



Joint Strategic Committee
10 April 2018
Agenda Item 5

ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Key Decision: No

Ward(s) Affected: All

Delivering our Housing Strategy - Review of Progress 2017-2018

Report by the Director for Communities

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Adur and Worthing Councils Housing Strategy 2017-2020 'Housing Matters' outlined a vision for our communities where everyone can have a place they can call home. We recognise that having a secure and safe home, not just a place to sleep, is one of the most important factors in enabling our communities to be ambitious, prosperous and resilient.
- 1.2. Our Strategy outlined a number of key activities we wanted to undertake and invest in, in order to achieve this vision. This Strategy was set against a particular landscape, which has been changing since it was adopted. The biggest change in legislation to impact statutory housing services has now been implemented, the 'Homelessness Reduction Act'. Welfare reform measures have continued to be implemented and changes to funding for local councils to support our communities, has not always kept pace with demand for our housing services. None-the-less, Housing and other teams across Adur and Worthing have worked tirelessly to create the foundations that will allow us to continue to support our citizens by preventing homelessness, providing the critical safety net to those in need, and enabling our communities lead valued, constructive lives in places that they call home.
- 1.3. This report updates members on all of the activities and outcomes that have been achieved to date in delivering this strategy, as well as highlighting challenges and opportunities for the future.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Joint Strategic Committee to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Context

3.1 In December 2016 Adur & Worthing Councils adopted 'Platforms for our Places' in which we committed to a number of key actions around housing and supporting our communities. These are also contained in the Adur & Worthing Housing Strategy 2017-2020 'Housing Matters' which was agreed at JSC in March 2017 and adopted by both Councils thereafter.

3.2 The Strategy provides a framework to support a wide range of activities across the Councils that are associated with the needs of our Communities to be housed safely and securely in order for our communities to thrive and prosper. Therefore, whilst there is much in the media at the present time regarding homelessness, this was deliberately not a Homelessness Strategy, (which a separate statutory requirement) but a Housing Strategy that encompasses our wider roles as:

- Provider of statutory housing services to those at risk of homelessness
- The local planning authority
- Network creator and system connector
- Landlord
- Private sector regulator and compliance agency
- Enabler for those with disabilities and specific housing needs
- Developer

3.3 The strategy is arranged with three broad areas of focus, this report will update on each area.

- Preventing Homelessness
- Developing the Supply of New Homes
- Improving Adur Council's role as Landlord (Adur District only)

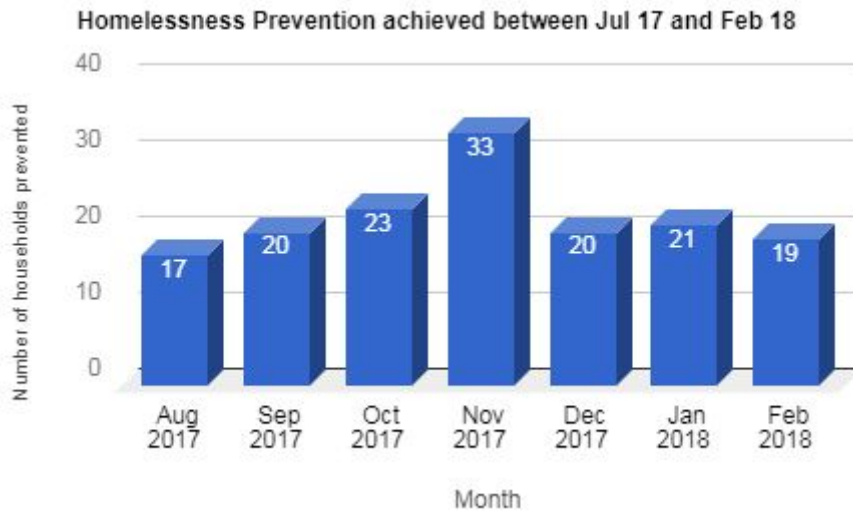
4.0 Preventing Homelessness

4.1 In our strategy we identified a range of opportunities that support our work to prevent homelessness. The activity to support these ambitions over the last year has been wide ranging and has been influenced by a number of external and emerging factors including the roll out of Universal Credit as part of the ongoing welfare reform programme and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This received Royal assent just after the strategy was adopted and was enacted in April 2018 (referred to as the Act).

