



ADUR & WORTHING  
COUNCILS

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
25 November 2021

Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected: All

**Progress on the delivery of the Housing Strategy**

**Report by the Director for Communities**

**Executive Summary**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1. This report outlines progress made against the commitments in the Housing Strategy 2020-2023 'Enabling communities to thrive in their own home'

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The Joint Strategic Committee is asked to note the progress made with the Housing Strategy commitments over the last year.

**3. Background**

- 3.1. Having a secure and safe home, not just a place to sleep, is one of the most important factors in enabling our communities to thrive. The Housing Strategy for Adur & Worthing, therefore, is not just about buildings but is about people and communities. How we can support, enable and sometimes enforce the right conditions for people to both have a home and to thrive in their community.

**4. Context**

4.1. Since the Deregulation Act 2015 came into force, there has no longer been a formal requirement to produce a Housing Strategy but it is still considered best practice to do so. The Housing Strategy 2020-2023, ‘Enabling communities to thrive in their own home’, set out to create the conditions for more homes to be built, to prevent homelessness, reduce the need for emergency and temporary accommodation, and where it cannot be prevented, ensure the accommodation we provide is suitable and cost effective. Overall we want to support and enable our communities to have a home and be part of a community.

**5. Issues for consideration**

**5.1. Priority 1: Housing Related Wellbeing and Support**

**Preventing Homelessness:**

- 5.1.1. Our aim is to identify early who are at risk of homelessness so we can work with them to maintain their tenancies or find alternative accommodation and so avoid becoming homeless.
- 5.1.2. Demand on the service continues to increase this year due to those landlords, who were unable to evict during the lockdown, now taking the opportunity to do so and also because of the ending of the furlough scheme pushing more people into financial difficulties. However, the Housing Needs Team, by working closely with partner organisations, is working hard to ensure as many households and individuals as possible are helped to avoid homelessness, or be speedily housed once homeless.

|          | Proportion of cases where homelessness was prevented |          | Proportion of cases where homelessness was relieved |          |
|----------|--|----------|---|----------|
|          | Adur   | Worthing | Adur  | Worthing |
| 2020/21  | 52%  | 41%      | 33%   | 34%      |
| 2019/20* | 54%  | 55%      | 30%   | 30%      |

\* Q4 data only due to system changeover

- 5.1.3. A number of new initiatives and close partnership working are making this possible. These include:
  - The pilot project “Discharge to Assess Beds”, which is providing an improved pathway for those being discharged from Mental Health settings.
  - A specialist Citizens’ Advice worker in place as part of the “WHAT”

Project.

- Funding secured from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) for a countywide roll out of TellJO. TellJO is a digital preventative tool that helps build social and financial resilience by identifying at an early stage when customers may be starting to experience financial difficulty.
- Links being maintained with the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) Team at West Sussex County Council and with JobcentrePlus despite being unable to co-locate as hoped due to the impact of Covid.
- Pathways Home floating support (a floating support and mentoring service), which is now live, together with referral routes for Registered Social Landlords into the Homelessness Team and Pathways Home.
- The implementation of a joint working protocol for young people and care leavers, including joint assessments with Children's Services. A monthly Young Persons' Panel has also been set up.
- The co-location of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) with the Housing Needs Team to jointly work with victims of domestic abuse who are at high risk of serious harm.
- Links established with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, particularly in relation to the issue of hoarding.
- Working with WSCC, which has secured short term funding for debt and financial inclusion work. We have also secured an additional year of funding for an Employment and Skills Worker.

### ***Reducing Rough Sleeping***

- 5.1.4. Our Commitment is that, by working with other agencies, we will help those sleeping on the streets to get the support they need to find and maintain accommodation and also to improve their health outcomes.

#### **Rough Sleeping Figures: Official Annual Count**

| <b>Count Year</b> | <b>Worthing Estimate</b> | <b>Worthing Count</b> | <b>Adur Estimate</b> | <b>Adur Count</b> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>2021/22</b>    | 15                       | 8                     | 1                    | 1                 |
| <b>2020/21</b>    | 3                        | n/a                   | 0                    | n/a               |
| <b>2019/20</b>    | 13                       | 7                     | 2                    | 0                 |
| <b>2018/19</b>    | 23                       | 11                    | 1                    | 0                 |

- 5.1.5. The Rough Sleeper Needs Audit (SHAH) continues to be carried out quarterly and will be expanded to Brighton and Hove City Council and East Sussex County Council as part of the Changing

Futures programme of work. SHAH data is being fed into the Mental Health Housing Strategy and services as well as the Rough Sleeping Strategy and action plan.

