

The wider policy context

Warwick District Council's corporate vision for the district is to make it a great place to live, work and visit where we aspire to build sustainable, safe, stronger and healthier communities. There is a corporate policy framework, known as Fit For the Future, that ensures that all strategies, projects and service plans focus upon three key themes: services, people and money.

Sustainable communities

A good quality, settled home environment is of central importance to almost every aspect of life and as a consequence housing strategy impacts upon many other areas of public policy.

The council has an over-arching Sustainable Communities Strategy with five broad themes (one of which is housing) that cover most of this wider context. Our aims and priorities for each of the other themes are set out below but it is important to stress that very often we, or another public sector body, have a duty to produce some form of strategy for tackling these wider issues and representatives from housing services have participated in the development of those strategies and plans. This strategy is not intended to replace those plans but to sit alongside them and complement and reinforce them where necessary.

Prosperity

Good quality, affordable housing of all tenures close to main employment centres or with convenient transport links can play a key role in enhancing the prosperity of the district. It is important so that people relocating to the district for work can find accommodation, normally in the private sector, while social housing can provide the stability for local people to find work and indirectly help those on benefits to get into work. Settled housing has also been shown to be important for educational attainment, enhancing the job prospects of younger people.

Our aim is to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Warwick district by pursuing a balanced and sustainable growth agenda that delivers improvements in each of these areas whilst protecting those things that make the Warwick district special.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Ensuring there are sufficient suitable and deliverable sites to accommodate growth
- Removing barriers to 'good' development and sustainable growth
- Ensuring the right infrastructure is available, at the right time, to encourage and support growth
- Ensuring effective promotion of the district to attract growth
- Helping to create the right environment for unemployed people to move into work
- Helping to uplift skills across the workforce
- Retaining the increased spending power created by economic development within the district to the benefit of the whole community
- Harnessing the economic benefits of growth (e.g. increased Council Tax base, increased business rates, new homes bonus etc.) to supplement Council resources and ensure high quality service delivery is maintained
- Making better use of public sector assets to increase financial returns
- Incentivising growth of existing businesses and attracting inward investment

Health and well-being

Housing has a significant impact upon mental, physical and social wellbeing. The negative impact that poor quality, overcrowded, unsuitable or expensive housing or the insecurity of having no home at all can have on an individual and their family is self-evident.

The Warwickshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) analyses the current and future health and well-being needs of the county's population to establish a shared, evidence-based consensus on the key local priorities across health and social care. This is used by the Health & Wellbeing Board to develop Health and Wellbeing Strategies and by Clinical Commissioning Groups to prepare commissioning and transformation plans for the local health economy.

The following priorities were identified in the Warwickshire JSNA Review and are the agreed priorities for the JSNA for 2015-18:

Vulnerable Young People

- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Educational Attainment of Disadvantaged Children
- Vulnerable Children

Mental wellbeing

- Mental Health (adults and children)
- Dementia

Long-term conditions

- Cancer
- Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)

Physical wellbeing

- Weight Management
- Smoking in Pregnancy/Smoking
- Substance Misuse and Alcohol

Carers

- Carers (adults and children)

It is worth recalling that local health priorities for Warwick have been identified as addressing alcohol misuse, smoking in pregnancy, and tackling obesity, all of which are included in the above list.

Warwick District Council's aim is to enable and encourage the people of the district to have an equal access to a healthy life and sense of wellbeing, ensuring that our actions are aligned with the Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Board's strategy.

Our strategic priorities are:

To make every contact count (MECC) in recognising that the Council has many opportunities to impact on people's mental and physical health and wellbeing by:

- Increasing opportunities for everyone to engage in sport, the arts and cultural activities
- Supporting independent living and decent housing for all
- Reducing obesity, particularly in children, and improving health outcomes generally by encouraging the availability and choices for healthy eating
- Reducing exposure to tobacco smoke
- Discouraging drug and alcohol misuse
- Promoting and engaging in robust equality and disability policy

Safer communities

Good housing positively contributes to safer communities by well-designed estates with natural overlooking of public spaces and individual properties with strong and secure entry points. The reverse is also true though – poor housing can create the conditions for crime to thrive and, through its impact on individual's health and well-being, can also lead to people turning to crime. Furthermore housing landlords have a number of powers and duties to deal with nuisance occupiers, giving them an important role in tackling anti-social behaviour.

