



## **Delivering our Housing Strategy - Review of Progress September 2019**

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

#### **1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report updates members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on what has been achieved to date in delivering on the commitments in “Housing Matters”, the Adur and Worthing Councils’ Housing Strategy 2017-2020.

#### **2.0 Background**

2.1 “Housing Matters”, the Adur and Worthing Councils’ Housing Strategy 2017-2020, outlined a vision for the communities of Adur District and Worthing Borough where everyone can have a place they can call home. The Strategy reflected the Councils’ understanding that having a safe and secure home, not just a place to sleep, is one of the most important factors in enabling our communities to be ambitious, prosperous and resilient.

2.2 The Strategy is arranged into three broad sections and this report updates on each in turn:

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

#### **3.0 Legal**

3.1 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 did not remove the ability of local authorities to produce a strategy if they wish to do so.

3.2 Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 continues to place a duty on every local housing authority to consider housing conditions in their District or Borough and the needs of the District or Borough with respect to the provision of further housing

accommodation. Further, part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) places an obligation on local authorities to promote the prevention of homelessness.

- 3.3 The Adur and Worthing Councils' Housing Strategy enables the Councils to discharge their obligations under section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 and work towards the prevention of homelessness. The changing landscape in relation to housing regulation, including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018, places an ongoing legal burden on local authorities to consider carefully their housing strategies which should link with both tenancy and homelessness strategies.

#### **4.0 Preventing Homelessness**

- 4.1 Staff across the Housing department, continue to build on the success of the Preventing Homelessness Project outlined in our last report. The Housing Needs service has mainstreamed the co-location of staff at both the Jobcentre, and with WSCC Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) services. Active engagement is also continuing with Worthing Homes and Adur Homes. All of this work supports the agenda to identify those at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity and engage in truly preventative work.
- 4.2 We also continue to build upon the success of the Councils' social prescribing project, Going Local, using the 'Wellbeing and Housing Advice Team' (WHAT) that is commissioned by the Councils and delivered by the Citizen's Advice service, and through developing new relationships with GPs, who are often the first point of contact for members of our community who are at risk of homelessness. A fifth of all referrals, by GPs to Going Local, are housing related. Since January 2018, over 200 people have been referred to WHAT and over 50% of those referred have been supported in maintaining their current housing, preventing them from becoming homeless.
- 4.3 The Housing Needs service has delivered and will continue to deliver a series of training sessions to GPs to encourage them to identify the triggers of homelessness as early as possible, and is working closely with Adur and Worthing Local Community Networks. This has resulted in the development of a set of 'flags' being developed for GPs systems to alert them to the triggers that could lead to problems with housing and homelessness in their patients, and enable them to refer to suitable resources early.

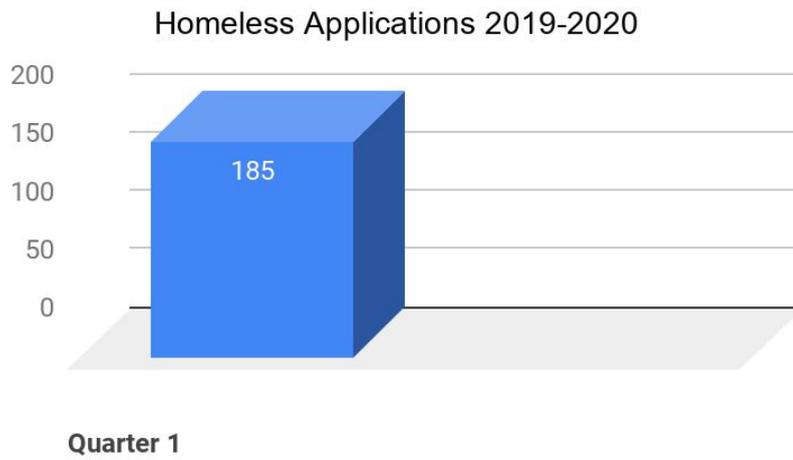
#### Homelessness duties

4.4 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3 April 2018. A new staffing structure was implemented for the Housing Needs Service to meet the requirements of this legislation, with teams dedicated to dealing with single people and families.