4.2 In order to be able to implement the legislation the team have embarked

on a huge amount of preparatory work, that will continue as we begin to embed the Act into our day to day work for example training sessions for staff and councillors, trialling the new Personal Housing Plan template, collecting data on footfall through the service for last few months and the new Qmatic system gives even better data, and holding awareness sessions for the contact centre team.

- 4.3 As well as implementing the Act our teams have focussed on a variety of projects that support and deliver our ambition to *'Make Homelessness everyone's business'* One of these is a multi-agency Project which started in September 2017 and to date has involved more than 40 people from the Councils, our voluntary and third sector partners such as Worthing Churches Homelessness Project (WCHP) and other statutory partners, such as West Sussex County Council, DWP, the local health system and the Police.
- 4.4 An early outcome of this project has been the sharing of intelligence. In particular our 'Going Local' Community Referrers identified that there is a significant need amongst those attending GP surgeries, for advice and support around housing issues. In response to this evidenced need, from the 1st April 2018 a new £40,000 advice service has been commissioned by the Adur and Worthing Communities Directorate where WCHP and South Sussex CAB will provide housing advice and support to those referred by the Going Local team or the West Sussex Integrated and Earliest Help team. The aim is to support 280 clients per year as part of our work to prevent homelessness and deliver the ambitions of the new legislation.
- 4.5 Other key outcomes from the project are now being taken forward by developing cross sector prevention approaches. For families and children we will build upon the WSCC Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help model, and for single homeless customers, we are working closely with WCHP and the wider partnership of the Homelessness Forum, to develop the new Lyndhurst Road accommodation into a multi-agency co-located hub that provides housing advice and support for our Single Homeless cohort.
- 4.6 In addition to specific projects, the team has continued to develop other approaches, that support the focus on prevention. The Homelessness Forum has developed the Community Homelessness Strategy and several landlord events have been convened. The positive collective outputs of these approaches can be seen in the graph below which shows how we are successfully helping to prevent homelessness and enable individuals to retain tenancies and/or find new ones.



The graph shows that between August 2017 and February 2018, 176 households were prevented from becoming homeless. Most of this was achieved by negotiating with the evicting hosts (usually friends and family) or with private sector landlords to prevent evictions. Where negotiations have failed, we have assisted households source alternative accommodation. As a result of this activity, we are seeing the number of households in emergency accommodation plateau, which is clearly of benefit to all.

4.7 Prevention Case Studies -Four prevention studies are included in Appendix 1 to this report which show the work required and the outcomes involved with preventing homelessness.

4.8 *Enabling our residents to remain and thrive in their own homes:*

Our Private Sector Housing (PSH) team oversees the process to disseminate Disabled Facilities Grants scheme across Adur and Worthing. They accept referrals and enable improvements via our Home Improvement Agency, distributing funds passported to us via WSCC. By March 2017 we aim to have spent upto £1M in this year to support residents.

4.9 We are working closely with all Districts and Boroughs across West Sussex to streamline these processes and improve access to statutory and discretionary funds. In October 2017 a revised policy was adopted at JSC that supports this ambition.

4.10 Hospital discharge grant - Case study

Mr A was referred by a social worker, he could not be discharged from hospital as he had accumulated an excessive amount of clutter and rubbish within the main living areas of his home, this included large amounts of old, out-of-date food in his hallway which created an unsafe environment that he could not return to. Officers met the social worker on-site and immediately agreed works to make the property safe and clean. A contractor was appointed and Mr A was contacted in hospital. The outcome

being that Mr A was able to be discharged from hospital within 2 weeks, this just would not have not been possible without this intervention.

