

 Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee 19 February 2020		Agenda Item No. 5
Title	Health and Well Being Aspects in Private Sector Housing	
For further information about this report please contact	Lisa Barker - Head of Housing Services Lisa.barker@warwickdc.gov.uk Mark Lingard - Private Sector Housing Manager mark.lingard@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee – 3 July 2018 Minute 6	
Background Papers	None	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
This is an update report only.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	03/01/20	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	23/12/19	Lisa Barker
CMT	24/12/19	Chris Elliott
Section 151 Officer	03/01/20	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	23/12/19	Andrew Jones
Finance	03/01/20	Andrew Rollins
Portfolio Holder(s)	15/01/20	Cllr Jan Matecki
Consultation & Community Engagement		
None with specific regard to this report.		
Final Decision?	Yes	
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. Summary

- 1.1 On 3 July 2018 a report came before the Committee providing an update on actions undertaken by Housing Services during 2017/18 in improving housing conditions in which residents live, this being a key task in the Health & Well-being Action Plan.
- 1.2 On 17 September 2019 the Committee reviewed its work programme. It resolved that a report on health and well being aspects in private sector housing be added to the work programme for January 2020.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee considers and comments upon the work undertaken on health and wellbeing aspects in private sector housing from 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2019.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1 At a meeting on 17 September 2019 the Committee resolved that health and well being aspects in private sector housing be included in the work programme for the first meeting of 2020.
- 3.2 This report provides a review of work undertaken from 1 April 2018 to 30 November 2019 to enable the Committee to scrutinise progress.

4. Policy Framework

4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects.

The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

FFF Strands		
People	Services	Money
External		
Health, Homes, Communities	Green, Clean, Safe	Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all Housing needs for all met Impressive cultural and sports activities Cohesive and active communities	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Area has well looked after public spaces All communities have access to decent open space Improved air quality Low levels of crime and ASB	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy Vibrant town centres Improved performance/productivity of local economy Increased employment and income levels

Impacts of Proposal		
Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Internal		
Effective Staff	Maintain or Improve Services	Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained All staff have the appropriate tools All staff are engaged, empowered and supported The right people are in the right job with the right skills and right behaviours	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs Continuously improve our processes Increase the digital provision of services	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets Full Cost accounting Continued cost management Maximise income earning opportunities Seek best value for money
Impacts of Proposal		
Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

4.2 Supporting Strategies

Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies and the relevant one for this report is the Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2017-2020 (HHS) and the mid-term strategy review in Feb 2019.

The HHS has four key objectives and a range of actions for each. The objectives are:

- Providing suitable accommodation, information and advice for the homeless in an effort to prevent and reduce homelessness
- Meeting the need for housing across the District by addressing the need for new home provision
- Improving the management and maintenance of existing housing
- Ensuring people are supported to sustain, manage and maintain their housing

4.3 Changes to Existing Policies

As this is a review report for scrutiny it does not recommend changes to existing policies. Should the committee make any recommendations that have policy implications these would be the subject of a further report and would require Executive approval.

4.4 Impact Assessments

Not applicable.

5. Budgetary Framework

- 5.1 There are no budgetary implications arising from this report. Should the committee make any recommendations that have budgetary implications these would be the subject of a further report and would require Executive approval.

6. Risks

6.1 As this is a review report for scrutiny a risk assessment is not applicable.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

7.1 As this is a review report for scrutiny alternative options are not applicable.

8. Background

8.1 The Council takes forward a range of work on housing in line with the strategic objectives set out in section 4.2 and many of these contribute towards improving the living conditions and the health and well being of individuals.

8.2 The Council's work in improving existing accommodation can be broken down into two broad categories: our own housing stock and private sector housing.

Improving Private Sector Housing

8.3 The Council has an enforcement role in this area and can intervene where poor living conditions are reported or discovered. In line with our corporate enforcement policy we adopt a supportive approach wherever possible to enable owners and occupiers to resolve any issues without us resorting to the use of statutory powers. Nevertheless these powers are used when required.

8.4 In December 2017 Council approved a policy enabling officers to use new powers contained in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to apply civil penalties as an alternative to a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for various offences in private sector housing. From 1 April 2018 to 30 November 2019 the Council have issued two civil penalties to landlords one for £4,500 and one for £5,000.

8.5 From 1 April 2018 to 30 November 2019 the Private Sector Housing Team dealt with 651 service requests and was able to resolve the vast majority of these through informal liaison with landlords and occupiers.