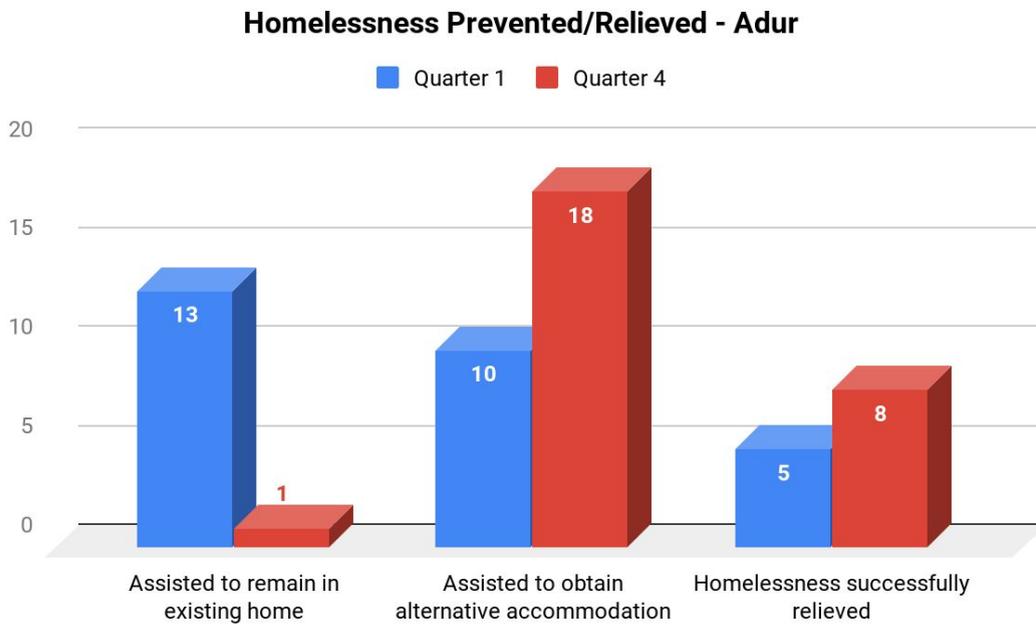
4.5 In the first 12 months of the legislation coming into force (03/04/18 - 31/03/19), **592** households made a homeless application, **392** of which were prevented or relieved. In the first 6 months of this year (January to June), the service dealt with **400** housing advice cases, **351** households made a homeless application and **174** households have had their homelessness prevented or relieved in line with the new Homelessness Reduction Act. Case Studies attached in Appendix 1.



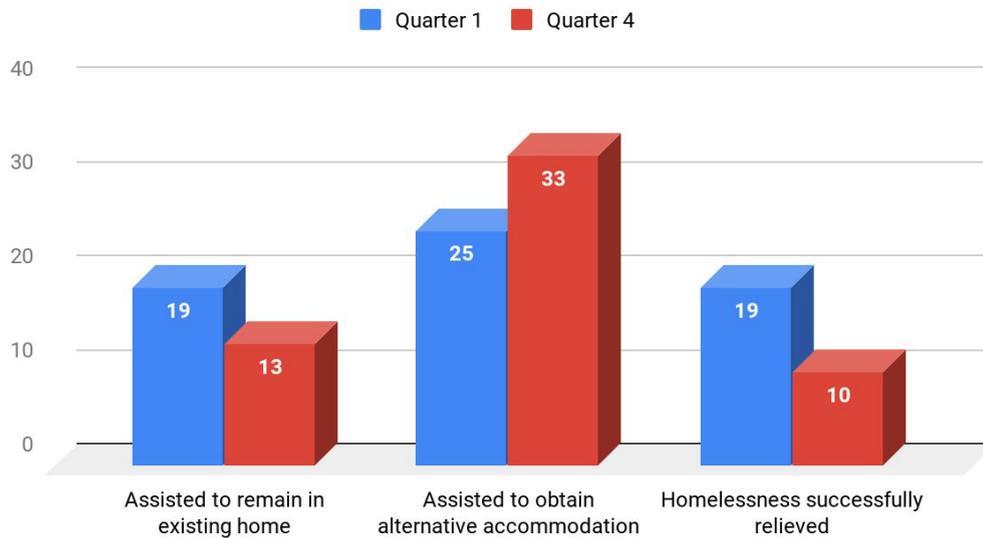
In Quarter 1 2019 there has been a 78% increase in homeless applications compared to Quarter 1 2018, some of this will be attributable to improved recording in the new system.