- 4.11 The PSH team also manages and delivers our telecare services to nearly 1100 residents, providing 24/7 support to some of our most vulnerable communities.
- 4.12 *Extending Funding and Services to support our communities* - Adur and Worthing Councils in partnership with local stakeholders have also successfully bid for several pots of funding to support some of our most vulnerable residents, prevent homelessness and reduce the impact of homelessness, including rough sleepers, as follows:
- 4.12.1 *Preventing rough sleeping* - This DCLG fund of £260k was awarded to West Sussex partners over two years. For Adur and Worthing these funds have or will be used to
- Appoint and Advice and Assessment Worker via WCHP
 - Commissioning a Mental Health Support worker
 - Fund upto 4 beds to provide a specific Pathway for homeless clients with mental health needs.
 - Provide 2 'crash pads' to prevent rough sleeping
 - Support Council staffing of the (SWEP) Severe Weather Provision
- 4.12.2 *Complex Needs MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) project* - DCLG have provided £70k to Adur and Worthing for 12 months. This supports 2 Complex Needs Workers who work with entrenched rough sleepers, and those identified as the 'most complex' using a chaos index'
- 4.12.3 *Women with complex needs* - DCLG fund of £96k to Adur and Worthing over 15 months - This funds a Complex Needs worker to work with women and families to prevent and support those at risk of homelessness due domestic abuse. The service is provided by Safe In Sussex.
- 4.13 *Leadership and Partnership* - Adur and Worthing Councils are cognizant of the fact that Housing and Homelessness is a shared issue, therefore we have invested officer time and energy in developing system wide initiatives, responses and partnerships (such as the multi-agency Rough Sleepers partnership and the Homelessness Forum chaired by the Worthing Executive Member) to support a longer term and systematic approach to preventing homelessness and reducing vulnerability. These also now include:
- 4.13.1 *Systems Leadership* - A&W has sponsored a leadership programme to enable leaders from all parts of the Housing system to work collectively to address the wicked issues surrounding homelessness. Existing groups have focussed on homelessness and mental health. The newest group focuses on 'Discharge to the Street' is led by Miles Ockwell (Sussex Police)

- 4.13.2 *Welfare Reform Partnership* - A&W has led on the formation of a multi-agency partnership to drive forward initiatives to improve financial and budgeting skills, share knowledge and best practice and support our communities. Details of progress are outlined in a separate report to this committee.
- 4.14 *Policy reviews and updates* - We also recognise that preventing homelessness and dealing with those who are affected by homelessness, needs to be supported by revised and transparent policies, updated procedures and easy to use processes. Recent revisions and plans include:
- Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy - draft approved JSC Nov 2017
 - Community Homelessness Strategy - Approved Dec 2017
 - Private Sector Housing Revised Enforcement Policy - Approved JSC October 2017
 - Disabled Facilities Grants (Better Care Fund) - JSC Dec 2017 - revisions proposed to speed up and extend the scope of discretionary grants to enable individuals to remain in their home or be discharged from hospital more quickly and efficiently.
 - Review of our Housing Register (ongoing)
- 4.15 *Customer Service* - Improving how we engage with our customers at risk of homelessness is an ongoing journey and is part of our approach to implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act. Our two main approaches are supporting our front line staff to be able to work effectively and with compassion, to do this they need time. One key factor is increasing our digital/self service offer to create this capacity. The two projects underway in Homelessness Prevention are:
- 4.15.1 *Housing Register* - The internally produced Housing register self service module has now gone live. The backlog of applications has now been dealt with and all future applications will be on line, reducing processing time and increasing the amount of time officers can spend on dealing with the applications.
- 4.14.2 *Home Connections* - Sussex Homemove a partnership between a number of Districts and Boroughs, including Adur and Worthing, have procured of a full end to end housing solutions/homelessness Digital Case Management system. A project team is supporting the implementation of this system, which will also support the roll out of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- 4.16 The amount of work required to support the implementation of this new system and new legislation, cannot be understated and has been undertaken by the team alongside all of the other demands, which will continue and grow throughout the year.

