

		<b>Insert name and date of meeting in this box.</b>  <b>Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee</b> <b>3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 5</b>
<b>Title</b>		Improved housing conditions	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>		Lisa Barker-Head of Housing Services <a href="mailto:Lisa.barker@warwickdc.gov.uk">Lisa.barker@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>  Ken Bruno-Strategy & Development Manager <a href="mailto:ken.bruno@warwickdc.gov.uk">ken.bruno@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>  Simon Brooke-Sustaining Tenancies Manager <a href="mailto:simon.brooke@warwickdc.gov.uk">simon.brooke@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>		All	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>		No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>		Health Scrutiny - 16 January 2018 Minute 18	
<b>Background Papers</b>		None	

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

<b>Officer/Councillor Approval</b>		
<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	20/06/18	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	14/06/18	Lisa Barker
CMT	14/06/18	Chris Elliott
Section 151 Officer	20/06/18	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	14/06/18	Andrew Jones
Finance	22/06/18	Andrew Rollins
Portfolio Holder(s)	14/06/18	Cllr Peter Phillips
<b>Consultation &amp; Community Engagement</b>		
None with specific regard to this report.		
<b>Final Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)</b>		

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 At a meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 Health Scrutiny Committee considered its priorities and action plan for 2018 -20 and resolved to put item 2.15 of the action plan – “Improved housing conditions in which residents live” – onto the work programme for the first meeting of 2018/19.
- 1.2 This report provides 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.

## 2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Health Scrutiny Committee considers and comments upon the work undertaken in improving housing conditions in 2017/18.

## 3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 At a meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 Health Scrutiny Committee considered its priorities and action plan for 2018 -20 and resolved to put item 2.15 of the action plan – “Improved housing conditions in which residents live” – onto the work programme for the first meeting of 2018/19.
- 3.2 This report provides a review of work undertaken on this action in the last year 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.

<b>FFF Strands</b>		
<b>People</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Money</b>
<b>External</b>		
<b>Health, Homes, Communities</b>	<b>Green, Clean, Safe</b>	<b>Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment</b>
<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

<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Internal</b>		
<b>Effective Staff</b>	<b>Maintain or Improve Services</b>	<b>Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term</b>
<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
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
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).

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

The Council, as a stock-holding authority, has specific responsibilities towards its own tenants and leaseholders and in respect of the maintenance and the safety compliance of the housing assets it owns. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget and the HRA Business Plan are the financial expressions of these policies. The HRA Business Plan contributes to the Fit for the Future transformation programme and assists the Council to deliver its Vision.

## 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 of individuals.
- 8.2 It is important to recognise that this may involve improving the existing accommodation of a household but can also be achieved by securing alternative accommodation.
- 8.3 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 Council housing**

- 8.4 The Council continues to meet its obligations to repair and maintain homes in a good condition. With this in mind we carry out roughly 12,000 repairs per annum. Spending on repairs to our properties was £2.7m last year. This year we have seen our main repairs contractor change with Axis taking over the contract from Ian Williams Ltd. Initial reports are very positive on this change.
- 8.5 The Council services all of its gas appliances each year in all council properties and has managed to achieve a compliance rate of 99.96% of dwellings with an "in-date" Gas Safe certificate by the end of 2017/18. This ensures that all properties are safe and there are no risks to the health and safety of residents. Considerable effort is required to ensure that we gain access to all properties.
- 8.6 With regard to improvements and planned maintenance the Council spent a further £9.8m in 2017/18. The stock condition survey undertaken in 2016 is now the basis of the roll out of our improvement programme and planned maintenance programmes are determined on the basis of a clearer picture of the condition of elements requiring maintenance. This work includes roofing, kitchen and bathroom improvements, electrical rewires and fire safety works. A report is being prepared for the Overview and Scrutiny and Finance and Audit Committees based on the 2016 survey setting out the improvements planned for properties to ensure that homes provided are of a good standard.
- 8.7 The Council undertakes adaptations to Council properties where there are mobility issues. This can include grab rails, stair lifts and level access showers. These improvements are often essential to maintain full use of the home and ensure the wellbeing of our tenants. Last year we carried out 301 major and

minor adaptations at a cost of £533,000. During the year we also secured additional funding from the MHCLG and have used this to complete works at Chandos Court to provide a mobility scooter store.

- 8.8 The major focus following the Grenfell fire in June 2017 has been on further improvements to the safety of our high rise blocks. We have increased the frequency of inspection, moving to daily inspections of these blocks. We have also undertaken updating work on various fire safety elements in all blocks. We have now started a £2.5m programme of major works to our high rise blocks, starting with Radcliffe Gardens but with plans to complete major improvement works in our other high rise blocks.

