

Foreword

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

SERVICE

PEOPLE

MONEY

I am delighted to introduce the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Warwick District Council (WDC); a single cohesive Strategy which has been created in line with current changes to legislation and related policy areas.

In order to ensure this strategy is effectively implemented and meets its objectives, we will review progress annually during its three year term.

As a local authority we recognise that access to safe and affordable housing has a far reaching impact not only on the individual or family unit but also on our wider communities and this ethos informs not only this Strategy, but our broader local policy.

Housing is a key priority within the *Sustainable Community Strategy* contributing to the vision of making the District a great place to *live, work and visit*. Within this Strategy we aim to promote four themes which affect housing: prosperity, health and well-being, safer communities and sustainability.

Throughout the creation of this Strategy we consulted with our partners and a wide range of stakeholders, and I would like to thank all the many contributors. The responses we received gave a diverse range of views and ideas and have helped shape the strategic objectives within this Strategy for housing:

- § **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**

Warwick District Council intends to work consistently and effectively in partnership with other agencies to ensure these objectives are met and to demonstrate our commitment to building a brighter future.

Councillor Peter Phillips

Housing and Property Services Portfolio Holder

Context

Our District and its demographics

Our District covers an area of 110 square miles in the southern half of the county of Warwickshire in the West Midlands and is home to around 58,700 households (137,600 people).

This area includes the towns of Kenilworth, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwick and Whitnash, accounting for around 80% of the population. The remainder of residents live in a number of villages, many of which are green belt. The District is bordered to the south and west by Stratford-on-Avon District, to the east by Rugby Borough and to the north by Solihull and the city of Coventry.

Our District provides a central location with strategic transport links. There are major routes across the area including the M40 providing direct access to London and indirect links to the north-west via the M6 and M5 respectively. There are junctions outside of our District near Rugby, providing links to the north and east. There are rail services to the rest of the West Midlands and London and the Government's development of the high speed rail line "HS2" will run directly through the District.

Our District has the largest population in the county and the population density of 4.9 people per hectare is the second highest in Warwickshire and above national/regional averages. The population grew over the ten years from 2001 to 2011 by over 9%, a faster rate than England and Wales and the West Midlands and the second only to Rugby in the county.

Our District has the highest proportion of non "White-British" people in the county at 16.6% but this is still lower than the national and regional average. The largest ethnic groups in the District after White-British are "Asian/Asian British: Indian" (4.9%) and "Other White" (4.2%). Rugby (11.7%) and Warwick (11.6%) have the highest proportions in the county of people who have come from abroad but these percentages are still below the national average.

The average age of the District population is 39.7 and Warwick is not significantly different from the country as a whole (but it is the lowest in Warwickshire). The only noticeable variations are slightly fewer people aged 0-14 and slightly more people aged 30-44.

At 28% in 2011 Warwick has the smallest proportion of population aged 55 or more in the housing market area, and this is projected to increase by 37.6% by 2031.

Our District is among the top 10% in the country for the highest proportions of full time students; this accounts for noticeable differences with the national, regional and county

wide figures and provides an above average number of single-person households, the highest in the county.

As a consequence we have the lowest proportions in the county for each of the following categories: married/civil partnership; separated; divorced and widowed.

There have been big increases locally in both the numbers of homelessness applications received and the numbers accepted by the council. Both rose by a higher proportion than was the case nationally. The number of cases where homelessness was either prevented or reduced increased by 39% from 2010-2014; it fell significantly in 2014/15 and despite a small rise in 2015/16 it is still well below the 2014 level.

Based on a recent "Rough Sleepers" count carried out by P3 in late 2016, there were an estimated 18 individuals, identified as sleeping rough within our District as a whole at the time of the estimate.

Our local economy and its social indicators

The local economy is diverse although three sectors account for over 60% of employment: "public administration, education and health"; "wholesale and retail, including motor trades" and "financial and other business services".

Throughout the period from 2004 to present, our rate of unemployment has been considerably lower than the national and regional average, while average earnings for employees living in the District were higher at £32,582 in 2015.

The level of people owning a vehicle in the District is relatively high at 81.5%: with 44% of people travelling to work by car; higher than regional and national average but the lowest percentage in Warwickshire. Over 10% of people travel to work on foot or bicycle, the highest in Warwickshire and well above the national and regional figures.