5.0 Developing the Supply of New Homes

- 5.1 Our Housing Strategy included a number of key ambitions to support the supply of new homes across all tenures. The main strands of activity over the last year include the following:
- 5.2 *Working with developers and providers* - Officers from across planning and housing are regularly meeting with developers and registered providers, with the ambition being to enable as many new homes as practicable, and create opportunities for affordable homes across our places. We can utilise Right to Buy receipts and Affordable homes grants to support some of this delivery, where appropriate.
- 5.3 For example recent discussions have seen Housing and Planning colleagues in negotiation with Hyde Housing on the Ropetackle North site, Southern Housing Group on the Free Wharf site, and with Worthing Homes on a number of sites to secure additional rented accommodation, beyond that secured through the planning process. S106 agreements are also currently being negotiated to secure 30% affordable housing on the following major development sites, West Durrington Phase II, Free Wharf (Shoreham Western Harbour Arm) and New Monks Farm. These sites have the potential to deliver 414 new truly affordable homes across Adur and Worthing in the next few years.
- 5.4 *Adur Local Plan and Worthing Local Plan* - The Adur Local Plan was approved at full Council in December 2017. The Worthing Local Plan is under review and it is intended to undertake the second public consultation on the preferred options for accommodating future growth in the autumn. A workshop was held earlier in 2017 to enable developers and RSLs to engage in this process.
- 5.5 *Asset review* - A new Asset Portfolio Manager has been recently appointed and a review of the Council's assets is underway. This will identify land that is surplus to requirements and has the ability to deliver new housing. Two sites at Worthing, the Camping and Caravan Club site and land at Fulbeck Avenue have been identified as potential new housing sites.
- 5.6 *Temporary Accommodation and engagement with Private Sector Landlords*
Both Councils have committed funds to support increasing the number of units of temporary accommodation across our area. Buying properties that provide value for money and are suitable has proved immensely challenging, at least 8 properties have fallen through. However, we have continued to pursue long term lease options and partnerships with key providers such as WCHP, as described below, which have provided quantity at speed.

Table 1 - Procurement of emergency accommodation

Location	Number of units	Tenure	Estimated completion date
Arun	13x self-contained	5yr Lease	April 2018 (although is already being used on a periodic lease basis)
Arun	5x Shared	5yr Lease	April 2018
Arun	16x Self-contained	10 - 15yr Lease	Summer 2018 (awaiting planning consent)
Hove	11x self-contained	5yr Lease	Summer 2018 (awaiting planning consents)
Various	8x self-contained	12 month block-booked	March 2018
Worthing	5x rooms	6 month block booked	March/April 2018
Total	58 units		

Table 2 - Procurement of 'Long term' temporary accommodation

Location	Type of property	Tenure	Estimated completion date
Worthing	3 bed house	5yr Lease	Complete
Adur	2 bed flat	3yr Lease	Complete
Adur	2 bed flat	5yr Lease	Complete
Worthing	3 bed house	5yr lease	Complete
Worthing	4 bed house	5yr Lease	Mar 2018
Worthing	2 bed flat	5yr Lease	Mar 2018
Worthing	2 bed flat	5yr Lease	Apr 2018
Total	7 units		

Table 3 - Other types of accommodation

Location	Type of Property	Tenure	Estimated completion date
Worthing	4x two bed flats	30 year nomination agreement	Dec 2018
Worthing	37 of which 18 are dedicated to the Councils for preventing use of B and B	3 - 5 year nomination agreement	Spring 2018
Arun	4x self-contained	10 - 15 year nomination agreement	Dec 2018
TOTAL	26 units		

5.6 *Working with the Private Sector* - Welfare reform and changes to taxation rules for landlords, combined with a private sector market in which rents continue to rise, means there are challenges for landlords who may want to work directly with us and/or use their assets for those in receipt of benefits. We have however pursued a number of avenues and the Executive Member for Worthing with senior officers, meets with landlord groups regularly. Specific actions include:

