

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – 12th July 2022
Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-23
Action Plan Update 2022

Accountable member	Councillor Victoria Atherstone, Cabinet Member for Housing
Accountable officer	Martin Stacy, Housing Strategy & Partnerships Manager
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 that are: 1) Increasing the provision of affordable housing 2) Making best use of existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods 3) Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping and 4) Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.</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 2022</p>

Financial implications	None as a direct result of this report. Contact officer: Andy Taylor andrew.taylor@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264186
Legal implications	The applicable legislation is the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, Housing Act 1996 - Homelessness Act 2002. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places an emphasis on early intervention and the prevention of homelessness. Authorities must 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. Contact officer: vikki.fennell@onelegal.org.uk, 01684 272015
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', as well as 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	None as a direct result of this report Contact officer: Dominic Stead@cheltenham.gov.uk

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 fourth 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.

- 2.1.1** 71 new affordable homes were provided during 2021/22, 43 of which were delivered across 3 schemes (9 homes at Bouncers Lane, Oakley; 7 homes at Brockhampton Lane, Swindon Village; and 27 homes at Monkscroft Villas, Hesters Way). The remaining 28 affordable homes were created through the conversion of market homes into affordable housing (mainly through the acquisition of homes previously sold through Right to Buy). In total 49 of our affordable homes (i.e. 69%) 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 44 (out of 62) new Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) homes delivered via Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH), along with a further 5 (out of 9) new affordable homes provided by Bromford, with the help of Homes England grant funding.
- 2.1.2** We are also continuing to identify new sites for the delivery of more CBC-owned affordable housing across the Borough. We currently have a pipeline of c.366 affordable homes to be delivered. This includes schemes in contract, committed sites, our acquisitions programme and sites with a higher probability of progressing, and does not include any further speculative sites

which we are also continuing to progress. Taking these into account, we are confident that we will reach our pipeline target of 500 affordable homes by the end of this year.

2.1.3 At present, we are expecting to allocate approximately £17m from the Housing Revenue Account on new affordable homes for 2022/23, and we are projecting further investment of c.£50m over the following 2 years to March 2025.

2.1.4 All this is in addition to the exciting new opportunities currently underway in West Cheltenham's proposed Cyber Park/Golden Valley Development, which will see the provision of over 3,000 new homes (of which 35% will be affordable homes) alongside a new cyber innovation hub. Please see the following link for more information:

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

2.1.5 Our plans to significantly increase the delivery of affordable housing in the Borough are part of a wider £180m CBC housing investment plan that will see the provision of both private rented and market homes throughout the town. As part of this plan, CBH have now acquired, refurbished and let 13 high quality homes in the private rented sector at St George's Place in the town centre, and are currently seeking new opportunities to increase our provision of privately rented homes across the Borough.

In addition, CBC is investing in new net zero carbon homes. Planning has now been granted at 320 Swindon Road for 24 highly energy efficient new homes, with other schemes controlled by the Council coming forward for development in 2022/23 and beyond also meeting this aspiration and achieving a cleaner, greener sustainable environment. Please see link below for further details on our Swindon Road initiative:

<https://www.cbh.org/2021/11/23/green-light-for-new-homes-at-320-swindon-road/>

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

2.2.1 During the last 12 months, we have improved the safety of over 847 households in the private sector in Cheltenham. Three long term empty homes have also been brought back into use as a result of direct action taken by CBC's Enforcement Team. Going forward, the restructure of the Private Sector Housing Team and the appointment of a Team Leader within Planning Enforcement means that CBC is now in a better position to explore options for the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, with the aim of bringing the most difficult properties back into use.