The population of the District is relatively healthy with 84.5% of the population being in good or very good health, the highest in the county and better than the national and regional averages. This is also true of the narrower age band: those aged 16 to 64.

Across the District 14.8% of people are estimated to have a long-term health problem or disability (LTHPD) and 22% of households include someone with LTHPD. More than 90% of people do not provide unpaid care, again the highest figure in the county exceeding national and regional averages.

According to government figures the District is ranked 267th out of 326 local authority areas in England for deprivation, where 1st would be the most deprived. In creating this ranking

relatively small areas are also considered and one such area in our district, Lillington East, was ranked in the 10% most deprived areas of England.

The 2015 Department of Health profile for Warwick stated that “The health of people in Warwick is generally better than the England average. Deprivation is lower than average, however about 10.3% (2,400) children live in relative poverty. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average.” Across 30 different indicators Warwick was “significantly better than England average” on 18 indicators and not significantly different on the remaining 12. Local health priorities were identified as addressing alcohol misuse, smoking in pregnancy, and tackling obesity.

Our housing

Across the whole of Coventry and Warwickshire there is an objectively assessed need for 4,272 new homes per annum from 2011 to 2031. Of this total Warwick District’s objectively assessed housing need is 600 new homes per year.

In addition to meeting its own housing need, Warwick District’s Draft Local Plan is accommodating 332 new homes per year to address unmet need from Coventry. This means the total annual housing provision in Warwick District will be 932 homes per year.

Based upon the definition of affordable housing set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 (i.e. not including starter homes) the annual affordable housing need is 1,462 new homes across Coventry and Warwickshire and 280 in Warwick District. As Warwick is accommodating a proportion of Coventry’s overall housing need, it follows that it should, as part of the overall need, also accommodate some of the City’s affordable need.

The Council has therefore reached an agreement with Coventry City Council to accommodate 94 affordable dwellings per annum from Coventry. This makes a total affordable housing requirement for Warwick District of 374 dwellings per annum (280 + 94), equivalent to 40% of the District’s overall housing requirement of 932 new homes per year.

Council Tax band data shows Warwick to have 61,386 properties on the Valuation List as at 2015, an increase of almost 1,000 properties (1.6%) since the census in 2011.

The census in 2011 found that there were 60,427 dwellings in the district. 18.5% of the stock is flats or maisonettes and a further 4.6% is flats in converted or shared houses, easily the highest in the county on both indicators: the overall figures for Warwickshire are 12.5% and 2.2% respectively.

Data from recent stock condition surveys shows that the housing stock is mainly post-war with 73% of private housing and 85% of council housing having been built since 1945, compared to 59% and 81% respectively nationwide. In relative terms this is quite a “young”

profile but it is worth noting that many of these post-war dwellings are now over 50 years old.

Housing standards and conditions are generally good with only just over two per cent of households in the District lacking central heating, lower than national and regional averages. Three per cent of households are overcrowded; the highest in the county but this is still well below national and regional figures.

In Warwickshire our District has: the highest proportion of one-bed properties and of two-bed properties; a significantly smaller proportion of three-bed properties and the second highest proportion of properties with more than three bedrooms: the most balanced mix of properties in the county.

When making comparisons the relatively high proportion of flats has a distorting effect. When this is removed and houses and bungalows only are considered the spread of terraced (28%), semi-detached (40%) and detached (32%) is broadly similar to the county average.

Warwick differs from the rest of the county in that it has the lowest rate of owner-occupation (67%) and the highest rate of private renting (18%), both figures being higher than the national averages. The amount of social rented housing (13%) is the second lowest in Warwickshire and around 4% below the national average.

In 2015/16 there were around 8,250 rented homes in the District owned by affordable housing providers (i.e. the Council or a housing association) and around 450 further homes owned by affordable housing providers where a share of the property had been sold to the resident (known as "shared ownership").

At any point in time the number of affordable homes empty and available for rent is much smaller than is the case in either the "for sale" or the private rented market. In the whole of the last full financial year for which data is available (2014/15) there were 667 lettings of affordable homes for rent; the estimated number of student properties was 999. This compares with well over 2,000 homes sold in the same year. Full year lettings data for the private rented sector is not available but the survey mentioned earlier found around 280 properties available at a single point in time.

