



Housing Strategy 2014 – 17

Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 17

Review of Action Plans

HOUSING STRATEGY 2014 - 2017

Objective 1 – Enabling and providing services that help people to sustain their homes

Action	Progress
1.1 Working with Warwickshire County Council as it identifies its priorities for housing-related support services that have in the past been funded by the Supporting People regime, such as people with mental health problems, people suffering domestic abuse, substance mis-users, and homeless people with support needs.	Complete. Warwickshire County Council is now re-procuring providers for the services that it has identified as being a continued priority in the context of a significant cut in available funding.
1.2 Being fair and supportive but firm. This means using all available means to provide help and support to those who need it but also using our enforcement powers as a local authority for those who are causing problems (to themselves or to others) if they refuse to engage with or respond to our offer of help.	Complete. Staff were briefed through existing team communication channels about this approach to customer service.
1.3 Working with our partners across all sectors to support people in financial difficulties.	Ongoing. We work with Breathing Space to offer financial and debt advice to all residents of the district regardless of tenure. We have been working with Warwickshire CC to set up a viable Credit Union in the district and we also work in partnership with CAB.
1.4 Redesigning our service structure, reviewing policies and procedures across the service and developing service level agreements, internally and with service providers, to deliver better outcomes for customers.	Complete. The new service structure was implemented from September 2014.
1.5 Reviewing and updating the homelessness strategy.	Complete. A new strategy was introduced from 1 st April 2015.
1.6 Working with Warwickshire County Council on its extra-care programme providing more flexible housing-with-support options for older people.	Schemes are open in Warwick and Royal Leamington Spa. Work to find a site in Kenilworth is ongoing.
1.7 Continuing to provide grants/loans to help low-income owner-occupiers with essential repairs or to rectify dangerous conditions.	Provision for grants in these circumstances is still available in special circumstances.
1.8 Working with partners to raise awareness and educate residents on energy efficiency issues, assisting with grants and loans where appropriate and seeking to raise energy ratings, particularly in the private rented sector using the Housing, Health & Safety Rating System.	We have a service level agreement with Act On Energy to give free energy-saving advice to local householders and training for staff. We are also part of a county-wide partnership funded through Public Health Warwickshire called "Warm and Well in Warwickshire". This provides a number of specialist services for the most vulnerable members of the community. Fuller details can be found in the Warwick District Council Home Energy Conservation Act First progress Report, March 2015.

Objective 1 – Enabling and providing services that help people to sustain their homes

Action	Progress
1.9 Continuing to seek a proportion of properties built to the Lifetime Homes Standard on new-build schemes.	We continued to require this until the government introduced new national rules about housing standards which prevent us from doing so.
1.10 Expecting new developments to achieve “secured by design” standards for the estate layout.	We continued to require this until the government introduced new national rules about housing standards which prevent us from doing so.
1.11 Requiring new-build affordable housing to meet a minimum of Code For Sustainable Homes level three standard.	We continued to require this until the government introduced new national rules about housing standards which prevent us from doing so.
1.12 Gaining a better understanding of the support needs of our tenants through annual customer visits, making every contact count by using feedback from repairs and gas servicing contractors to prioritise visits to customers.	Complete. Annual customer visits were introduced in summer 2015.
1.13 Reviewing the information provided to tenants and applicants.	Complete.

Objective Two – Meeting the need for housing across the district

Action	Progress
2.1.1 Updating and broadening our understanding of district and local housing markets and needs and responding to the findings of the new Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (JSHMA).	We incorporated the JSHMA findings into our requirements for new affordable housing schemes from 1 st April 2014. An update to the JSHMA was completed in September 2015.
2.1.2 Completing the development of the new Local Plan to identify the land needed to deliver the housing that the district needs.	Not yet complete due to a requirement imposed by the Inspector to identify further housing sites to accommodate wider housing needs.
2.1.3 Ensuring that larger housing schemes include an appropriate proportion of affordable housing and a sustainable mix of property types and sizes.	An affordable housing policy mix based upon JSHMA needs has been required on all large sites.
2.1.4 Working with our partner housing associations to ensure that new affordable homes are provided by a mixture of social landlords across the district.	Work has continued with the existing range of partners and a new partner, Fortis Living, was invited to, and joined, the partnership from 1 st April 2015.
2.1.5 Creatively using the council’s assets and finance to deliver further new homes working in partnership with Waterloo Housing Group through the W2 Joint Venture.	Work through W2 continues and has achieved 161 new homes with a further 230 affordable homes in the pipeline.
2.1.6 Investigating the best way of using the new financial freedoms to build new council housing.	This was overtaken by events as the new government proposed a policy to charge a levy council housing based upon estimates of high value vacant properties each year. This introduced a high degree of uncertainty into what funds would be available, which has yet to be resolved.