Our aim is to work in partnership to reduce violent crime, anti-social behaviour and re-offending.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Focusing on prevention of harm to the community and on the causes or risk factors which impact upon it
- Working in partnership with external agencies and the voluntary and business sectors to deliver our community safety priorities
- Focusing on areas where we can have the most impact and contribute to 'narrowing deprivation' in our District
- Reducing the prospect of serious flooding

Partnership working is critical to addressing crime and for our district the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership is the key mechanism for this. It has adopted a wide range of strategies for tackling various issues and fuller details of these can be found on our website at:

http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20112/community_safety

Sustainability

Our aim is to minimise our use of natural resources and CO2 emissions, improve the energy and water efficiency of our buildings and operations and source as much of our energy as possible from renewable sources. We will also act as a lead in the community on climate change and energy efficiency issues.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Using our procurement processes to minimise energy use and CO2 emissions
- Ensuring our services adapt and have greater resilience to the impacts of climate change
- Promoting community leadership by supporting and encouraging community and business-led initiatives to reduce energy use and to secure more renewable and low carbon energy
- Maintaining a visible commitment to tackling climate change by retaining our commitments to the Nottingham Declaration and the 10:10 campaign
- Ensuring climate change impacts will be taken into account in decision making, policy development and significant operational initiatives

The council has an important role in addressing environmental issues at the local level. Housing policy in turn plays a part because homes are a major consumer of energy and therefore a major producer of carbon dioxide. Furthermore high energy costs impact upon disposable household incomes and can result in fuel poverty and housing debt, with physical and mental health effects and, at the extreme, homelessness.

In our district greenhouse gas emissions are higher than national and regional averages and domestic properties account for 28% of such emissions in our district. The most significant contributor is transport with 43% while industrial and commercial premises emit 29%. Total emissions in the district have fallen by around 11% since 2005 but modelling suggests that without intervention they are likely to stay constant from 2012 to 2027.

Our corporate approach is set out in detail in [Warwick District Council's strategic approach to sustainability and climate change](#) adopted as policy in 2015, which has three strategic aims:

- 1: Embed sustainability at a strategic level with the organisation
- 2: Address our own impacts relating to sustainability and ensure our physical assets and operations remain resilient in the face of a changing climate
- 3: Promote and enable sustainability and climate change resilience in the wider district.

More detailed objectives are defined under each aim with specific actions, a number of which relate directly to housing. The way in which the corporate strategy is cascaded into more specific housing-related actions is set out in the [Home Energy Conservation Act First Progress Report](#) from March 2015. This includes: making the council's own housing stock more energy efficient; providing more energy from renewable and low-carbon sources; reducing fuel poverty in the district; and engaging with other public bodies to achieve joint aims on sustainability.

Housing

The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the following five broad strategic objectives for housing.

- Improving the standard of new and existing housing in order to build healthy, safe and strong communities
- Increasing the supply of housing to meet housing need
- Increasing the range of housing options available to maintain independent living and prevent homelessness
- Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable people
- Engaging with our communities to understand and respond to their views

The council agreed a three-year Housing Strategy in 2013 to guide work on housing for the period from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2017. The objectives for the strategy were arrived at after very wide-ranging consultation and were defined as follows:

- Meeting the need for housing in the district
- Raising standards of management, repair and improvement of existing housing and neighbourhoods
- Enabling and providing services that help people to sustain their homes

While there is no legal requirement for the council to have a Housing Strategy there is an obligation to have a Homelessness Strategy for the district and a new one was produced in 2015. We decided to prepare a two-year strategy so that it would run to the same end-point as the Housing Strategy and the two could then be combined into a single new document.

A full review of progress on the actions set out in both strategies has been undertaken and this is included in appendix 1.