- The Councils has a number of properties held via Northwood Lettings Agent utilising a Rent Guarantee Scheme to bring back into use empty properties.
- The Councils have agreed a Landlord Grant Assistance Scheme whereby grant funding of up to £5k can be provided to landlords to improve their properties and/or make significant repairs (subject to meeting criteria). In exchange for the grant, the landlord must agree to sign up to the PSL scheme or provide nomination rights for up to 5 years.
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and Prevention Funds are being fully utilised to support tenants access private rented properties. Providing as at 1/3/18 help for 117 households in Worthing (50 rent in advance and prevention funds of £73,179 and 67 DHP of £86,217) and 38 in Arun (24 rent in advance and prevention funds of £43,733 and 14 DHP of £16,270)
- Enforcement activity continues against those landlords who may be placing our communities at risk. In the wake of the Grenfell Fire the Private Sector Housing team has worked tirelessly with West Sussex Fire and Rescue to identify and risk assess privately owned and let, high rise properties across A&W
- Reviewing relationships with agents and others to see how we can continue to promote the supply of affordable and high quality properties for rent. Hosting

in conjunction with the National Landlords Association (NLA) twice yearly forums for local landlords.

- 5.7 Adur District Council is also the owner of property and land as part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). In early 2017 the Council appointed a development expert to work alongside the housing, major projects and planning teams to assist with the progress of a number of key sites as well as enabling the transfer of skills and learning across the Council as the development of HRA land has not been a feature in recent years.
- 5.8 Two sites will come forward for planning in the first half of 2018. Albion Street which is being developed by a private developer will deliver a total of 53, one, two and three bedroom apartments of which the Council will receive 14 affordable, for rent, apartments. Cecil Norris House will follow Albion Street. The Council will be progressing the redevelopment of the Cecil Norris site and initial assessments indicate that the site could potentially accommodate up to 18 one and two bedroom units - again affordable for rent.
- 5.9 Further Council/HRA owned sites are under investigation in the District with the potential for a further 30 units to go to planning this year. A team with the relevant skills and experience is being formed to give the necessary in-house capacity and capability to deliver these schemes as quickly and efficiently as possible.

6.0 Improving and Enhancing Adur Council's Role as a Landlord

- 6.1 Within the strategy, we recognise that for Adur Council, there is a specific role as Landlord and we identified a number of areas of improvement activity across; housing management and tenancy services, tenant engagement, delivering effective and responsive repairs and maintenance services as well as asset management and capital projects.

Key activities to progress these areas include:

- 6.2 *Building capability and capacity to respond to the needs of our tenants:*
Over the last year we have reviewed and revised the structure and make up of the teams that manage and deliver our maintenance services, our compliance activities (e.g gas, electric, water, asbestos and fire safety) and our management of external contracts and contractors. We have appointed a new team of experienced professionals to oversee these activities, reporting to the Maintenance Manager. Already we are seeing improvements and savings across contract management and procurement e.g a new contract for communal cleaning; compliance regimes and recording and in feedback on repairs and maintenance.
- 6.3 The *Responsive Repairs Digital Project* has included colleagues from across housing, customer services and digital as well as engaging directly with our tenants. It is delivering three key outcomes:

- Revised Service Level Agreements between the Council and residents
- Improved resident engagement
- New digital solutions for reporting, allocating, inspection and managing payment for responsive repairs.

6.4 The project has created a resident focus group, and engaged with Councillors throughout. The new digital tool for reporting and overseeing repairs will be going live in May/June 2018. Changes in processes and personnel prior to this date however, have already lead to real time benefits for tenants, with a 98% satisfaction rate with repairs timeliness and quality being reported.

6.5 A *Star Survey* was issued to all residents with a good level of response (33%). The results were by and large encouraging with improvements in many areas since the last survey in 2015. Officers and residents have been reviewing the outcomes and compiling an action plan accordingly. The Adur Homes Management Board meets quarterly to review a range of issues.. The newly appointed Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement officer, in partnership with the Wellbeing team and all the Housing Managers, will be leading much of this engagement work with tenants and leaseholders to develop a 'you said, we did' monitoring and communications plan.

6.5 *Asset Management and Capital Programme*: Information from the Stock Condition Survey and other safety inspections in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy have informed a three year Capital Programme that was approved at JSC in 2017. A Capital Programme working group is developing the priorities and timeframes for delivery. It is recognised that there are long term issues given the under investment in our stock and that there continue to be significant financial challenges for the HRA with year on year rent reductions and sustained levels of arrears.

6.6 *Financial Sustainability* - The annual HRA revenue account budget in 2018/19 will be more than £13.9 million, funded by housing rents and service charges. Capital expenditure on major repairs in 2018/19 is expected to be nearly £5 million rising to £6.5 million by 2021/22.

