



Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected: All Worthing

## Worthing Housing Strategy Roadmap

### Report by the Director for Communities

#### Officer Contact Details

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### Executive Summary

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to request the extension of three housing strategies, including the:
  - [Housing Strategy: Enabling communities to thrive in their own home” 2020-2023](#);
  - [Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy](#), and
  - [Community Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022](#)
- 1.2. Access to quality, affordable and sustainable homes is a fundamental priority for this Council. This paper outlines a roadmap to renew these important strategies during 2023/24, to enable the development of a strategic approach which is shaped by the vision of Worthing to be the fairest and greenest coastal town and informed by

the needs of local communities and which places prevention and early intervention at its heart.

- 1.3. This report also updates some key interventions to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Worthing and sets out the key commitments around finding, enabling and supporting more sustainable accommodation for our residents to provide help when people need it most.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The Worthing Strategic Committee is asked to agree to extend the following strategies/policies until the end of March 2024:
  - 2.1.1. [Housing Strategy: Enabling communities to thrive in their own home” 2020-2023 to March 2024;](#)
  - 2.1.2. [Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy;](#) and
  - 2.1.3. [Community Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022](#)
- 2.2. Members are asked to note the progress and plans underway to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping [as set out below]
- 2.3. Members are asked to note and agree to the roadmap for the development of the new strategies/policies during 2023/24, which will be reported back to this Cabinet in January 2024.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. Our Council believes that all of our citizens should have access to a safe, secure and sustainable home and that people need to be at the heart of a strategic approach. Our ambition is to develop a housing strategy that is better informed by the needs of our communities and which has the principle of participation deeply embedded, involving residents, communities and partners in its development and delivery.
- 3.2. Our Members understand the profound challenges around the demand for housing, with growing numbers of our citizens requiring access to high quality, affordable and sustainable housing. There are particular

challenges for Worthing, the first of which is in relation to the significant issues around affordability for many of our citizens. This has led to many being unable to afford their housing.

- 3.3. Our second and connected challenge is the lack of housing supply which is very much needed by our communities. There is a chronic shortage of affordable and social housing to meet our housing demand, with long waits for people in need and increasing numbers of people unable to source their own housing and who are in need of assistance from the council.
- 3.4. Along with this, a shortage of temporary and emergency accommodation has severely impacted the Council's budgetary position. More importantly this is having a profound impact on the lives of those families who we are trying to find temporary placements for and for those that we have to place out of the area, often away from their work, schools and support networks.
- 3.5. Our third challenge is the lack of adequate supported housing to meet the needs of those with multiple and complex needs, resulting in single people, with no housing option, either rough sleeping or facing multiple placements in temporary accommodation.
- 3.6. Having access to good quality, affordable and sustainable housing is a fundamental requirement for all of our citizens. Housing is the cornerstone to our work and is deeply connected to our broader work around health and wellbeing (Healthy AW - our Health and Wellbeing Strategy) and the Cost of Living work our Council has been prioritising over this last year.
- 3.7. As an adaptive Council, we need to use our resources and partnering in the most creative and effective ways to meet these challenges, which embed the principles of collaboration and co-production.
- 3.8. The period of the current Housing Strategy has witnessed much change: the Covid-19 pandemic and "Everyone In" (and the heroic efforts of the teams and community partners to support our homeless people during this period), the lasting impact on people's wellbeing, the enduring effects of the cost of living, all of which have and continue to exacerbate already chronic challenges.
- 3.9. The significant challenges in Worthing mean that we are an area of focus for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH). Our most recent meeting with our DLUCH representative

has highlighted a number of challenges and areas of focus. Our Council and its work has been compared to a number of other similar authorities, which takes account of population size and make up, percentages of: male/female; working age; overcrowding, ethnic minority population, indices of multiple deprivation, social housing; numbers of court orders and house prices.