As at January 2017 there were 4,843 tenants of the council or a housing association who were in receipt of Housing Benefit support towards their rent. This is around 63% of all such tenants in the District, well below the England figure of approximately 83%.

Of the rented homes 93% were in the towns and 7% were in rural areas. The overwhelming majority of the properties were let at a social rent with a little over 200 being on the new (more expensive) affordable rent tenure.

There are estimated to be around 42,500 homes in the owner-occupied sector in the district (67%) and the “for sale” market is very strong, characterised by high and rising prices for all property types. Data from Hometrack showed that the average price for a home in the district was £338,600 compared to a regional average of £205,200. Prices had risen by 12.3% over the 12 months to November 2015, properties were taking just 2.3 weeks to sell and the selling prices obtained were 99.3% of the asking price. The ratio of house prices to average earnings in the District was 9:1.

Extra Care Housing (ECH) is now available in all five Boroughs and Districts, with 9 schemes for those aged 55+ now in operation across Warwickshire, yielding a total of 631 units of which 442 are rental units. In January 2017 a scheme was delivered in Leamington Spa; providing 15 one bedroom flats for individuals with a Learning Disability. Further schemes are planned for delivery in 2017/18.

The overall objective of developing ECH in Warwickshire is to modernise housing with care and support services by offering older people a very real alternative to a residential care home – a ‘home for life’ – as well as responding to current demographic pressures and changes. (*Extra Care Housing in Warwickshire*, October 2016, Warwickshire County Council)

The policy framework

The national housing policy agenda

Since the last Housing Strategy was developed there have been substantial revisions due to new legislation in housing and related policy areas. This body of law sets the national policy framework within which local policies and strategies must operate.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 is a major piece of legislation for the housing sector and for this Strategy as it sets the future direction for government housing policy. It contains wide-ranging changes in all housing tenures; however much of the detail is left to regulations which have not been published at the time of writing.

On owner occupation it introduces the “starter home” which is a new home available to first time buyers at a discount of at least 20% of the market value and a price (after discount) of less than £250,000 outside Greater London, with the buyer having to be between 23-39. Councils are put under a duty to promote the supply of starter homes through the planning system and will only be able to grant planning permission on most housing sites where a specified proportion of starter homes has been included.

In the Autumn statement 2015 the then Chancellor announced that Housing Benefit for council and housing association rents (both social and affordable) will be capped at the same level as applies to the private rented sector for the area, known as the Local Housing Allowance rate. In Warwick District this is £106 per week. It also includes restricting Housing Benefit for single people younger than 35 to the rate for a shared room rather than a self-contained flat.

In December 2015 the government consulted on a number of changes to the NPPF with proposals to broaden the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes so that it encompasses a wider range of low cost housing opportunities for those aspiring to own their own home, including “starter homes”.

Other proposals included: increasing the density of development around commuter hubs; supporting sustainable new settlements; development on brownfield land and small sites; delivery of housing allocated in plans, and supporting delivery of starter homes. Final decisions are still awaited.

Phillip Hammond (current Chancellor of the Exchequer) announced in the Autumn 2016 statement – “A £2.3bn housing infrastructure fund to help provide 100,000 new homes in high-demand areas with £1.4bn to deliver 40,000 extra affordable homes.”

"I can also announce a large-scale regional pilot of Right to Buy for Housing Association tenants - and continued support for homeownership through the Help to Buy: Equity Loan scheme and the Help to Buy ISA."

The Chancellor also announced a ban on upfront fees charged by letting agents in England, to be introduced "as soon as possible."

As this Strategy was being finalised, the Housing Minister launched a new Housing White Paper, entitled “Fixing our broken housing market”. Given the early stages of the consultation on the White Paper, our Strategy does not directly reflect any changes proposed by the Government. Any impact and effect will be included in the annual review of the progress of the Strategy.

Our vision

Our vision for Warwick District, as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, is “to make Warwick District a great place to *live, work* and *visit*”.

The Sustainable Community Strategy is a long term strategy; set out in 2010 and refreshed in 2013, it continues to lie at the heart of our plans to improve the overall quality of life in the District.