However, the financial landscape for the HRA is challenging with continued year on year rent reductions and buildings that require extensive investment to bring them up to a quality standard.

For the second year in a row, the HRA has set a deficit budget (£735k in 2018/19) and will continue to set a deficit budget whilst it grapples with falling rental income. In 2020/21, the Council will be allowed to increase rents for the first time in five years. However, the rent setting formula for the next five years will be prescribed by central Government and limited at CPI plus 1%. Nevertheless, the HRA will gradually become more financially sustainable as rent levels increase.

Clearly this is unsustainable in the longer term, however in the short term we are continuing to focus on rent collection, current and historic; understanding all of our

costs in order to be able to make the right strategic decisions going forward as well as seeking external funding where possible. (e.g a recent application to the Warm Homes fund - outcome awaited)

6.7 *Tenant Engagement* - there has been good engagement with the repairs project and a new cross team Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Officer has recently been appointed. He will work across Housing and Wellbeing acknowledging the clear link required between these teams in enabling some of our most vulnerable communities to access resources and build resilience. The Big Lottery Funded Growing Communities project in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers, is focussed in part in Eastbrook and Adur housing staff are involved in discussions aimed at providing our tenants with opportunities to utilise green spaces better in that area.

7.0 Challenges and Opportunities - Looking forward

7.1 For the immediate future the implementation of new legislation, understanding the impact and demand of the Act are virtually all consuming, yet at the same time they cannot be. The teams are also implementing and bedding in a new case management system (Home Connections), developing new ways of working across partners and agencies and developing relationships with landlords, developers and Registered Providers (RPs). An new RP liaison group has been established and will meet for the first time in April 2018.

7.2 Clearly challenges may emerge is the issues of rising demand and a lack of affordable rented accommodation persist, and we await the impact of full service Universal Credit in Worthing this year. There are opportunities however to exploit, by fully utilising, multi-agency and cross council working, recognising that the people in our places are interacting with multiple systems and we have a duty to make this as straightforward and effective for our communities as possible. Housing is both a safeguarding and a public health issue, as such it is not just the concern of the District councils, but should be on the agenda for all statutory agencies wanting to enable, health, wellbeing and prosperity in our communities.

8.0 Engagement and Communication

8.1 Housing is an area of the Councils work that is high profile and we engage widely with different groups and stakeholders both formally and informally. As mentioned throughout this document there are a variety of forums in which we engage and seek feedback with:

- The voluntary and community sectors
- The statutory sectors
- The Homelessness Forum
- Private Landlords
- Developers
- RSLs
- Tenants

- Customers
- Banks, our local Credit Union and other service providers
- Customers of our service including those who are, or have been, homeless and rough sleeping

8.2 In terms of Governance the Executive Member for Customer Services for Worthing Chairs the Adur & Worthing Homelessness Forum and both Executive Members for Customer Services and the Executive Members for Wellbeing, oversee the delivery of the Strategy and hold the teams to account.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The cost of delivering the housing strategy is built into the Councils' revenue and capital budgets.

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 The Local Government Act 2003 previously provided for a local housing authority to have a strategy in respect of such matters relating to housing. Section 29 of the Deregulation Act 2015 removed this formal requirement, but does not remove the ability of Local Authorities to produce a strategy if they see fit to do so, and indeed it is best practice to do so.

10.2 Section 8 Housing Act 1985 continues to place a duty on every local Housing Authority to consider housing conditions in their District/Borough and the needs of the District/Borough with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation. Further, part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) places an obligation on Local Authorities to promote the prevention of homelessness.

10.3 The Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy enables the Councils to discharge its obligations under s8 Housing Act 1985, and work towards the promotion of the prevention of homelessness. The changing landscape in relation to housing regulation and homelessness prevention, including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, places an ongoing legal burden on Local Authorities to consider carefully their housing strategies, which will should link with both tenancy strategies (as required under the Localism Act 2011) and homelessness strategies.