- 3.10. The key issues identified are summarised as:
- Friends and family evictions are the biggest cause of homelessness for cases accepted into a Relief Duty. This is 30% compared to a national average of 24%;
  - End of Assured Shorthold tenancies is the biggest cause of homelessness for those entering Prevention Duty;
  - High rates of eviction from supported accommodation providers;
  - Good rates in relation to our Duty to Refer (which is the mechanism by which statutory bodies are required to refer people threatened with homelessness), which demonstrate good partnership working with statutory bodies, including for example Probation;
  - Higher levels of temporary accommodation, which is out of the area - 45% compared with 12% nationally;
  - Higher percentage of people being accommodated through the private sector (at 53.2%) compared to the national rate (33.5%).
  - Lower rate of people being accommodated via social housing (40.4%) compared to nationally (51.5%);
  - The need to re-establish an approach to co-location with other services, which has diminished since the pandemic. This needs to focus on making homelessness a shared priority and everyone's business;
  - Improve the information for the public on our website to make homelessness advice clearer for our citizens.
- 3.11. We have finite resources to do this work. It is therefore essential that we develop greater resilience in our teams, maximising external resources to support the work that we do. Alongside this we need to create a more preventative and early help approach using Proactive (reported to Members previously) and technology (for example through the use of Tell Jo), to maximise our ability to reach more people and enable them to self help, using our people-based resources efficiency.
- 3.12. We recognise the need for much stronger foundations in relation to data, insights and evidence so that the current and future needs of our citizens are better understood, predicted and planned for. We will continue to use LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) as well as

re-establishing training and colocation with our stakeholders to facilitate and grow how we work with our partners.

3.13. Our developing strategic approach to housing is deeply connected with this Council's core ambitions:

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- **Fair** - we want to ensure that everyone has access to safe, secure and sustainable housing. We recognise the deep inequalities that exist and challenges some of our residents face with the lowest levels of life expectancy experienced by those that are sleeping rough. Our Wellbeing Strategy, Cost of Living Road Map and Proactive work is utterly focused on how we focus our collective attention on prevention, early help and building greater resilience.
- **Green** - we want to ensure our housing plans actively address climate and ecological emergencies. We therefore want to take the opportunity to build on a wide range of climate action initiatives across carbon, nature and circular economy agendas. We want housing provision to support better mental health and wellbeing and we want homes to be more energy efficient, cheaper to run and, where possible, generate energy. In the context of the cost of living crisis, our strategic approach to housing will maintain a strong focus on just transition, mindful that potential inequities can be reinforced given the current costs involved in transitions to low carbon technology.
- **Local** - As a Council for the [Community](#) our strategic approach to housing will reflect our emerging map of neighbourhoods and places that make up our town, reflecting the unique assets and different opportunities and challenges we have to work with, building clearer and stronger foundations for our temporary housing supply to ensure, where we can, that people remain connected and rooted in their local communities.

3.14. Finally, a foundation for this work is around our [economic principles and community wealth building](#), focusing on local approaches to housing supply and the need to make strong connections between housing and access to good work.

#### **4. Housing Strategy: Enabling People to thrive in their own homes 2020-2023**

4.1. The current Housing Strategy: Enabling People to Thrive in their Own Homes was widely consulted on, produced and agreed by the Joint Strategic Committee in March 2020, setting out four key ambitions:

- secure and appropriate housing for the people of Adur and Worthing;
- individual and community resilience, and economic growth;
- communities to live healthy, secure and purposeful lives;
- partnership with businesses, people, and statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

It also set out three key priorities for action, including:

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

4.2 A review of this strategy has been provided annually to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the latest report (19 January 2023), setting out key performance data and progress in relation to the strategy (with the exception of priority three around levels of affordable housing supply).

4.3 Further to this report, some other areas of progress to highlight are set out below:

#### **4.4 Night shelter:**

In response to increased numbers of rough sleepers, the council opened a winter night shelter in the town, as a temporary use of a building. This was vital because of increased homelessness pressures and the loss of night shelter provision that was formerly run by faith groups. This provision is closing at the end of February and will be opened only during March should the SWEPP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) be activated.

Below sets out a summary of this work:

- 40 individuals have accessed the provision;

- A number of complex support needs have been identified. A review of this client group is being completed at the close of the current provision to highlight pathways for those that have used the provision and to highlight gaps in supported accommodation provision;
- A significant number of individuals have been in a cycle of sleeping rough for many years and there are significant physical and mental health needs which need to be addressed in order to end their cycle of rough sleeping;
- This provision has affirmed the need for 'Safe to Stay' beds for those new to sleeping rough who need to be assessed and then moved on to provide supported and temporary accommodation (i.e. providing short term stay beds of approx 3 days). This will enable people to move within a supported housing pathway and have their support needs met rather than be evicted and trapped in a cycle of rough sleeping.
- The need for female and male only provision.