The following are our key strategic priorities:

Supporting prosperity: seeking to support the District’s economic prosperity by promoting opportunities for businesses to grow and relocate; supporting employment, vibrant town centres and a strong cultural and tourism offer.

Providing homes: Supporting housing providers in delivering the housing needed in response to the District’s changing and growing population in accordance with the Local Plan; ensuring the delivery of high quality and affordable housing that meets the needs of everyone, including those with specialist housing needs.

Supporting sustainable communities: (including health and wellbeing and community safety): to work in partnership to reduce violent crime; providing spaces and services to enable healthy and safe lifestyles. Promoting the regeneration and enhancement of existing communities and environments; ensuring the protection of the natural and built environment; minimising our use of natural resources and CO2 emissions and improve water efficiency of our buildings and operations.

Objective 1

Promoting the provision of suitable accommodation, information and advice for the homeless in an effort to prevent and reduce homelessness

Achieving this outcome, will contribute to ensuring Warwick District is a great place to live, work and visit by:

Effectively working in partnership to develop a coordinated approach; supporting all sections of the community by signposting support, including alcohol addiction and mental health resources

Improving access to accommodation which helps prevent and reduce the risk of homelessness

Enabling the housing and support needs of vulnerable people to be met

Ensuring and promoting accessible and effective advice and support services are available for homelessness and housing

Why is this important?

As a District, it is important we strive to meet the needs of all sections of our community and ensure we promote a balanced and sustainable approach.

The vast majority of people are able to locate and maintain their own home; however there are still a significant number of people who require some form of help or support to access suitable accommodation.

As a local authority we recognise the detrimental effects that homelessness can have on an individual's life; it can affect their health and well-being, their ability to find and maintain employment, to access learning and to maintain vital relationships. Given the adverse effects of homelessness, not only on the individual but their wider community, it is essential that services are provided to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

The key responses we received from our consultation, which give an insight into the perception of residents of the state of the local market, are as follows:

Leamington Spa residents are very upset by the number of homeless people sleeping in the town centre and hope that Warwick District Council achieve some very quick results in reducing this, in liaison with the police, local voluntary bodies and other relevant parties.

A further priority should be to extend the legal duty to house the homeless to all homeless including single people.

The high visibility of homeless people/rough sleepers is causing great concern, both to the retail sector and to residents. There is a need to provide somewhere for people to sleep, and associate, and have access to WC and showering facilities, which is not in residential areas and activate the objectives in your 2nd year strategy on homelessness.

Long term and effective solutions to homelessness needs to be prioritised. ANY homeless person should be able to find the resources and services to help them get them moved off the streets and the relevant support to remain in safe accommodation.

It needs a combined approach with all agencies to offer a one stop help and advice service. A review of types of accommodation available with both WCC and WDC working together to maximise resources and assets. A coordinated delivery of emergency help with the night shelter and other voluntary providers.

To provide support to not just the people who are deemed most vulnerable. To implement meaningful policies including finding accommodation for homelessness people after one night below freezing, not three.

For a full list of consultation responses, please see our supporting documents.



What have we achieved so far?

Drop in surgeries have been introduced at the *Salvation Army*

Links have been established with the emerging homeless in ethnic minorities, via the local Sikh temple and the Sydni Centre

Front line staff are now attending visits to our partner agencies as part of their induction

Partnership meetings have been set up involving Police, Way Ahead, Helping Hands, Housing, Health and Community Protection and the Night Shelter

We secured funding via central government and have introduced online housing applications from 2016/17

WDC staff took part in a "Sleep Out" which supported Helping Hands to raise vital funds for their work with homeless and vulnerable adults in the District. The main theme of the event was to raise awareness of the fact that 1 in 10 rough sleepers across the country are ex-forces, which is why the event took place on Friday 11th November on Armistice Day

We secured Warwickshire Together Homelessness Early Intervention Project funding to develop a countywide system ensuring early identification of residents at risk of homelessness and the tailoring of support services to address the issues which could result in the resident becoming homeless



Objective 1: Action Plan

1.1 Implementing the extension of our legal duties to the homeless, including single people under the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

Resources / Funding: Housing and Allocation time commitment / Existing budget within General Fund with the possibility of Central Government funding for the extension of duties within the bill

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager - Elaine Wallace

1.2 Developing a Mental Health Protocol for homeless people.

Resources / Funding: Existing staff / General Fund

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

1.3 A coordinated delivery of emergency help with the night shelter and other voluntary providers.

Resources / Funding: Housing Advice and Allocations staff time, as and when required / General Fund

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

1.4 Improving the provision of adequate transitional accommodation for the homeless in general and the vulnerable in particular.