8.6 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) can sometimes be of a poor standard and, to the degree permitted by the statutory licensing regime, the Private Sector Housing Team is able to monitor and deal with issues in this kind of housing. In October 2018 the government extended mandatory HMO licensing to all properties with five or more occupants with more than one household. Following the introduction of this legislation we have licensed and raised housing standards in an additional 250 HMO's. This brings the number of HMO's in Warwick District covered by statutory licensing to 600.

8.7 In Warwick District we have a vibrant and growing student population. Inevitably tenants renting for the first time can be unsure of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to running a home. Students typically take on tenancies for 1-2 years and take a few weeks to settle in, which creates a regular cycle of issues such as refuse mismanagement, noise nuisance and external maintenance of properties/gardens etc. This can cause friction with local settled residents.

8.8 In addition to the residents' complaints, our contact with student tenants highlighted that poor housing conditions were commonly accepted to be part of the student experience. Conversations we have had with student tenants also identified that they are not confident in how to select a good property or how to

approach their landlord when issues arise.

- 8.9 Following liaison with Warwick University and the local settled community the University agreed to fund a Student Housing Enforcement Officer for a fixed term of 12 months. The post holder started work on 1 October 2019 and is employed by Warwick District Council within the Private Sector Housing Team, to enable the Officer to have the necessary delegated authorities required for enforcement work.
- 8.10 This new role is already making a difference with successful targeted proactive work to reduce the nuisance from large scale parties during the Halloween Bonfire Night period. Proactive inspections of non-licensable HMO properties are now about to begin. The aim of these is to pick up and deal with any disrepair and safety issues before complaints are received, and make landlords aware that we have a greater capacity for oversight of private rented accommodation. It also helps to educate landlords about the housing standards we expect and improve student perception of their accommodation and therefore their health and well being.
- 8.11 In recent years the district has had a number of unauthorised gypsy and traveller encampments which can affect the quality of life of local residents. From 1 April 2018 to 30 November 2019 the Private Sector Housing Team took action to remove 23 encampments on WDC land and, by joint-working across the county and with the Police, improved the process and reduced the "move-on" time quite significantly. During 2019 the average length of the encampments is just over 3 days. The Council also carried out a number of "target-hardening" measures to Council-owned sites that were proving vulnerable. This along with the relocation of the Kenilworth Horse Fair has been successful in reducing the number of encampments, particularly during 2019.
- 8.12 We have the ability to provide financial support in the form of grants and loans to individuals for certain kinds of home improvements, including disabled facilities grants (DFGs). However, Committee members will be aware that from 1st April 2017 the service for providing DFGs was outsourced to the HEART shared service, operating countywide in conjunction with the other districts and boroughs, Public Health and Warwickshire County Council.
- 8.13 A progress report on the HEART service was provided by the Head of the HEART Service and the Head of Housing Services to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 2 April 2019. From 1 April 2018 to 30 November 2019 there were 75 DFG's completed:
- 38 level access showers
 - 27 stair lifts
 - 7 ground floor extension/conversions
 - 3 door-widening
 - 6 ramps
 - 1 wash/dry toilet
 - 1 half step
 - 1 through floor lift

(Note that this adds up to more than 75 due to more than one adaptation being required in some properties.)

- 8.14 To further complement the HEART approach the Council agreed to a new county-wide Financial Assistance Policy, to be run by HEART, to offer other forms of assistance towards improving housing conditions:
- Disabled Facilities Grants (Mandatory Grant)
 - Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance – a discretionary grant (up to £10k,) and a discretionary loan (a further £10k) for where the cost of works goes above the statutory maximum. Whilst this is referred to as a loan it is a charge on the property that only becomes payable on a change in the property ownership.
 - Warm and Safer Homes Grants – discretionary assistance to remove hazards from homes (up to £10k)
 - Hospital Discharge Grant – to facilitate discharge from hospital or prevent likely return to hospital due to the home environment (up to £10k).
 - Home Safety / Handy person – small grants to carry out preventative works, (up to £500 per property over a three year period).

- 8.15 From 1 April 2018 to 30 November 2019 there were 12 Warm and Safer Homes Grants for:

6 boiler replacements
3 full heating installations
5 electrical works
1 penetrating damp
2 window and door replacement
1 structural work

(Note that these add up to more than 12, due to some grants being for more than one issue at a property)

There were 2 hospital discharge grants and 113 home safety grants.

- 8.16 We continue to work with Act on Energy on energy efficiency/fuel poverty issues in private sector housing and a report on fuel poverty will be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2020.