#### **4.5 Private sector housing**

The private rented sector continues to be a significant provider of homes in the area. Ensuring these properties are safe not only protects the residents, it reduces the demand on the housing need function. The majority of interventions by the Council are reactive, responding to complaints about housing conditions, sometimes in support of housing applications.

The Private Sector Housing team are actively investigating schemes whereby the emphasis can move from reactive to proactive and provide a firm base to drive the overall improvement in the housing stock in line with the Housing Strategy.

#### **4.6 Housing supply**

As set out above, this has been an extraordinary time, coupled with significant challenges and change for the team tackling demand and supply.

Following publication of the Housing Strategy, In March 2021 the Council published 'Pathways to Affordable Homes', outlining an ambition to deliver 450 new affordable homes in Worthing in the period

between 2021 and 2025. 50 of these would be self-delivered by the Council for the purposes of providing Emergency and Temporary Housing (EA/TA) for eligible households in need. In 2021, refurbishment of the Downview Public House was completed, providing 9 units of EA/TA; added to this, in 2022, the Council completed development of a new block of 8 units adjacent to the Downview, and the refurbishment of an old Freemasons lodge in Rowlands Road was completed providing 19 units.

The Council has recently sought permission for an 11-unit block in Victoria Road, Worthing, which, if consent is granted, is due for completion by Q3 2024. One other refurbishment project is in the feasibility stage and will be brought to members later in 2023, which will potentially provide 5 units, bringing the total either delivered or in design to 52.

But bringing forward affordable housing requires a multi-agency approach. In recognition of this, the council has facilitated a very successful Housing Conference on 23 February 2023 bringing together a wide variety of providers and landlords with the aim of promoting innovation and partnerships to develop all streams of housing - temporary, affordable, social, supported, move on as well as exploring opportunities to increase our Opening Doors portfolio. This was very well attended by a number of partners and developers and demonstrated huge enthusiasm to collaborate locally.

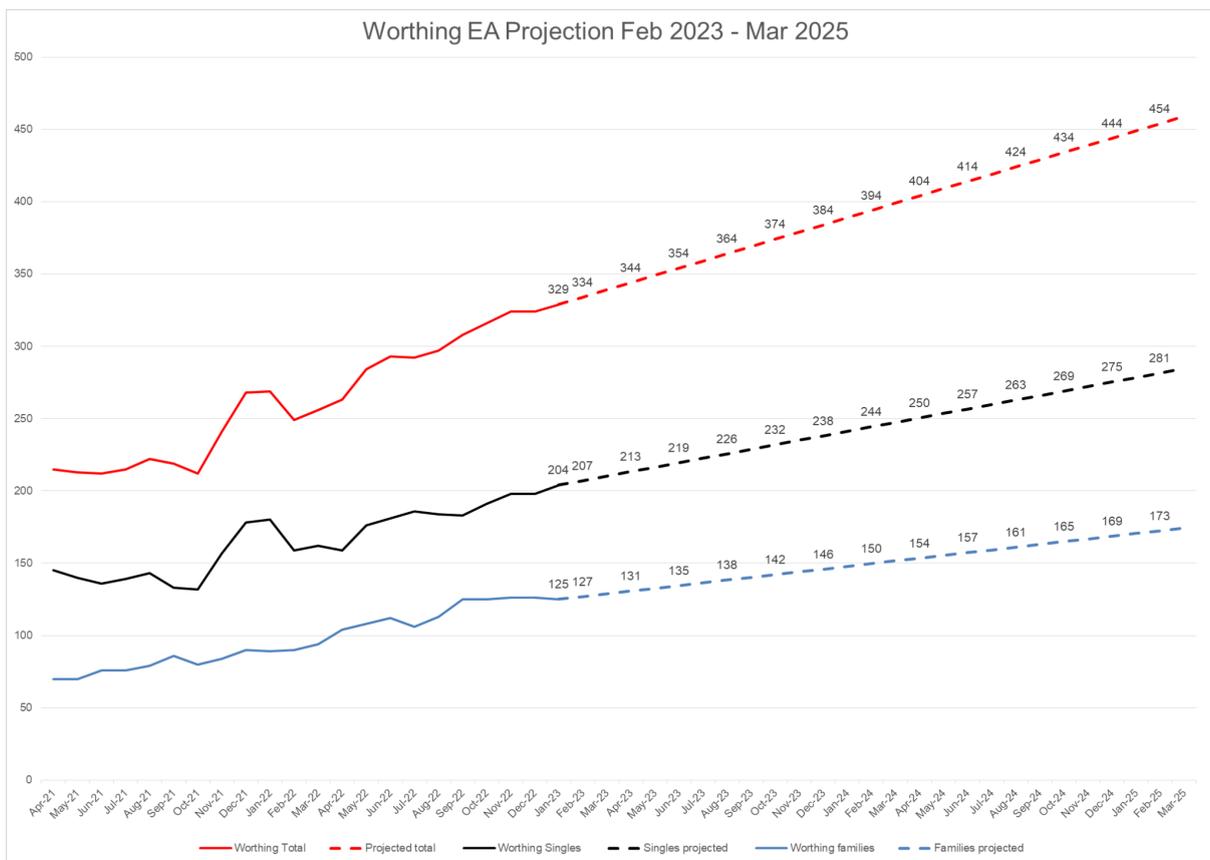
- 4.7 Members are asked to approve an extension of this strategy to the end of March 2024, to provide officers with the time needed to review this strategy and develop a new strategy for the town in line with this administration's ambitions.