Objective Two – Meeting the need for housing across the district

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2.1.7 Looking to provide for the identified gypsy and traveller needs through the planning system.	This work is ongoing through the Local Plan process referred to in 2.1.2 above.
2.1.8 Restricting rents on Affordable Rent homes so that the average on any scheme is no more than the mid-point between average social rent and 80% of average market rent.	In place and ongoing.
2.1.9 Refreshing our approach to the provision of rural housing, taking account of the new scheme for neighbourhood planning and the new Local Plan policies on village housing options.	We revised our Local Plan policies on rural housing and a number of sites have been identified in rural areas. Warwickshire Rural Community Council has been procured to carry out parish-level housing needs surveys (where the parish council is supportive) with the programme of surveys based upon prioritising villages with identified sites.
2.2.1 Developing a "Buy To Flip" policy whereby the council and its housing association partners consider purchasing existing homes for sale to let them on social or affordable rents.	This was incorporated into the wider work under action 2.1.6 to consider the use of any surpluses in housing funds
2.2.2 Reviewing the housing allocations policy, giving consideration to prioritising existing tenants, local connection policies, the potential use of fixed term tenancies and the handling of applicants with no housing need.	Complete. The new allocations policy went live in June 2016 and gives tenants greater priority for vacancies and introduces local connection policies. Fixed term tenancies and exclusion of applicants with no housing need was not taken forward.
2.2.3 Looking for new ways to incentivise people who are under-occupying their homes to move to more appropriate accommodation.	We have implemented a new scheme offering practical and financial support with downsizing and greater priority through the allocations policy.
2.2.4 Reviewing and updating our strategy for bringing empty homes back into use.	We assessed the available data and decided that the number of properties involved did not warrant developing a completely new strategy.
2.2.5 Looking for opportunities to create more appropriate housing with a higher degree of energy efficiency by the modernisation, remodelling or regeneration of existing housing schemes and estates.	Ongoing. One modernisation scheme is underway on the site of an old sheltered housing scheme – Fetherston Court – and possibilities are being investigated around Lillington.

Objective Three – Raising standards of management, repair and improvement of existing housing and neighbourhoods

Action	Progress
3.1 Working to develop ways to inform and advise private landlords and tenants of their rights and obligations.	Ongoing. We have set up the Warwick District Landlords' Blog, begun publishing a newsletter for private landlords, have updated our website with relevant information and continued to disseminate information and good practice through the Landlord Steering Group and Forum.

Objective Three – Raising standards of management, repair and improvement of existing housing and neighbourhoods

