



Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
26 November 2020

## ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected:

### **Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy 2020-2023**

#### **Report by the Director for Communities**

#### **Executive Summary**

##### **1. Purpose**

- This report updates members on progress so far with the commitments in the Housing Strategy.

##### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress made in the first six months of the Housing Strategy 2020-2023.

##### **3. Context**

3.1 The Housing Strategy was published at the beginning of the 2020/21 financial year and is a three year plan. It set out a number of commitments under three main policy areas:

- Housing related wellbeing and support;
- Better homes, stronger communities; and
- Improving the levels of affordable housing supply.

3.2 This report is the first six monthly report on progress and sets out our key achievements to date.

## **4. Progress over the last six months**

### **4.1 Priority 1: Housing related wellbeing and support**

4.1.1 We are building on our prevention agenda to engage a wider set of partners to identify those at risk of homelessness earlier. We have:

- Set up regular monthly meetings with key partners, including the Probation Service, to manage prison releases.
- Established a line of communication between Worthing and Meadowfield Hospitals to manage hospital discharges for homeless individuals.
- Supported a pilot in Worthing, funded by West Sussex County Council (WSSCC), for “discharge to assess” beds for homeless individuals being discharged from high support mental health beds.
- Co-funded a worker with the Citizens Advice Bureau who works on cases where there is a risk of homelessness.
- Included a question about homelessness in the Wellbeing Service’s new 'Work App' so that individuals at risk can be signposted to Housing.

4.1.2 With our partners, we are agreeing pathways into our respective services to enable joint working. We have:

- Established joint working with WSSCC Children's Services Intervention and Early Help and JobCentrePlus, with housing officers co-located with each of those services twice a week (we have used remote communication routes during Covid-19)
- Agreed protocols with WSSCC regarding 16/17 year olds and Care Leavers, including joint assessments with the Young People's Prevention Team and an arrangement to place homeless 16/17 year olds supported accommodation temporary access beds to prevent the need to use B&B accommodation for this group.

4.1.3 We are also developing further joint working to help residents in all types of housing to sustain and manage their accommodation. We have:

- Jointly put out a Tender for a tenure neutral floating support service, co-funded by all West Sussex Districts and Boroughs and WSSCC.
- Started recruitment for Lettings Support Workers, jointly funded with MHCLG, to work across all single person housing to sustain tenancies, prevent homelessness and increase successful move on.

4.1.4 We are supporting cross sector work to prevent homelessness and improve financial wellbeing, access to work, digital skills and wider health and wellbeing outcomes. We have:

- Used MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative funding to put in place an Employment and Skills Coach for single people in Temporary & Supported Accommodation or who are Rough Sleeping.
- Undertaken the first quarterly Rough Sleeper Needs Audit, jointly with all Districts and Boroughs and Adult Supported Accommodation providers, to assess the health and housing needs for all rough sleepers and single people in Temporary and Supported Accommodation.

4.1.5 Through commissioning, pathway development and inward funding we are focussing on reducing the need for people to sleep rough and improving health outcomes. We have:

- Supported the Hospital Admission Reduction Pathway pilot (HARP) which, although delayed by Covid-19, 'went live' in October 2020 and includes a Housing Navigator role at Worthing Hospital and a community nurse working with rough sleepers.
- Ensured all those housed during the 'Everyone In' phase of the pandemic are registered with a GP.

4.1.6 We are developing pathways and provision for hospital discharges and prison releases to prevent rough sleeping. We have:

- Expanded the Rough Sleepers Team so we can manage more casework in relation to rough sleepers and single people being discharged from prison and hospital.

4.1.7 We are embedding Psychologically Informed Environments into our approach and tackling the issue of complex need clients being repeatedly evicted to the streets. We have:

- Provided Psychologically Informed training to managers across the Councils and within our partner organisation, Turning Tides.
- Become part of a Multi-Disadvantage Group which is chaired by Sussex Partnership Trust and includes all Districts and Boroughs, WSCC commissioners: Housing and Substance Misuse, Turning Tides, Stonepillow and Crawley Open House.
- Using MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative monies, funded Complex Need Workers, a Mental Health Worker and access beds in Temporary accommodation.

## **4.2 Priority 2: Better Homes, Stronger communities**

4.2.1 We are developing our Adur Homes Resident Engagement Strategy. We have:

- Produced a draft Resident Engagement Strategy in consultation with residents which is now going out to wider consultation before being brought to members for approval.