Resources / Funding: Housing Advice and Allocations staff time commitment / General Fund

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

1.5 Participate in the “Warwickshire Together Homelessness Early Intervention Project” to develop a countywide system ensuring early identification of residents at risk of homelessness and tailored support services to address the issues which could result in the resident becoming homeless.

Resources / Funding: Staff time commitment / Warwickshire Together Homelessness Early Intervention Project Funding

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Manager – Ken Bruno

1.6 We will continue to work collaboratively with other districts and agencies to explore and pursue bids for Government funding for initiatives on homelessness.

Resources / Funding: Staff time commitment / Existing budgets

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Manager – Ken Bruno

1.7 Ensure good advice on housing options is available by the provision of staff that are well trained, supported by good publicity materials.

Resources / Funding: Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer/ Assistant time commitment / Existing budgets

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

1.8 Review and improve our system for tackling rough sleeping.

Resources / Funding: Existing budget and staff commitment

Manager: Housing and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

1.9 To improve financial difficulty prevention work between WDC Income Team and the Housing Advice team to reduce the number of evictions and prevent homelessness.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources / General Fund

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

Objective 2

Helping delivery of meeting the need for housing across the District by addressing the need for new home provision

Achieving this outcome, will ensure WDC is a great place to live, work and visit by:

Promoting a range of new housing opportunities which meet the affordable housing needs of our District

Supporting the sustainability and improvement of our local communities

Managing the continued economic and population expansion of the District

Why is this important?

As a local authority we recognise that; “unaffordable housing affects household budgets, health and education and the ability to gain and sustain employment. A balanced approach to developing housing that will maximise productivity, mobility and choice involves giving attention to the contributions of both new and existing housing. Investment to upgrade unhealthy older housing will generate substantial and continuing savings in the cost of health care and contribute to better education and employment outcomes. Policy action to improve older housing will generate savings in expenditure elsewhere and contribute to wider policy effectiveness. “(The Academic-Practitioner Partnership: Good Housing: Better Health, July, 2016)

The key responses we received from our consultation, which give an insight into the perception of residents of the state of the local market, are as follows:

We are not building enough affordable housing and 40% should be the bare minimum for developers, not less.

Build more social housing, encourage developers to ensure they have meaningful affordable housing.

A good (student) Housing Strategy should have greater community cohesion at the heart of its objectives; otherwise there is little point in having such a Strategy.

Not enough social housing, and too many unregulated private stock and poorly managed properties.

For a full list of consultation responses, please see our supporting documents.





What have we achieved so far?

We have continued to build on our working relationship with the University of Warwick; in relation to student housing in the District we have attended a Student Housing Day at the University and have worked with the Students' Union housing advisor on specific cases. We have also completed joint work with the University's lettings company to try and tackle refuse problems and Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) issues

Work through W2 continues and has achieved 161 new homes with a further 230 affordable homes in the pipeline

We incorporated the Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (JSHMA) findings into our requirements for new affordable housing schemes from 1st April 2014 and an update to the JSHMA was completed in September 2015

We have expanded our partner housing agencies to include Fortis Living, who joined the partnership on the 1st April 2015

We have assessed available data from our council tax regarding empty homes and decided that the number of properties involved did not warrant developing a revised Strategy

The new allocations policy went live in June 2016 and now gives tenants greater priority for vacancies and introduces local connection policies

We have delivered Sayer Court, a flagship development of new council apartments for the over 55s situated on Tachbrook Road. Included in the development are five purpose built bungalows, specifically designed to meet the needs of someone living with a disability or mobility issue. These high quality properties, a range of 1 and 2 bed apartments, together with 2 and 3 bed bungalows were available to rent from Autumn 2016

Objective 2: Action Plan

2.1 Ensuring that housing schemes of more than 10 dwellings include an appropriate proportion of affordable housing and a sustainable mix of property types and sizes.

