nationally and locally, will continue to emerge; 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. For instance, nationally a number of key announcements have been made over the last 12 months. These include:

- At the March budget, the government announced there would be a new, 5 year Affordable Housing Programme, providing grant funding to the value of c.£12bn for the delivery of new affordable housing. Further details are to follow, though it is anticipated this funding will continue to be used to support Social Rented homes, in addition to other affordable housing products.
- The government have consulted on plans to set out a new national model for shared ownership, bringing down the initial stake that households can purchase from 25% of the value of the home to 10%. This is combined with plans to enable owners to increase their share of their home in 1% tranches rather than the current 10%.
- The government have also consulted on the introduction of a First Homes Scheme, which could potentially cut the cost of new homes by a third, with the discount being locked into the home in perpetuity.
- In addition, the government have consulted on the potential for tougher building regulations to pave the way for a Future Homes Standard on homes built after 2025 – the aim being to cut carbon emissions in new homes by up to 80%.
- The government have also set out a Renters Reform Bill which could see the security of tenure being improved for tenants renting in the private sector, by abolishing ‘no fault evictions’.
- The new Domestic Abuse Bill is currently going through parliament. It is proposed that this will include a statutory duty on tier 1 local authorities to commission services based on a robust assessment of need, with a view to ensuring that the most appropriate accommodation and support services are available locally for survivors of domestic abuse, and their children.
- During this year, the government have announced £433m of funding to help rough sleepers into accommodation. Following Covid, and the efforts councils have taken to bring everybody in, £116m will be made available over the next 12 months to support the provision of around 3,300 homes for rough sleepers. Further details about this funding are expected shortly.
- Whilst we continue to experience the Covid pandemic, the government have placed a temporary ban on eviction hearings. This has now been extended to 23rd August 2020, and is coupled with legislation that has extended the notice period (that landlords are required to give to their tenants if they wish to end the tenancy) from 2 months to 3 months. It is hoped this extension will provide more time for households who have been adversely affected by the covid pandemic to resolve any financial challenges they may currently face; nevertheless we are anticipating an increase in demand on our homelessness service in the autumn, once these restrictions are lifted.

4.2 The above examples illustrate the complexity and breadth of 'housing' – sometimes a decision taken in one area can have unintended consequences in another. As such, national policy will continue to evolve. The current Covid pandemic has also shone a light on rough sleeping and the hidden homeless. These are challenging times, and they are likely to continue over the next 12 months and beyond as we continue to adapt our services to the current pandemic and plan ahead for future.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 To agree not to update the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 action plan. It is proposed this option is rejected for the reasons given above. Our action plan needs to remain 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 action plan supports this priority.

7. Consultation and feedback

7.1 This action plan has been updated in collaboration with key officers within the council, CBH and our other 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 our 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 Assessment 2. Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan Update 2020
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	8.6.20	3	4	12	Reduce	Ongoing annual review and monitoring of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, as approved by Cabinet.	7.7.20	Martin Stacy	
Explanatory notes											
<p>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)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p>											