2.2.2 In addition, the county-wide, jointly commissioned Warm & Well scheme (which provides free, impartial home energy efficiency advice to fight fuel poverty throughout Gloucestershire) undertook 88 energy efficiency measures across 70 properties in Cheltenham, leading to estimated lifetime savings of 1,871 tonnes of carbon: the equivalent of making 533 Cheltenham homes carbon neutral for a year. With the current energy and cost of living crisis, we expect to see an increase in the number of calls to the service asking for advice on how to reduce their energy bills. Please see below a link to the Warm & Well scheme:

<https://warmandwell.co.uk/>

2.2.3 Despite the pandemic, which has significantly impacted the sector, CBH have also ensured that 549 doors (including fire, standard and balcony doors) were installed in 2021-22. The impact on contractors' abilities to deliver, due to materials availability and difficulties recruiting and retaining adequate resources, means that the programme will continue through 2022-23, with full completion expected by March 2023. For the same reasons, it is anticipated that our window replacement programme will now be completed by March next year. Nevertheless, improvement programmes over 2021-22 have so far contributed to a further uplift in the SAP rating of our homes (SAP stands for Standard Assessment Procedure, and is the methodology used by the government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings, and provides a rating figure of between 1 and 100). Our SAP rating is now 73.02, compared with 72.02 in 2019, and exceeding the average SAP rating of 69 for Local Authority housing stock.

2.2.4 Following a successful bid earlier this year to Wave 1 of the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator Project, CBC (via CBH) secured approximately £780k grant

funding. This funding will support the implementation of 'fabric first' measures, such as improved insulation, to reduce energy demand for eligible homes and to improve these homes to at least SAP C (i.e. a SAP rating of between 69 and 80). 59 homes are expected to benefit from this initiative, which will be implemented over 2022/23. Looking forward, we plan to submit further grant funding applications as opportunities from government become available. (It is anticipated that Wave 2 of the government's funding programme will be announced during the Summer 2022.)

2.2.5 Supporting households to downsize from large CBC homes is a key part of our housing strategy, as this helps to release these homes for larger families. Over the last 12 months, CBH have enabled 26 households to downsize from family-sized CBC accommodation, via Cheltenham's Help to Move Scheme. (This scheme provides practical support and assistance to enable older people to move home.) Of the 26 homes that became available for re-letting, half were either 3 or 4 bedroom family homes. In total, 30 unused bedrooms were freed-up for larger families under this initiative.

2.3 Outcome 3 – Tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

2.3.1 2021/22 has continued to be a challenging year for tackling rough sleeping and homelessness, following the Covid pandemic. We have also felt the impact of international affairs, both in Afghanistan and in Ukraine. Cheltenham is proud to be a town of sanctuary, and we continue to resource all that is necessary to help displaced families feel welcomed and settled in their new homes and communities. We are also mindful of the potential risks of homelessness arising from breakdown in relationships as a result of the government's Ukrainian Sponsorship Scheme. Already we are beginning to see relationships breaking down, which is being managed, where possible, by re-matching Guests to new Sponsors, though it is highly likely that homelessness referrals to the Housing Options Service will rise during 2022/23 as Sponsor-Guest arrangements come to an end. In the meantime we continue to work with GARAS (Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) who are helping to support Guests in their new homes and communities.

2.3.2 Alongside our efforts to welcome Afghan and Ukrainian families to settle into our Borough, we also continue our focus on reducing rough sleeping. The measures required to end rough sleeping are complex, requiring significant collaboration with partners across the county. Over the past 12 months we have reviewed and strengthened our partnership arrangements, with Cheltenham's Housing Strategy & Partnership Manager now leading the county-wide Programme Management Partnership, involving District Authorities, the County Council, the Police and Crime Commission and Health. This partnership is responsible for the commissioning, monitoring and the review of all our jointly-commissioned rough sleeping services.

2.3.3 This year the government announced there would be a 3 year funding bid opportunity to support the delivery of rough sleeping services from July 2022 (the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25 (RSI)). Districts submitted a joint bid for approximately £2.9m over the next 3 years. At the time of writing, public announcement by the government of the funding awards was imminent. If we are successful, this funding will enable key services for rough sleepers to be commissioned across the county through to March 2025, providing much needed certainty for commissioners and providers alike. Specifically, it would ensure the following:

- Partners are able to maintain our existing Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub in Cheltenham. Essentially this hub is our immediate off the street offer for rough sleepers (including those who would otherwise become rough sleepers) and is therefore a critical part of our pathway to support rough sleepers into independent accommodation.
- Extension of our jointly commissioned Assertive Outreach Service. District Authorities across the county currently jointly commission an Assertive Outreach Service to help rough sleepers take up offers of accommodation and to access relevant support services. The additional RSI funding allocation would enable districts to continue to bolster the provision of this service.
- Expansion of our Enhanced Housing Support Service to support our housing-led Initiative. Cheltenham has already made available 6 properties from our council-owned stock to be used to support this initiative, which essentially is about providing self-contained

accommodation to rough sleepers with very complex needs - but with enhanced housing support attached to help ensure that tenancies are sustained. Enhanced Housing Support services are currently jointly commissioned by the partnership, and this funding would enable us to expand this service further, by increasing our provision of housing-led council-owned accommodation from 6 to 12.