Action	Progress
3.2 Developing an enforcement policy for private sector housing to be followed where landlords fail to engage or respond to more informal approaches.	Complete. The council adopted a new corporate policy on enforcement across all relevant enforcement services from October 2014.
3.3 Refreshing our data on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and investigating whether to extend the licensing of HMOs to other HMOs not currently covered.	An internal refresh of the data was undertaken. The government consulted on extending the rules on HMO licensing and action was therefore deferred pending the outcome of that review. However due to increasing issues with HMOs in the district the Overview & Scrutiny Committee decided to set up a Task & Finish Group in 2016/17 to investigate the issue in depth.
3.4 Investigating whether to introduce additional licensing for buildings converted into flats and also for shared houses.	See 3.3 above.
3.5 Completing a pilot scheme remodelling Home Improvement Agency services on a cross-tenure basis across southern Warwickshire and evaluating the results.	The pilot scheme has been extended until March 2017.
3.6 Building on our working relationship with the University of Warwick in relation to student housing in the district.	Ongoing. We attended Student Housing Day at the University and have worked with the Students' Union housing advisor on specific cases. We have also done some joint work with the university's lettings company to try to tackle refuse problems and HMO issues.
3.7 Reviewing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRABP) to ensure that our approach to managing, maintaining and improving our own stock remains relevant and up-to-date.	The HRABP is regularly reviewed to ensure no major variance from projections. A fuller review is now underway to take account of new government legislation and will also incorporate the findings of a new stock condition survey that commenced in July 2016.
3.8 Engaging with our council tenants to develop a WDC Standard for homes and neighbourhoods that exceeds the Decent Homes Standard and that embraces customer choice where possible.	Not yet started.
3.9 Looking at how to creatively manage our housing assets by developing a new Asset Management Strategy.	A new stock condition survey is underway to enable the new Asset Management Strategy to be prepared during 2017.
3.10 Reviewing our management of leaseholder properties.	Complete.

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2015 – 2017

Action		Progress
HS1	Reviewing and updating literature for Housing Advice Services and making it more widely available, including a Services Directory for the district to be distributed online and in paper form with clear information on people's housing options to prevent homelessness	Some progress has been made with the Homechoice application form and guidance booklet having been rewritten to plain English standard. A review of the other literature has been carried out and the findings are being considered at the time of writing. The Services Directory has not been done.
HS2	Investigating whether housing staff can do drop-in surgeries in other agencies' buildings.	This has been considered and drop-ins have been introduced at the Salvation Army as this was the most appropriate location.
HS3	Establishing links with the emerging migrant and black and minority ethnic communities to ensure access to services	Some work has been done to engage with communities via the local Sikh temple and the Sydni centre.
HS4	Setting up a seminar with voluntary sector organisations to agree housing options	Not done.
HS5	Including visits to other agencies in staff training programmes	This is now part of the induction process for the Housing Advice & Allocations Manager position. More junior appointments attend the Salvation Army drop-in with existing staff.
HS6	Preventing homelessness as a result of eviction or abandonment from Council and Registered Social Landlord accommodation	Not done.
HS7	Developing a Mental Health Protocol for homeless people	Not done.
HS8	Reviewing the approach to people leaving prison - building links with relevant persons in the criminal justice and prison systems	Not done.
HS9	Developing a clear Protocol for the Council's Housing Management team and Registered Providers with stock in the District on how cases threatened with homelessness involving tenants who are victims of domestic abuse should be dealt with	Work is underway internally to draft this protocol for WDC and this will then be discussed with Registered Providers to see if it can be more widely adopted.
HS10	Setting up regular partnership meeting to discuss individual cases	Partnership meetings have been set up involving Police, Way Ahead, Helping Hands, Housing, Health & Community Protection, Night Shelter.
HS11	Explore opportunities and prepare bids for additional resources for actions HS12 to HS20	This was undertaken with limited success (see HS12 and HS19 below).
The following actions were all intended for the second year of the strategy provided that resources could be found under action HS11.		
HS12	Increasing online housing options.	We secured funding from central government and will be introducing online housing applications in 2016/17.
HS13	Looking at potential for outreach services and linking these to employment and training advice	Not resourced.

HS14	Investigating the need for an independent Housing Advice Service for Young People	Not resourced.
HS15	Investigating whether lockers could be provided for street homeless	Not resourced.
HS16	Arranging joint training for council housing staff and voluntary sector workers run by an independent provider	Not resourced.
HS17	Reviewing the accommodation needs of homeless people and considering options for provision	The review has begun.
HS18	Working in partnership with schools and prisons to raise awareness of homelessness – developing a training module for students	Not resourced.
HS19	Exploring opportunities to extend mediation services	Work is underway to introduce a mediation service that will operate corporately across all council services.
HS20	Setting up robust record-keeping systems for all contacts with rough sleepers	Partially implemented – we now record approaches through the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and contacts through the drop-in work at the Salvation Army.