4.2.2 We are developing an approach to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) to ensure that Adur Homes can identify and support those who are vulnerable. We have:

- Begun a review of existing ASB cases to identify best practice, learn from approaches that have worked less well and inform our priorities for developing more collaborative working.

4.2.3 We are supporting the long term financial health of Adur Homes by tackling the costs of reactive maintenance, reducing arrears, reviewing charges and reducing the time taken for void properties to be re-let. We have:

- Reduced a projected overspend by improving monitoring through a Repairs and Maintenance Budget Review meeting which takes place monthly.
- Started work to outsource the Building Services stocks and stores procurement.
- Started a review of service charges in order to develop proposals for charges in the next financial year.
- Started work to develop an Income Recovery strategy and set up weekly reviews of income collection to inform our actions to maximise income.
- Introduced a new Voids Tracker and organised fortnightly voids meetings to improve coordination of the voids process.

4.2.4 We are supporting the long term investment into our stock by developing revised and prioritised capital and asset management programmes. We have:

- Appointed Campbell Tickell to help us create a long term investment plan for Adur Homes stock, including investment in existing stock and plans to build new homes and achieve net Zero carbon emission by 2030.

4.2.5 We are supporting the Councils' stated ambition to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. We have:

- Made a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme fund for heating

systems and solar PV at Marsh House and Shadwells Court, which we will match fund if successful.

- Been successful as part of a consortium bid to Green Homes Grant Phase 1 which will enable us to deliver improvements to E,F and G efficiency rated private sector properties.

#### **4.3 Priority 3: Improving the levels of affordable housing supply.**

4.3.1 We are drafting our Development Strategy for Adur and Worthing in order to deliver affordable new homes. We have:

- Signed contracts to develop 27 new homes on two sites in Worthing (Rowlands Road and The Downview)
- Agreed terms and prepared contracts for signing which will deliver a further 49 homes.
- Gained agreement from JSC for a programme to deliver a further 56 new homes.

4.3.2 We are extending the successful Opening Doors social landlord scheme. We have:

- Recruited over 40 landlords to the scheme with none of the tenants housed accumulating bad debt - any minor arrears due to Covid-19 have payment plans in place which are all being maintained.).
- Achieved the first property to be 'floated off' (that is, the tenancy is no longer having to be supported by the Council)
- Added the first House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to the scheme which will provide tenancies for single people.

## **5. Engagement and Communication**

5.1 The Housing Strategy mirrors and extends the commitments outlined in Platforms for our Places. It was further informed by a number of workshops/sessions with approximately 150 people representing a diverse range of stakeholders, including residents. Research data from the Preventing Homelessness Project and the West Sussex Supported Housing Task and Finish Group was also used to inform the Strategy. The Strategy was approved in March 2020 by the Joint Strategic Committee.

5.2 This progress report was compiled with input from managers in Housing Needs, Adur Homes, Major Projects & Investment and Wellbeing, with input as appropriate from their delivery partners.

## **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no additional financial implications in connection with this report.

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no additional legal implications in connection with this report.

## **Background Papers**

- The Housing Strategy 2020-2023

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## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

### **1. Economic**

The Strategy aims to provide more affordable homes and to help people into tenancies. A stable place to live enables people to participate economically in the community as they can apply for and hold down regular work

### **2. Social**

#### **2.1 Social Value**

The Strategy promotes thriving communities where families and individuals are not at risk of homelessness, can settle and be part of the local community.

#### **2.2 Equality Issues**

The Strategy aims to provide affordable and long-term accommodation for those who need it, irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, age, religion or belief, disability, marital status, pregnancy or maternity.

#### **2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)**

- Improving access to homes and supporting people to be part of their communities will help reduce anti-social behaviour, The Strategy also includes the specific ambition to better tackle anti-social behaviour within Adur Homes estates

#### **2.4 Human Rights Issues**

- Matter considered and no issues identified.

### **3. Environmental**

The Strategy supports the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through our commitments to help those in poverty and prevent homelessness, to promote health and wellbeing and to ensure our developments are sustainable by design.

### **4. Governance**

The draft Housing Strategy mirrors and extends the ambitions for housing set out in Platforms for our Places. It also links with a number of other strategies and plans, which are set out in Chapter 2 “A Connected Strategy”. This report is part of the regular monitoring of progress against the commitments in the Strategy which is carried out on behalf of members.