## **5.0 Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Strategy 2017-2020**

- 5.1 This strategy sets out the approach to the placement of households in temporary accommodation and the acquisition of suitable accommodation for people who we accept as having an 'interim' and full housing duty.
- 5.2. This strategy was due to be reviewed in 2020 and now needs to be fully reviewed and updated during this year. Members are therefore asked to approve its extension to the end of March 2024 to ensure that we are compliant with the requirement for local authorities to have an up to date policy for procuring sufficient units of temporary

accommodation to meet projected demand, as determined by R (N) v Westminster City Council [2015].

5.3. The service has continued to procure accommodation for the period 2020-2023 in accordance with our existing policy, but our local context: increasing rents and high demand, together with higher than average home ownership makes this a challenging market to achieve low cost contracted accommodation. The new strategy needs to take account of the new context to enable the council to deliver on our new strategy with partners and stakeholders.



## 5. Community Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2022

6.1 This strategy was developed in collaboration with Adur and Worthing Homelessness Partnership, setting out a systematic approach to tackling homelessness through help and interventions to sustain and secure suitable accommodation.

6.2 The Partnership has since ceased to operate and work is now underway to reform a new Homelessness Prevention Partnership, which will include a number of statutory and voluntary sector partners involved in tackling homelessness, with a first meeting planned for

March 2023. This partnership will drive the development of a new homelessness prevention strategy for Adur and Worthing.

- 6.3 To inform this and our broader strategic work, a full [needs assessment](#) of housing needs and homelessness has been commissioned and will be complete in April which will provide important data and insights to inform the development of our approach to tackling demand and housing supply.
- 6.4 In addition to the housing needs assessment the council now has robust data from our homelessness system that will enable us to target prevention interventions, design solutions as well as understand the demographic and support needs of our citizens threatened with or experiencing homelessness.
- 6.5 It is recommended that this existing strategy is extended to enable the development of the new homelessness prevention strategy, again until the end of March 2024.

## 6. Our Roadmap

Officers are developing a broad roadmap to develop, produce and deliver these strategies during 2023/24, which will focus on some key elements:

- 7.1 **Needs assessment:** As described above, this needs assessment will provide the data required to inform the work around housing demand and supply to meet these needs, and needs of those homeless with a report to be provided by the end of April 2023.
- 7.2 **A&W Homelessness Prevention Partnership:** We will establish the new partnership to drive our homelessness and rough sleeping work forward, with the first meeting to be held in March 23 with partners and stakeholders, with partnering with local authority neighbours on workstreams to prevent and relieve homelessness to be explored.
- 7.3 **A&W Homelessness Prevention Strategy:** The Council will establish the new partnership to drive forward a collaborative approach to how we work together in line with council principles to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and develop a housing first approach to homelessness, with the first meeting to be held in March 2023.