- 5.1.6. While the HARP PHE funding stream has now ended, WSCC have funded an extension to the programme until March 2022. Provision provides a housing navigator in the hospital and a community nurse. Options to mainstream this service after March 2022 are being explored.
- 5.1.7. A multi-agency Rough Sleeper Team (RST) continues to work together to ensure homeless and rough sleepers are registered with general practitioners and have access to health services. Successes include being one of the first areas in the country to secure a programme of covid vaccinations for rough sleepers and homeless people and the inclusion of the “Hospital Admission Reduction Pathway” nurse and navigator, as well as Worthing Hospital, as members of the RST, meaning that cases are being referred into the RST in time for properly planned discharges.
- 5.1.8. The Single Person Network continues to work together and is building closer links with probation.
- 5.1.9. Work is now underway to improve Duty to Refer links by working with the Probation Service’s CAS3 project, which is intended to provide accommodation to those at risk of being homeless on being released from prison.

## 5.2. ***Priority 2: Better Homes; Stronger Communities***

### ***Acceptable Living Conditions and Regulation:***

- 5.2.1. Our Strategy commitment was to continue to use our powers to drive up standards in the private rented sector by making landlords carry out improvements where we find these are necessary and by licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- 5.2.2. Between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, 323 complaints about housing conditions were received by the Private Sector Housing Team. 36 formal Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessments were completed, 82 formal notices served and four Financial Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued. Three FPNs were successfully defended on appeal for a total income of £20,250.
- 5.2.3. In Adur District, 20 licensable HMOs have been identified and, of these, 16 are licenced (80%) and 4 are awaiting licencing. In

Worthing Borough, 164 licensable HMOs have been identified, of which 143 are licensed (87%) and 21 are awaiting licensing.

***Staying safely at home for longer:***

- 5.2.4. By providing grants for adaptations and equipment such as community alarms, we will continue to help those with disabilities, mobility problems or poor health to remain in their own home.
- 5.2.5. Officers from the Councils continue to attend both the Strategic and Operational meetings of the West Sussex Adaptations Working Group. Between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, 327 fresh applications for grant assistance were received, including both Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and Repairs Grant Assistance (RGA). 229 of these applications were formal recommendations from WSCC Occupational Therapists for DFGs.
- 5.2.6. 182 DFG adaptations were completed during the same period, although due to the long term nature of these projects, some of these were started before October 2020. In total 77 of the applications received during the period have so far proceeded to completion, with the rest likely to complete in the next year. The total spend in Adur has been £675,987.04 and in Worthing £1,212,155.20 (both figures actuals).

***Our role as Landlord (Adur District):***

- 5.2.7. We said we would continue to review how we manage our housing stock in Adur District, including rent and service charge collection, repairs, grounds maintenance and cleaning. We also said we would provide support services for tenants and leaseholders, such as tenant engagement and helping to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- 5.2.8. These commitments have now led to the establishment of a Housing Transformation Programme and the appointment of an interim Housing Transformation Manager with the remit of improving services across Housing, with particular concentration on services for Adur Homes residents.
- 5.2.9. We produced a first draft of a Resident Engagement Strategy for Adur Homes, in consultation with staff, residents and TPAS, before the end of 2020. Covid 19 and the lockdown paused further development but it is now feeding into the Housing Transformation

Programme. That Programme includes plans to establish a diverse group of residents from whom we can not only seek feedback but also engage as part of our service redesigns.