Background Papers

- See paragraph 4.17 for a list of recent Housing related papers and policies brought to JSC
- 'Housing Matters' Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy (insert link)
- Platforms for our Places (Insert link)

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- Housing of all types and tenure, supports the economy of our places, enabling inward investment as well as providing safe and secure places for our communities to live and work from.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

- There is a growing understanding of the health and social impacts of poor housing and at its extreme, the impacts of homelessness can be significant for individuals and families. Adur and Worthing Councils seeks to minimise these impacts through our work to identify and support individuals and communities at risk of homelessness and prevent this where ever possible.
- Providing suitable accommodation for our communities, enabling our disabled and older residents to remain safely in their homes for longer has significant and far reaching economic and social benefits for the Councils and our places.

2.2 Equality Issues

- As with Social Value, equality of opportunity and indeed of access to services may be impacted by an individual's or groups access to suitable housing. The Councils seek to provide a service to all residents to enable them to access advice and support in preventing the issues that may lead to homelessness from escalating.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- As a landlord in Adur, we work closely with our partners to monitor and address Anti-social behaviour issues amongst our tenants and across Adur and Worthing as a key statutory members of the community safety partnership work with all housing provider to address and reduce the likelihood of crime and victimisation.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

- Considered, no issues to address

3. Environmental

- Ongoing development and environmental issues are assessed as part of each planning application.

4. Governance

- Considered, no issues to report

Appendix 1

Homelessness Prevention Case Studies (Initials have been changed)

Case study 1 - AC

AC is a single parent with two young children renting an affordable private sector two bed property. The landlord appeared determined to sell the property and had been awarded a court order to evict AC.. Prior to the landlord applying for a County Court Bailiff to carry out the eviction, the Housing Solutions Team made one last appeal to the landlord to allow AC to remain in the property for another six months whilst we helped AC to find another in the local area. The landlord agreed and issued a new tenancy for a minimum period of six months, on the basis that the rent was raised. AC was helped to identify where they could reduce their outgoings, in order to afford the higher rent under the new tenancy agreement. Today the AC remains in their home and we continue to work with them to find alternative accommodation.

Case study 2 - TC

TC has a privately rented, three bed house, but following a stroke is unable to work and can not afford the property. The landlord therefore issued a S21 notice to evict. The Housing Solutions caseworker negotiated directly with the agency to let TC remain. Housing benefit is going direct to the landlord with a discretionary housing payment being used to cover the shortfall in the interim. TC has been assessed as into Band B and the team are actively bidding on behalf of TC to provide more suitable, affordable accommodation as quickly as possible.

Case Study 3 - VA

VA was served notice to leave a privately rental flat as the landlord wanted to sell the property. VA is single parent with an infant child and is pregnant, she also has mental health problems, and is supported by mental health teams and social services. Emergency accommodation would have been unsuitable in particular as it would be too far from her extensive support network. Therefore, she stayed with her mother. Whilst this enabled VA to remain in the area, this was not ideal because of overcrowding and associated problems. With much guidance and support from Housing Solutions, VA was able to identify a suitable private rental property in Worthing. We also established that she was not in receipt of all of her eligible benefits which would make it difficult for her to afford to pay the top up between her Housing Benefit and her rent. VA was assisted with chasing up her claims for child benefit and tax credits, although these took some time to be processed. Working in partnership with social services we reached an agreement to help VA with the rent in advance and a deposit to secure the property and social services agreed to help with top-up funds for between 2-3 months. She has now successfully moved into her new accommodation and is very happy and feeling much more settled.

Case study 4 - MB

MB, is a single parent with a dependent child. MB works and occupies a housing association property. They had £3,500 rent arrears after difficulty in claiming housing benefit, and unfortunately adopted a 'burying head in sand' approach. MB approached the team when a claim for Possession was issued. The team contacted the landlord to establish current arrears and liaised with Housing Benefits to ensure HB was in payment and possible backdating. Intensive work with MB established that it was feasible to pay the rent and a reasonable sum off the arrears ready for court hearing. We asked the landlord to call off the hearing, this was refused. Devised repayment plan ready for court. The Possession Order was Suspended although the landlord requested outright Possession. Homelessness was therefore prevented.