4.6 In the last 2 reporting quarters, we have successfully prevented or relieved 174 households from becoming homeless .



### Homelessness Prevented/Relieved - Worthing



Of these, 46 were assisted to remain at home (14 - Adur and 32 - Worthing), therefore preventing the need to make a homelessness application. 86 were assisted to find alternative accommodation (28 - Adur and 58 - Worthing) and 42 were relieved of homelessness through other means (13 - Adur and 29 - Worthing).

### Eliminating Rough Sleeping

- 4.6 Over the last 18 months, rough sleeper numbers have halved in Adur and Worthing, despite the pressures of rising homelessness locally and nationally. Between September 2018 and June 2019 more than 100 individuals have been supported by the Rough Sleepers Team. This includes 27 individuals, who would previously have been excluded from services, who have been supported with the use of the MHCLG Cold Weather Fund during winter months.

	Worthing Estimate	Worthing Count	Adur Estimate	Adur Count
Jul 2019		17		2
May 2019	17	14	2	2
Mar 2019		15		0
May 2019		14		2
Nov 2018	23	11	1	0
Nov 2017	34	19	2	0
Nov 2016	26	11	2	0

4.7 The work we have been doing with our rough sleepers is held up as best practice and in 2019-20 WBC was awarded an additional £340, 000 from the MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative which continues to fund:

- A Rough Sleeper Coordinator,
- Two Outreach Workers, an
- Employment and Skills Worker, provide a
- Personalised Budgets
- A number of accommodation units in Temporary Accommodation;
  - including one as an Intervention and Assessment Bed and
  - two as longer term beds for excluded rough sleepers, and
- Help to stabilise and move on, into supported accommodation options.

We have also commissioned with Turning Tides:

- Two SWEP beds for serially excluded, high risk rough sleepers,
- Three Complex Needs Workers,
- One Mental Health Worker,
- One Advice and Assessment Worker,
- One Community Inclusion Worker and
- Personalisation Budget to support the work.

A small underspend from the award made in 2018-19 has been allocated to the provision of an additional night shelter this winter that will be available to Worthing and Adur rough sleepers.

4.8 A further £335,00 has been awarded by MHCLG to WSCC and all West Sussex District and Boroughs as part of the 'Rapid Rehousing Pathway'. Collectively, we are in the final stages of mobilisation which will see four Navigators and five Support Workers appointed to work with rough sleepers and those in temporary accommodation, at high risk risk of rough sleeping.

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

#### Disabled Facilities Grants

4.9 Our Private Sector Housing (PSH) team oversees and processes the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) scheme across Adur and Worthing. They accept referrals and distributing funds passported to us via West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The implementation of the county-wide discretionary disabled facility grant policy resulted in a combined commitment and spend of £2.24 million during 2018/19. This sustained funding on the DFG process has maintained activity in this area with committed spends in Adur and Worthing amounting to £438,294 and £1.01 million respectively of the 2019/20 BCF allocation of £1.92 million since 1 April 2019.

Despite the increased numbers of people being helped, we are continuing to improve response times

- 4.10 We continue to work closely with all Districts and Boroughs across West Sussex to streamline these processes and improve access to statutory and discretionary funds.

#### Regulatory activity

- 4.11 The legal definition of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that require a mandatory licence changed on 1 October 2018. There are now 115 licensed HMOs on the public register (11 & 104 in Adur & Worthing respectively) with a further 3 Adur and 37 Worthing properties awaiting inspection and approval. We continue to receive applications and have a priority list of premises that are likely to need licensing who have not yet applied..
- 4.12 In addition to the HMO licensing activity, during 2018/19, the team has responded to over 370 complaints about housing conditions, completed 53 formal inspections and served 62 enforcement notices. Since April 2019, the team has commenced 2 prosecutions against landlords and issued civil penalty notices to a value of over £20,000, in addition to recovering costs for works carried out in default.