Resources / Funding: Housing Strategy and Development Officer time commitment, as and when required / General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer – Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster

2.2 Reviewing the W2 Partnership during 2017.

Resources / Funding: Staff time within the parameters laid down by the Joint Venture and subject to ongoing monitoring by the Project Board / General Fund

Manager: Head of Housing and Property Services

2.3 Once all government proposals around housing tenure have been confirmed considering whether we have a sufficiently wide range of options as regards social landlords to meet the identified needs of the District.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources / General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer – Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster

2.4 Once all government proposals around housing tenure have been confirmed, review and update our housing market assessment.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer - Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster / Policy and Projects Manager - Dave Barber

2.5 Investigate the financial capacity of the Housing Revenue Account to support a programme of new council house ownership and/or building with or without the creation of a housing company, subject to the impact of the High Value Voids levy.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources – Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Head of Housing and Property Services

2.6 Assessing council-owned land for potential housing developments.

Resources / Funding: Housing Revenue Account - Existing budgets

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer – Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster

2.7 Commissioning rural housing needs surveys at parish level to inform proposals for rural developments.

Resources / Funding: Rural community contract via existing budgets / General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer – Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster

2.8 Monitoring the impact of welfare reforms on housing demand and adjusting requirements if necessary.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets from General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer – Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster

2.9 Continue to work with Warwickshire County Council to look at bringing forward an Extra Care housing scheme for Kenilworth.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets from General Fund / Capital Programme

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Officer - Charlotte Rowan-Lancaster

2.10 Begin strategic discussions with Coventry City Council, around housing allocations, in light of local plan land allocations, to address unmet need from the City.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources – General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Manager / Policy and Projects Manager

2.11 Establish a housing market sounding board; meeting regularly with local developers to monitor the market condition.

Resources / Funding: Housing Strategy and Development Officer time /General Fund

Manager: Housing Strategy and Development Manager - Ken Bruno

Objective 3: Improving the management and maintenance of existing housing

Achieving this outcome, will ensure WDC is a great place to live, work and visit by:

Making best use of existing stock

Improving overall health and wellbeing

Why is this important?

As a local authority we recognise that; “while in most cases it is reasonable to expect the owners of existing housing to maintain and improve properties, it is evident that some do not do so and this generates persistent and costly hazards. There is a need to identify where policy interventions are necessary to encourage and enable owners to carry out work to mitigate hazards and to protect the residents of these properties.” (The Academic-Practitioner Partnership: Good Housing: Better Health, July, 2016

The key responses we received from our consultation state:

Spot checks by councillors of cheap rented accommodation, private or otherwise? A list of approved landlords?

Provide services that enable people to sustain their homes.

Provide debt management services, on a one to one basis.

What have we achieved so far?

Following the completion of the new stock condition survey the results are being analysed to enable the new Asset Management Strategy to be prepared during 2017

We have reviewed our management of leaseholder properties

We have set up the Warwick District Landlord’s Blog, publishing a newsletter for private landlords, with a website containing relevant information to disseminate good practice through the Landlord Steering Group and Forum

We have had several meetings since November 2015 with Community Protection, Neighbourhood Services and Warwick Accommodation regarding student refuse and HMO issues

We have set up the Task & Finish Group to investigate the issues around HMOs and to formulate proposals for dealing with them.

We have prosecuted landlords who fall below acceptable safety standards

Objective 3: Action Plan

3.1 Further develop the council's approach to regulating private sector Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) in light of consideration by the Executive of the findings of the Task and Finish Group, currently investigating this subject.

Resources / Funding: Existing staffing / General Fund

Manager: Private Sector Housing Manager - Mark Lingard

3.2 If and when they are confirmed, review how to implement the Government's proposals on extending licensing of HMO's.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources potentially supplemented by fee income

Manager: Private Sector Housing Manager – Mark Lingard

3.3 We will continue to engage with the University of Warwick and residents on the issues surrounding student accommodation from a housing and planning perspective and consider the development of a Student Housing Strategy.