### **Sustaining tenancies**

- 8.9 A key focus for our housing management team is upon sustaining tenancies. Prevention of tenancy failure means that Tenancy Officers, our Income Recovery Team and our Housing Support and Lifeline Team are working to ensure those at risk of tenancy failure are supported to retain their tenancies. This can make a massive difference to some very vulnerable tenants who manage to retain their tenancy whilst they may be dealing with physical and mental health conditions, debt and payment issues, drug and behaviour issues.
- 8.10 Housing Services carry out a 3 yearly cycle of visits to all our tenants. Last year we completed 1,228 visits. These visits are often a vital opportunity to check on the wellbeing of our customers and ensure any issues are being picked up. Advice can be given as well as referrals to other agencies.
- 8.11 During the last year visits to all 400 high rise residents were completed. Inspections were carried out to ensure there are no fire hazards and to take any necessary actions. The opportunity was also taken to restate fire safety advice to all residents. One issue identified was a hoarder in Ashton Court. This resident was given advice and support to clear his flat but due to health concerns it was agreed a move to alternative accommodation was necessary. This action has resolved a potential threat not only to the resident but to all residents in the block.

### **Lifeline**

- 8.12 Our Lifeline Service provides a 24/7 emergency call alarm response. There are over 3,300 customers paying for this service. This is an invaluable service for many elderly people or those at risk of falling. The service helps to ensure these people can stay living independently in their homes and prevents the need for residential care. We can supply key safes as well as various personal alarm products.
- 8.13 Our Sheltered Schemes receive daily visits and staff provide a presence in the onsite offices. This is a service that is appreciated by our tenants and ensures that we can provide the necessary support to more elderly and vulnerable tenants that live in these schemes. Staff can provide residents with advice, signposting to other services and ensuring that they are receiving the right care, benefits etc.

## **Improving private housing**

- 8.14 Turning now to private sector housing, 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 the latter are used when required.
- 8.15 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.
- 8.16 During 2017/18 the Private Sector Housing Team dealt with 452 service requests and was able to resolve the vast majority of these through informal liaison with landlords and occupiers. However we also carried out one successful prosecution of a landlord for offences in connection with housing standards and conditions. The landlord was fined almost £19,000 including costs.
- 8.17 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. During 2017/18 we issued or renewed 191 licences to landlords of HMOs and refused to grant two licence applications until further work was completed.
- 8.18 In recent years the district has had a number of unlawful gypsy and traveller encampments which can affect the quality of life of local residents. During 2017/18 the Private Sector Housing Team took action to remove 22 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. The Council also carried out a number of "target-hardening" measures to Council-owned sites that were proving vulnerable and this has been successful in reducing the number of incidents.
- 8.19 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.
- 8.20 A progress report on the HEART service was provided by the Head of the HEART Service to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in February 2018. During 2017/18 there were 34 DFGs approved in Warwick district at a cost of £315,359 for:
- 22 level access showers;
  - 10 stair lifts;
  - 1 ground floor extension;
  - 3 ground floor conversions;
  - 1 kitchen adaptation;
  - 1 door-widening;

- 2 others.

(Note that this add up to more than 34 due to multiple jobs in a single application.)

- 8.21 To further complement the HEART approach the Council agreed, in September 2017, 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).
- 8.22 This policy only came into operation later in 2017/18 due to all authorities needing to sign up to it.
- 8.23 HEART is able to facilitate access to grants for energy efficiency measures under the ECO scheme and during 2017/18 nine boilers were replaced with grant funding of £21,536. A further four are in the pipeline as well as one loft insulation project.

### **Improving conditions through rehousing**

- 8.24 The principal way in which the Council is able to secure alternative accommodation for people living in poor housing conditions is through the housing register and allocations policy (HomeChoice). This provides access to vacancies in Council housing and also housing association properties.
- 8.25 All new affordable housing built in the district is advertised through HomeChoice, as are most vacancies that arise in existing properties. During 2017/18 we enabled 305 new affordable homes to be built through the use of planning powers and joint working with developers and housing associations. We allocated 378 Council vacancies during the year and made nominations to 485 housing association properties (inclusive of new-builds).
- 8.26 The following housing needs were addressed through rehousing:
- 79 existing tenants and 10 private households with children living in above ground floor accommodation.
  - 56 under-occupying tenants.
  - 124 households in the most severe need, 100 of whom were homeless and 18 of whom were moved on from temporary supported accommodation.
  - 27 households with medical or welfare needs.
  - 196 overcrowded households.
  - 115 households that were not owners or tenants.
  - 40 households that were lacking basic amenities or sharing them with other households.

- 8.27 In 2017/18 the Preventing Homelessness Improving Lives (PHIL) countywide service launched. This was set up using central government funding secured through a joint bid by the five districts and boroughs. It provides an early intervention service for people with housing problems that could ultimately result in homelessness, such as issues with their landlord and money problems or, for younger people, relationship problems with family and friends.
- 8.28 PHIL takes referrals from a wide range of agencies, as well as self-referrals, and provides an additional complementary service to the Council's Housing Advice & Allocations Team, with which it works closely. It has taken 13 referrals from Warwick district.
- 8.29 In February 2018 the Council purchased Beauchamp House, a former hostel, with a view to using this to support a strategy towards tackling rough sleeping. Members will be aware of the recent report approved by Executive as regards a bid for funding from the government's new Rough Sleepers' Initiative. This funding has now been secured and will facilitate a radical new approach to tackling rough sleeping in the district. It will help improve the living conditions of those entrenched in the street-lifestyle through additional temporary housing options, i.e. a direct access hostel, while bringing in support services to enable the customer to move towards a more permanent long-term housing solution back in mainstream society.