- The creation of a new Multiple Disadvantage Team. This would be made up of a team of specialist officers with expertise in Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol services and Adult Social Care. They would support rough sleepers residing in our hub, our housing-led accommodation, and other forms of temporary accommodation across the county. Their purpose would be to provide professional/clinical support services with a view to promoting tenancy sustainment and independent living, whilst also referring clients into mainstream services where appropriate.
- Provision within Cheltenham of an ACE-led trauma-informed post and an Intensive Tenancy Management post. Alongside our county-wide initiatives, Cheltenham would also provide for an ACE-led, trauma-informed post (i.e. based upon Adverse Childhood Experience principals), plus an Intensive Tenancy Management post, to complement the above Enhanced Housing Support Service. These posts would be specific to Cheltenham and would be managed by CBH. They would focus on working with the 6 ex-rough sleepers who have been accommodated within our housing-led properties, and they would then expand their work to include the next 6 rough sleepers, as and when suitable properties become available to accommodate them.
- The ACE trauma-informed post would be a part-time post, focussing on helping tenants to better understand past traumas. Research has shown that traumas experienced at childhood can impact on behaviours in adulthood. The more traumas experienced, the greater the risk that this will impact on future behaviours. Traumas can range from physical and emotional abuse and neglect, through to types of household dysfunction, such as substance abuse within the family home, etc. This ACE-led, trauma-informed post would be centred upon building trust, and seeking to understand what has happened to the individual,

rather than judging current behaviour; and, whilst acknowledging these challenges, focussing on the strengths, assets, dreams and ambitions of the individual. This would be with a view to increasing their resilience, so that they are better able to cope when challenging situations arise. The intention is to guide them into making more positive life choices; giving them a sense of purpose and meaning that will equip them to lead more fulfilling lives. This could include, for example, helping them into education, training and/or employment.

- The Intensive Tenancy Management post would provide additional resource to focus on managing any anti-social behaviour issues, and any other breaches of tenancy conditions that may arise as a result of housing rough sleepers with highly complex needs in our council homes. This would include identifying potential safeguarding issues and ensuring that harm is prevented, both to those individuals concerned and to the community more generally. Our learning from implementing our first pilot of 6 housing-led properties is that this dedicated resource is required to ensure that issues are dealt with as swiftly as possible, and that neighbouring communities are supported where needed. Ultimately, our aim is to ensure that rough sleepers with complex needs, and who are accommodated within our housing-led properties, are given every opportunity for their tenancies to succeed.

2.3.4 With regards to our wider homelessness services, CBH's Housing Options Service has continued to remain effective in preventing and relieving homelessness across the Borough. In 21/22 there were 216 households whose homelessness was either prevented or relieved. This compares with 145 households during 2017/18 (prior to the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and CBC's Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy).

2.3.5 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 £1.4m income for low-income households as a direct result of her involvement in supporting residents to resolve their benefits issues.

2.3.6 Finally, this year we recommissioned our Advice and Inclusion Service. North & West

Gloucestershire Citizens Advice were successful in securing the contract for this new service. From April 2022, they began providing debt, benefits, financial inclusion and housing rights advice to Cheltenham residents on behalf of CBC. This is a 3 year contract, with the option to extend for a further 2 years, subject to relevant funding remaining available.