#### Policy reviews and updates

- 4.13 We are in the process of reviewing both Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils' Choice Based Lettings Policies. The review will assist the Councils' to make the best possible use of the limited social housing available.
- 4.14 Discussions have also started on creating a new Housing Strategy for April 2020. The new strategy will build on the learning and achievements of the current strategy.

### **5.0 Developing the Supply of New Homes**

#### Housing Revenue Account - Development Programme

- 5.1 Following the lifting of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap, the Council has now taken over the development of Albion Street, which will see the delivery of 50 affordable homes in contrast with the 15 affordable homes previous planned. Planning permission has been granted and a tender for construction is being prepared.

- 5.2 The development of Cecil Norris House, is well underway. Pilbeam construction started on site in July 2019 and will commence external demolition in the coming weeks. This project will deliver 15 units of social housing.
- 5.3 Earlier this year the Adur Homes also completed the conversion of a former staff office at 101 North Rd Lancing into 2 one bedroom flats which have already been advertised via the Choice Based Lettings system to those on the Adur Housing Register.
- 5.4 Officers are also working up plans for the development of infill and other garage sites owned by the HRA, with the potential to deliver up to 60 new homes.
- 5.5 In August 2019, the Councils appointed a new Senior Development Officer who will take the lead on creating the Adur Homes Development Strategy going forward as well as building a team to take forward the in-house affordable homes development ambitions for both Councils.

#### General Fund Developments

- 5.6 Worthing Borough Council is collaborating with BoKlok to deliver 162 flats, with 30 per cent social and affordable housing at the Fulbeck site in Worthing.
- 5.7 Adur District Council has agreed to move forward the sale of the former Adur Civic Centre to Hyde Housing, a registered provider, with the ambition of providing 171 new affordable homes. 40% of which will be at social rents, the rest affordable shared ownership properties.

#### Emergency and Temporary Accommodation

- 5.8 In October 2017, both Adur and Worthing Councils adopted the *Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy* as required by the landmark judgement, R (N) v Westminster City Council [2015]. A link to the policy is provided below.

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/media.148535.en.pdf>

This policy sets out the Councils' approach to procuring and securing temporary accommodation within or as close to the District/Borough as possible. Paragraph 3.1 of the Policy sets out the Council's strategy as follows

*The Council will employ a variety of approaches to maintain the supply of good quality TA such as:*

- *Obtaining self-contained properties in its temporary accommodation stock through short and medium term block booking arrangements with private landlords.*
- *Increase the number of leased properties in its stock by developing a private rented leasing scheme*
- *Exploring options for direct purchase of properties on the open market that will be suitable for use as temporary accommodation subject to meeting value for money criteria.*
- *Exploring options for working with lettings agencies*
- *Seeking to increase the number of private sector landlords willing to let directly to homeless households to encourage move on from temporary accommodation*

Progress has been made on **all** of these objectives to increase the range of suitable, affordable emergency and temporary accommodation, this includes:

- increasing the number of leased and long term block booked units to 50 with another 37 units in the pipeline within the next 12 months
- Purchasing properties for development as EA.
- Developing properties for EA
- Developing the Opening Doors social lettings scheme (see below).

5.9 In addition to the purchase of 'the Downview', WBC has purchased another property on Rowlands Road. Work has commenced on the Downview and the first 9 properties will be available for occupation in early 2020. The designs and plans for the Rowlands Road property will be re- considered by the WBC planning committee in September 2019. Six of the flats to be developed at Albion Street in Adur (through the conversion of two dwellings) will be allocated for EA.

5.10 Whilst securing affordable and suitable emergency and temporary accommodation is important, this must be viewed alongside the work to reduce the need for EA by focussing on the wide ranging prevention agenda highlighted above.