- 5.2.10. We are in the process of reviewing all our existing ASB cases to benchmark and clarify the present quality and status of working. This is being fed back into the Housing Transformation Programme to inform the future shape of the service.
- 5.2.11. The Maintenance and Repairs Team are currently working with Procurement for Housing (PfH) to procure a single materials supplier and so reduce the spend on materials. This is expected to be in place by the end of the financial year. This financial year we are also meeting with all of our contractors to review the amount of work we contract out and how much we spend with each of them. This will inform our contracting arrangements going forward.
- 5.2.12. We continue to work to improve our timescales for turning around void properties so they are ready to be re-let as quickly as possible. We have established weekly operational and weekly management meetings to manage the process from beginning to end. A key issue is that, with our aging stock, many of the void properties require a significant amount of work to make them ready. For example, re-wiring, new kitchens, bathrooms, windows and even roofs. This is driving up the total turnaround time and the costs of the voids. This is being addressed in the short term by dedicating three new multi trade operatives to work purely on voids, In the longer term, the Council's improved asset management and prioritisation of capital works, as set out below, should take some of the pressure off the voids process.
- 5.2.13. Campbell Tickell and Norse Property Services continue to work with us on creating a long term investment plan for our stock. This includes reviewing all capital works plans to ensure proper prioritisation of compliance issues. As part of the Housing restructure associated with the Transformation Programme, an Asset Manager is being appointed to oversee all asset management of Adur Homes stock.
- 5.2.14. Part of this investment plan will be to look at decarbonisation of the Adur Homes properties. While the SMART Hubs programme, initially set out on the Housing Strategy, has been assessed as unviable bids were made to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme for the installation of new, efficient, renewable heating

systems at a number of sheltered housing schemes. As a result, 41 new heating systems will be installed at Shadwells Court, solar PV will be installed at Shadwells Court and Marsh House and it is hoped that Tollbridge House will also receive new heating systems.

- 5.2.15. Adur Homes is 100% compliant in terms of Fire Risk Assessments of its stock. Fire Risk assessments are booked in advance and planned over a 3 year cycle. All completed FRA reviews are stored on the Councils' Health and Safety System and necessary actions recorded and prioritised appropriately.

***Co-creating communities and spaces that support our communities to thrive:***

- 5.2.16. We undertook, in the Housing Strategy, to support communities to thrive by designing the built environment of places so that it encourages connections, engagement and supportive behaviour.
- 5.2.17. Adur Homes estates are currently being reviewed as part of the work to improve asset management described above. This will include identifying spaces which could be turned over for community use. However, works have had to be prioritised and the first area of review is compliance of the stock with health and safety requirements. For example, identified fire safety measures and prioritisation of properties which may be nearing the end of their life and so require major refurbishment or demolition and rebuilding. Tenants are being fully involved in these decisions through proper consultation processes.

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

***Our Development Strategy and Programme***

- 5.3.1. We said we would increase access to housing for people of all ages by working in partnership with developers to ensure housing schemes are sustainable by design, provide for community interaction and include a significant number of homes that are affordable. We also committed to continue carrying out our own developments, by both working with our existing assets and purchasing land to develop affordable homes for sale and rent.
- 5.3.2. In the last six months, Adur & Worthing Councils have completed 15 new homes at Cecil Norris House in Adur) and 19 in Rowlands Road, Worthing. Phase 2 of the Downview development in Worthing, which will provide 8 more homes, is due for completion this month. Start on site has also taken place for 6 further flats in

Adur District.

- 5.3.3. Partnership working is still high on the agenda with officers undertaking discussions with a number of organisations to ascertain strategic fit for working in partnership and delivering even more homes over the life of the Strategy..

***Extending access to the Private Rented Sector:***

- 5.3.4. We said we would continue to expand the “Opening Doors” scheme to improve access to private rented accommodation for people in receipt of benefits.
- 5.3.5. We have completed a total of 67 lets so far this year through the Opening Doors Scheme, with a further 24 in the pipeline that we expect to sign up by the end of the year. We have also 'floated off' 16 tenancies, which means that, because they have been successful for two years, the council is no longer liable for the rent guarantees on those properties.
- 5.3.6. We have also just completed a contract with a larger property developer, “Crowding Bricks” to secure 21 one-bed properties in Worthing that will be let through the Opening Doors service. Individual landlords are also still showing interest in the scheme, despite the fact that rents are continuing to rise and LHA rates remain frozen.
- 5.3.7. We are also now working with our HMO emergency accommodation landlords to turn emergency accommodation placements into permanent offers of accommodation, where appropriate, through the Opening Doors scheme. We have so far completed successfully on two of these with a further two in the pipeline. With rising numbers of single person placements and lack of available move on accommodation, this is proving to be a very useful method in securing long term accommodation for this cohort.

## **6. Engagement and Communication**

- 6.1. 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.

- 6.2. 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.

## **7. Financial Implications**

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

## **8. Legal Implications**

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

### **Background Papers**

Housing Strategy 2020-2023 'Enabling communities to thrive in their own home'

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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”.
- The Strategy will be monitored with regular reports to members on progress.