7.4 **Review the Housing Strategy:** with our Members and partners to assess our progress and learning and develop the work required to create our next strategy for Worthing.

7.4 **Review our Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy:** we will review and renew our temporary accommodation policy, focusing much more on the use of evidence to inform this work and to develop innovative approaches to how we make the best use of our resources.

## **7. Engagement and Communication**

7.1. We will set out an approach to fully engage and involve our communities and partners in the development of this roadmap. This work will be guided and supported by the Council for the Community approach and the Corporate Plan's (Our Plan) principle of participation.

7.2. A communication and engagement plan will be developed to support this work and ensure our communities of place and identity, including those often excluded and most in need, are heard and responded to.

## **8. Financial Implications**

8.1. The Council has a range of budgets to support the delivery of the current housing strategies detailed above.

8.2. Any new investment needs arising from the development of the new strategies will need to be addressed in the development of the 2024/25 budgets.

## **9. Legal Implications**

9.1. Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

9.2. Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

9.3. s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation

## **Background Papers**

- [Our Plan](#)
- [Housing Strategy: Enabling communities to thrive in their own home” 2020-2023;](#)
- [Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy](#), and
- [Community Homelessness Strategy 2017-2022](#)
- [Becoming a council for the community: principles and approach](#)
- [Responding to the cost of living emergency in Worthing](#)
- [Adur & Worthing Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Economic principles and community wealth building](#)

## **Sustainability & Risk Assessment**

### **1. Economic**

- 1.1 A thriving economy is a key priority for the council and through our new Economic Principles for Worthing we will seek to achieve this, wherever possible, through community wealth building approaches. Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people
- 1.2 Providing a decent home that is secure, affordable, warm and modern, supports the wellbeing of our residents, enabling those who are able to work to enter and sustain employment and contribute to economic activity.

### **2. Social**

#### **2.1 Social Value**

- 2.1.1 Helping communities to thrive is a key priority for the Council. Through facilitation and investment we will work to ensure people are healthy, resilient and resourceful, that they can access the right help when they need it and everyone has a safe, secure and sustainable home.
- 2.1.2 Our overarching principles of fairness and participation are based on the explicit intention to work more closely with citizens, to involve them in deeper and more meaningful conversations about service design and delivery. Our work to provide affordable and good quality housing therefore forms a central part of the council's commitments.

#### **2.2 Equality Issues**

2.2.1 The council is subject to the general equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

2.2.2 In delivering housing services the council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

2.2.3 The participative principle in Our Plan describes the council's commitment to providing truly inclusive services by listening to

underrepresented voices, creating equal access and meeting our equality duties. As part of our commitments to fairness we want to ensure everyone has access to safe, secure and sustainable housing. We recognise the deep inequalities that exist and that some of our residents face deep seated inequalities.

2.2.4 These commitments and the council's legal duties (Equality Act 2010) will inform the development and delivery of the road map, in relation to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

2.2.6 Decisions, actions and areas of investment relating to the road map may require Equality Impact Assessments.

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

2.3.1 The council is committed to the promotion of communities as safe places. We will progress delivery of the councils' community safety commitments by strengthening communities and working in partnership with the Police, communities, businesses and multidisciplinary teams across the council.

2.3.2 As part of our ongoing work to create fair and safe neighbourhoods we will cooperate with relevant partners to promote wellbeing and help prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour.

## **2.4 Human Rights Issues**

- The actions set out in the report will enable the council to identify solutions that will enable our residents, communities and neighbourhoods to flourish.

## **3. Environmental**

3.1 A Thriving Environment is one of the four Missions identified in Our Plan and key actions include achieving net zero carbon, resilience to climate change and increased biodiversity by restoring natural habitats and minimising waste.

3.2 The strategy development process will actively consider and contribute to carbon reduction, waste minimisation and biodiversity improvement objectives. In the context of the cost of living crisis, our green principles will help ensure this work maintains a focus on just transition, mindful of the potential for inequities to be reinforced given the current costs involved in transitions to low carbon technology.

## **4. Governance**

4.1 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”.

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