#### Private Sector Rented Supply

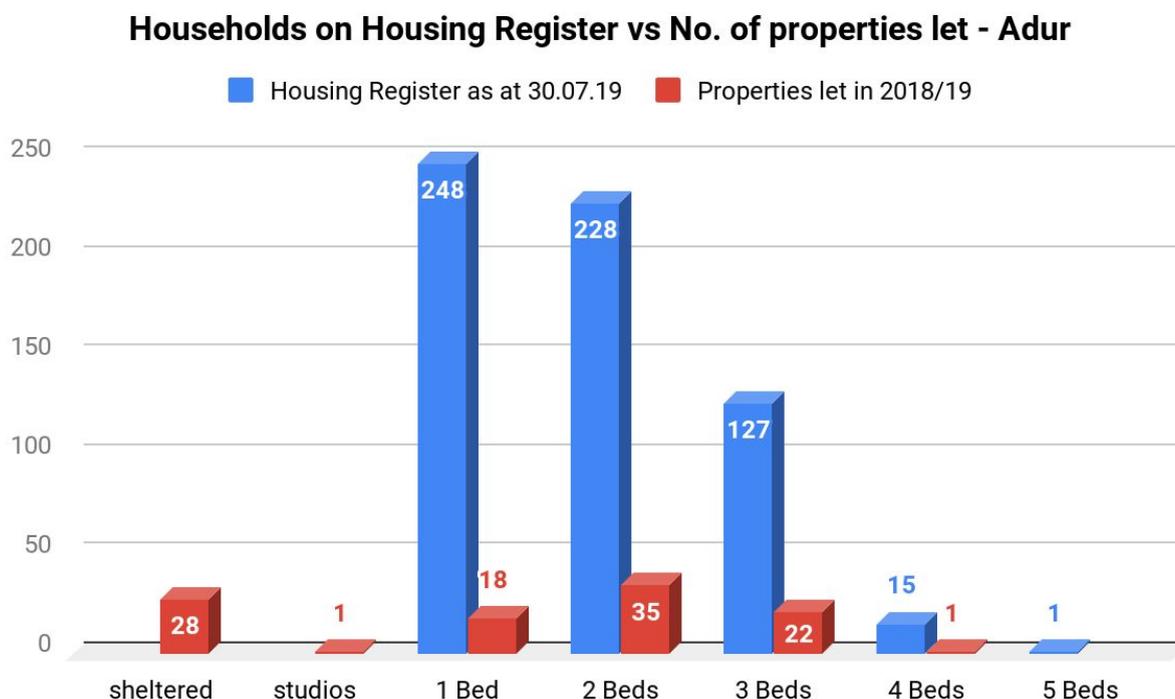
5.11 The Housing Needs service, following consultation and feedback from private landlords and our customers, and following a successful trial, launched the private sector lettings service, **Opening Doors**, in June 2019. The key to this service is to enable and support the many good private sector landlords we work with, to let their properties to households in housing need, to reduce the need to place people in unsuitable emergency accommodation, with all the disbenefits this brings. The service works to agree rental levels that are affordable, (to the family) and provides both tenancy and landlord support from the Housing Needs Service. Further publicity is planned for September through the local press, social media and a dedicated webpage. Opening Doors is currently supporting a number of landlords

and tenants, in 17 properties.