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

Significant work has been undertaken by CBC 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:

- 2.4.1** CBH have continued to do well in tackling antisocial behaviour (ASB) – with all 68 cases being successfully resolved during 21/22. In addition, CBH's Employment Initiatives Service has enabled 127 people to access training locally, and helped a further 93 people into work over the same period.
- 2.4.2** Working with our partners in Health and Social Care, we have been supportive of their implementation of a new Home-Sharing Scheme. This scheme 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. The scheme is still in its early stages, but initial feedback remains very positive, with 5 households matched across the county as a whole, and with a further 3 expected over the next few months.
- 2.4.3** Partners also remain committed to investing in improvements to the Borough's park homes. Through the use of the county-wide Better Care Fund, Health and Social Care partners have enabled a further 24 park homes to be insulated this year in Cheltenham.
- 2.4.4** In addition, CBC's Lifeline Alarm service has carried out 173 new installations over the last 12 months, taking the total number of customers to 1,036 across Cheltenham. This is an important service which supports our housing strategy as it contributes to our aims of supporting independent living.

- 2.4.5** CBC has also continued to work collaboratively with our partners across the county to develop greater consistency in the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) services. 64 major DFG adaptations were delivered this year in Cheltenham, plus a further 10 discretionary grants, enabling disabled or frail people to remain in their homes.
- 2.4.6** Finally, and in addition to our work to support households under the Ukrainian Sponsorship Scheme and households fleeing Afghanistan, we are continuing to work with partners to increase the provision of homes for asylum seekers and refugees within the Borough. In November 2020, CBC took the decision to increase the number of homes that will be sourced by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) as part of the Asylum Dispersal Scheme to accommodate approximately 50 people, and procurement for additional properties is currently underway. This number has not yet been reached, largely due to the challenges UKVI are experiencing in securing private rented accommodation in the area. However, we expect this position to change, in light of the government's recently announced plans to overhaul their current approach so that there is a fairer distribution of asylum seekers across the country.

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 2022/23 and beyond in order to support our strategy. Highlights include:
- Creation of an overarching CBC Housing Investment Strategy (incorporating private rented sector and market homes delivery to help support our regeneration aspirations and carbon neutral agenda);
 - Continued focus on firming up our 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 over 3,000 new homes;
 - A review of the affordable housing (and associated) policies within the Joint Core Strategy, as part of the Joint Strategic Plan review – and to create a new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to support CBC's policy position;

- Creation of a new 'First Homes' Supplementary Planning Document in order to provide greater clarity to developers on our expectation around the delivery of the government's new affordable housing product;
- A new suite of Community Investment Plans, created jointly between CBC and CBH, for our Borough;
- Implementation of a 'fabric-first' approach to our Council-owned homes, beginning with improvements to 59 of our homes through the use of the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Preparation will also be underway to ensure the council is ready to bid for additional grant funding under wave 2 of the government's programme, which is expected to be launched in the summer;
- The joint commissioning of a county-wide housing condition survey to ensure CBC (and districts across the county) are up to date on the condition of homes in the private sector. This will then help to inform CBC's future priorities in this area;
- Implementation of our tackling rough sleeping plan following our successful bid for RSI grant funding;
- Working with partners across the county to support the delivery of the County Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy, which will include a review of our provision of places of safety for survivors of domestic abuse.

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 these 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:

- A Renters Reform Bill. The government have announced it will seek to drive up standards and improve security of tenure in the private rented sector. In particular, it plans to abolish Section 21 evictions (i.e. the ability for landlords to terminate tenancies without giving any reason) so that tenants are better able to remain in their homes and communities. The Bill

will also strengthen landlords' grounds for repossession, making it easier for them to evict tenants who are wilfully not paying rent, or who are repeatedly engaging in anti-social behaviour.

- A Social Housing Regulation Bill. Tenants in social housing will also benefit from major reforms to the sector, with the Bill proposing to make all registered social housing providers subject to a tough new regulatory regime, whereby failing social landlords will face unlimited fines if they fail to meet the required standards.
- A Levelling up and Regeneration Bill. Proposals in this Bill include the introduction of a single levy which is intended to replace much of the developer contributions via the current s.106 agreements. At present it is unclear the extent to which the new proposals will affect the delivery of affordable housing via these s.106 agreements, which currently represent a significant proportion of affordable housing provision across the Borough.
- Proposals have also recently been announced that the government intends to extend its Right to Buy Scheme to include housing association tenants. The details of scheme are due to be firmed up over the next few months.

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.

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 CBC 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 CBC, 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.

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 & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan Update 2022
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	31.5.22	3	4	12	Reduce	Ongoing annual review and monitoring of the Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy, as approved by Cabinet.	12.7.22	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											