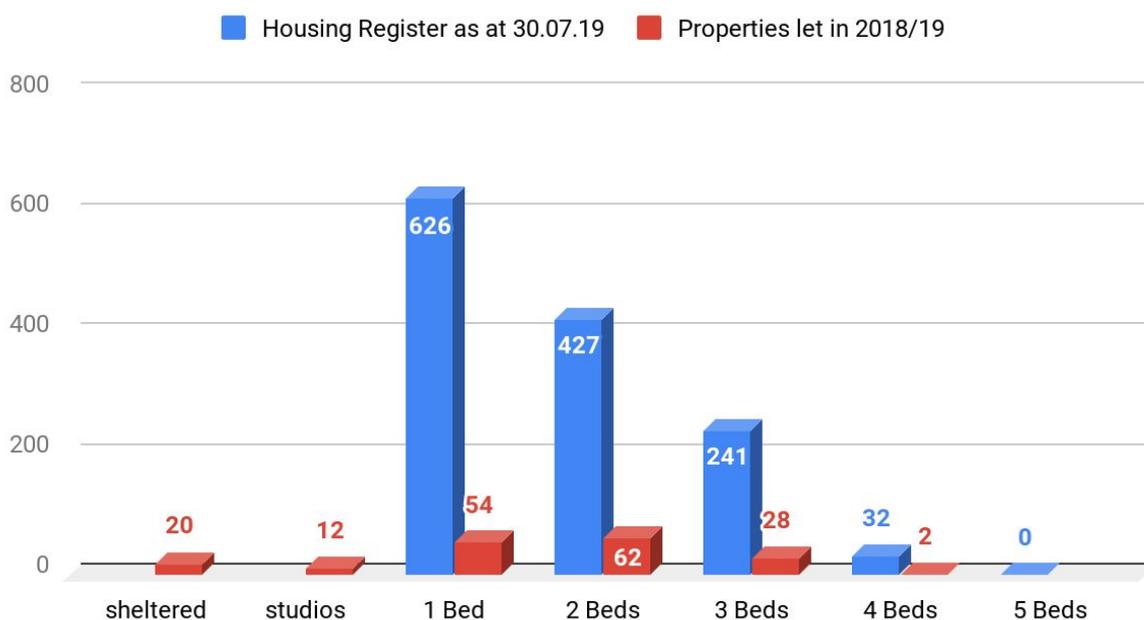
## 6.0 Housing Demand

6.1 In the final months of 2018/19, officers undertook a full review of the Adur and Worthing Housing Registers. Following this, there has been a decrease in the number of households on Adur District Council's housing register from 900 to just over 600. Whilst the number of households on Worthing Council's housing register initially reduced to 1100, there has been a steady increase, from the beginning of this year to just over 1300.

6.2 Over 75% of households on each register have a 1-bed or 2-bed need. One household in Adur has a 5 bed need.



## Households on Housing Register vs No. of properties let - Worthing



6.3 During financial year 2018 - 2019, in Adur 105 properties were advertised for let on the housing register, while 178 properties were advertised for let on the Worthing housing register.

6.4 A comparison of housing need vs property supply shows that demand for social housing continues to significantly exceed supply. Hence the work being done to support a whole range of options for our communities is essential, such as enabling people to obtain and retain private sector tenancies; supporting the development of new properties for rent by Registered Providers and developers through the use of our land and capital funds; and critically, convening realistic discussions about availability and options for people.

### 7.0 Improving and Enhancing Adur Council's Role as a Landlord

7.1 Adur Council has a specific role as landlord, delivering housing management and tenancy services, tenant and leaseholder engagement, repairs and maintenance services as well as asset management and capital projects.

7.2 An improvement plan for the service has been developed following a number of Lean Reviews in 2018/19. The plan includes the following priorities:

- Reducing the length of time properties are void
- Improving the efficiency of the repairs service
- Reducing rent arrears

- 7.3 The plan is monitored regularly by operational and strategic leads.
- 7.4 *Asset Management and Capital Programme*: Delivery of the Capital Improvement Programme continues to be shaped by guidance issued to local authorities by the Regulator of Social Housing in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire and better knowledge of our stock.
- 7.5 The appointment of a Fire Safety Officer has allowed us to focus on fire safety remedial works. Several fire remedial works are now being implemented across our stock. This includes our estate wide front entrance fire door replacement programme which has already seen the replacement of 181 'critical' doors in tenanted properties. Engagement with leaseholders to identify and support them to bring their doors into compliance with the current legislation, has also commenced.
- 7.6 The upgrade of the Community Alarm Systems in our sheltered housing schemes is ongoing.
- 7.7 The external capital works programme is being revised in light of the need to re-profile fire safety works and also critical health and safety works. Consequently, the works to Southwick Square has been brought forward and have already started. The works will be completed this year. Planning for external works to Rock Close, Lock Court, Bushby Close and Beachcroft Place are now well advanced with site presence expected in spring 2020.
- 7.8 Adur Homes has installed new kitchens and bathrooms in 450 properties since the kitchen and bathroom programme began in 2016. In 2018/19, 59 new kitchens and 58 new bathrooms were installed.
- 7.9 We are in early discussions to be part of the proposed 3 year Smart Hub programme. The Smart Hub programme is part of the government's investment to support business and researchers to create affordable, low carbon and resilient ways to provide energy. The programme is being delivered by Innovate UK through West Sussex county council. It is expected that the programme will create sustainable energy solutions and provide long term savings to residents and the councils.
- 7.10 We are also in discussion with colleagues to see what the opportunities may be for Adur Homes properties, as part of the Gigabit project being implemented by CityFibre.

## **8.0 Challenges and Opportunities - Looking forward**

## Supported Housing

- 8.1 The Council has been actively involved in discussions with West Sussex County Council and other Districts and Boroughs across West Sussex, to mitigate the impact of County Council's decision to reduce its current £6.3m budget for housing related support in mid-2019/20 to an annual sum of £2.3m.
- 8.2 Significant progress has been made, working collectively with WSCC and all of the Districts and Boroughs, to understand the needs of those in this system, including; providers, commissioners and users of services, and to create a coherent set of strategic and design principles for joint commissioning going forward.
- 8.3 Key outcomes to date are agreement to sustain most of the funding for some key services which assist single people to prevent homelessness, and support those fleeing domestic abuse. Tenders for those contracts have been issued this summer. Further work is underway to agree the joint commissioning of other services. Whilst a number of services will cease to be funded, in some cases the provider can continue to deliver services using alternative sources of funding. In a few cases, the services will cease to exist or will be provided in a different way, for example, the co-location of prevention workers with housing teams has already been overtaken by the work undertaken to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act.

## Need

- 8.4 The number of those presenting homeless continues to increase, driven mainly by evictions by friends/relatives and evictions from the private rented sector.
- 8.5 Despite increased move on from temporary accommodation, the demand from temporary accommodation remains high. The table below provides the numbers we have had in emergency accommodation, each month, this year. In recent weeks we have seen a reduction in numbers which has been achieved by; increasing success in prevention, a focus on move on, the availability of the Opening Doors model and reducing our decision making times. We will wait to see if this is sustained throughout Q2. With a reduction in average costs per night of temporary accommodation, and relatively consistent demand in Adur, the budget pressures for Adur are less than in Worthing, where significant demand continues to be apparent.

Emergency Accommodation	Jan 19	Feb 19	Mar 19	April 19	May 19	June 19	July 19	Aug* 19
<b>Adur</b>	44	47	44	40	46	41	40	40
<b>Worthing</b>	104	105	106	119	122	126	117	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>152</b>

\* Of this August total, 7 positive move on placements have been completed in the first half of September

### Adur Homes Asset Management

8.6 A review of the Capital Improvement programme has taken place following better knowledge of our stock and recent guidance issued by the Regulator for Social Housing in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire. Greater priority therefore will have to be given to identified fire safety and health and safety works.

## **9.0 Engagement and Communication**

### Adur Homes

9.1 Adur Homes has commissioned external support to help steer the co-design and development of the new Adur Homes Resident Engagement Strategy. The aim is to coordinate a task and finish group of residents and staff to review the Tenant Participation Strategy 2008 and the Working Together Tenants' Compact 2009 and create a new strategy fit for the future.

9.2 The Housing Voice newsletter has been relaunched - initially in hard copy format with a proposed move towards an electronic version in due course. Adur Homes are also planning to set up targeted resident's focus groups to help improve key areas of service delivery (e.g. estates inspection, reporting repairs and maintenance).

9.3 Adur Homes and the Wellbeing team have introduced a 'Get Active' programme into our sheltered housing schemes. The programme involves gentle chair based exercises to improve mindfulness and wellbeing. Adur Homes and Impulse Leisure has also introduced a falls prevention programme into our sheltered housing schemes.

### General

- 9.4 There is continuing engagement with a broad spectrum of old and new partners in the Housing and wider support system. This includes hosting and attending forums such as the
- Homelessness Forum,
  - Landlords Forum, and the
  - Welfare Reform Forum.
- 9.5 The Rough Sleeper Team membership continues to grow and new members include Adult Social Care and Worthing Hospital A&E.
- 9.6 A recent MHCLG fund calling for a Public Health led bid, brought together a partnership of Housing, Third Sector Homelessness and Support providers, Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust, Sussex Partnership Trust, West Sussex Hospital Trust and West Sussex County Council. Irrespective of the outcome of the bid (which we have learned has moved successfully to phase 2 of the process) the group have committed to continued joint working to prevent homelessness and improve outcomes for rough sleepers.
- 9.7 We will continue to do all we can to work in partnership to address the issues of homelessness and in 2019 will further develop relationships with a range of housing providers to develop innovative ways to increase the supply of affordable homes.
- 9.8 In 2019, the team have provided briefing sessions for members in Adur on the work we are doing to improve our engagement with and services to residents, and also more broadly to members on the work we are undertaking to prevent and support those at risk of homelessness.

## **10.0 Financial implications**

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

## **11.0 Recommendation**

- 11.1 That members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report

## **Local Government Act 1972**

**Background Papers:**

- 'Housing Matters' Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy
- Joint Overview and Scrutiny Update - January 2019
- Platforms for our Places

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## **Schedule of Other Matters**

### **1.0 Council Priority**

1.1 Platforms for our Places - Platform 2: Our Social Economies

### **2.0 Specific Action Plans**

2.1 "Housing Matters", the Adur and Worthing Councils' Housing Strategy 2017-2020, makes commitments in each of the following three areas:

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

### **3.0 Sustainability Issues**

3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

### **4.0 Equality Issues**

4.1 The Housing Strategy helps the Council to comply with the Human Rights Act 1998, Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination. This means that everyone must have equal access to services, regardless of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political views or any other personal characteristic. Article 14 is a qualified right and a difference in treatment can be justified if there is a good reason (for example someone being given priority for housing because they have a greater housing need).

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

5.1 Homeless people are far more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators, and rough sleepers are 17 times more likely to be victims of violence compared to the general public. The Housing Strategy, which includes preventing and alleviating homelessness, therefore, contributes to a reduction in crime and protects vulnerable individuals.

### **6.0 Human Rights Issues**

6.1 The Housing Strategy helps the Council to comply with the Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8. This does not give anyone a right to a home but it contains a right to respect for a home that a person already has so will apply to tenants of properties in Adur and Worthing.

### **7.0 Reputation**

7.1 The issues covered in this report are all high profile and directly affect the lives of residents in Adur and Worthing. Failure to deal successfully with homelessness, temporary and emergency accommodation and the management of Adure District Council's housing stock could affect the reputation of the Councils.

## **8.0 Consultations**

8.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

## **9.0 Risk Assessment**

9.1 The Housing Strategy contains commitments that help to mitigate against the following corporate risks:

- As Universal Credit and other welfare reforms are rolled out, delays in payments and the fact that Housing costs are often not being met by the level of out of work benefits is likely to lead to increased homelessness presentations and/or reduced rental income for Adur Homes. Recent agreements to cut budgets from WSCC lines - i.e the Local Assistance Network funding; Supported Housing and IPEH (Universal services) may also impact in these areas.
- Limited housing supply in all areas and all tenures is a key risk for the Councils in terms of both discharging its statutory duty to prevent homelessness and support those at risk, as well as placing critical budgetary pressures on the Councils. Managing this demand is challenging and places additional capacity pressures on the operational teams

## **10.0 Health & Safety Issues**

10.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

## **11.0 Procurement Strategy**

11.1 Matter considered and no issues identified

## **12.0 Partnership Working**

12.1 Partnership working with other public sector organisations, Registered Landlords, private sector landlords and the voluntary sector is key to preventing homelessness and increasing the supply of suitable accommodation.