Resources / Funding: Existing staffing and budgets

Manager: To be confirmed

3.4 Reviewing the working of the new allocations policy in June 2017.

Resources: Existing resources

Manager: Housing and Allocations Manager – Elaine Wallace

3.5 Implement fixed term tenancies for council tenants, in line with Government legislation.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

3.6 Commission a new private sector stock condition survey to provide updated intelligence on the state of private housing in the District.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources /General Fund

Manager: Private Sector Housing Manager – Mark Lingard

3.7 Continue to work towards the regeneration of the Lillington area.

Resources / Funding: to be identified through project planning process

Manager: Business Manager – Projects – Philip Clarke

3.8 Looking at how to creatively manage our housing assets by developing a new Asset Management Strategy.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Asset Manager - Russell Marsden

3.9 To plan to get into the top half with a stretch objective of top quartile of all Local Authorities (LAs) in our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for empty property management, repairs satisfaction, and income management.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Housing and Property Management Team

3.10 To report on the possibilities for separating service costs and rents and the implementation of service charges.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

3.11 Reviewing the approach to the management of council tenancies for people leaving and entering prison, building links with relevant persons within the criminal justice and prison systems.

Resources / Funding: Existing budget / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

Objective 4

Support people to sustain, manage and maintain their housing

Achieving this outcome, will ensure WDC is a great place to live, work and visit by:

Supporting all sections of the community, including homeless people and those with specific needs, to quickly and effectively resolve housing issues

Helping improve living conditions for residents of the District

Integrating housing into the local community to ensure a co-ordinated approach to tackle wider community issues

Improving the aesthetic appeal of the built environment

Why is this important?

We recognise that; “effective coordination between housing and other services (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux, local colleges, council housing services and social services) can be critical.”

(Housing providers and youth poverty, CCHPR, November 2016)



The key responses we received from our consultation state:

Provide early referrals to relevant agencies for both young people and parents.
Provide accessible and relevant information through education institutions to pupils and parents. Educate all agencies to recognise signs of family friction and rebellion.
Include links to services on WCC website for agencies such as family services and mediation and community support.

I do not think it is fair that people are allowed to run up rent arrears; at the end of the day we all have to pay our way. If people fall on bad times and need help that is fine but at some point they should pay something back to the council.

For a full list of consultation responses, please see our supporting documents.

What have we achieved so far?

We are working with Breathing Space to offer financial debt advice to all residents of the District regardless of tenure

A joint approach has been adopted with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to address the needs of individuals with housing related support needs. WCC are now procuring providers for services it has identified as being a continued priority

A task and finish group has been set up to explore the issues surrounding HMOs

We are working with WCC to examine the setting up of a viable Credit Union in the District and we are working to develop our partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau (CA)
Provision of grants is available in special circumstances, to assist tenants to complete essential repairs or rectify dangerous conditions

We have a service level agreement with Act on Energy to give free energy-saving advice to local householders and training for staff

We are now part of a county-wide partnership funded through Public Health Warwickshire called "Warm and Well in Warwickshire"

Since Summer 2015 we are completing annual customer visits to gain a better understanding of the support needs of our tenants

We have adopted a corporate policy on enforcement across all relevant enforcement services from October 2014

We are continuing with our pilot scheme for remodelling Home Improvement Agency services across southern Warwickshire, due to be completed in March 2017

Objective 4: Action Plan

4.1 To investigate the potential to introduce/attract a sustainable credit union into the District.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources / General Fund / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Income Recovery and Financial Inclusion Manager - John Gallagher

4.2 Introduce the Rental Exchange (RE) into Warwick District to improve the credit ratings of our tenants and their ability to access cheaper rates of interest in respect of goods and services.

Resources / Funding: ICT / Existing budgets

Manager: Income Recovery and Financial Inclusion Manager - John Gallagher

4.3 Implementing, monitoring and evaluating the new Home Environment Assessment & Response Team (HEART) which delivers aids, adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants through a single delivery vehicle serving the whole of Warwickshire.

Resources / Funding: Existing capital and revenue resources / General Fund / Housing Revenue Account / Disabled Facilities Grant

Manager: Private Sector Housing Manager - Mark Lingard

4.4 Encourage and develop Money Advice services across the District, including our own, online services, CA and Brunswick Hub.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources

Manager: Income Recovery and Financial Inclusion Manager - John Gallagher / Brunswick Hub – Sue Howarth

4.5 Monitor government proposals for the funding of housing-related support services and work with other relevant agencies to implement the resulting legislation.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources unless government provides resources for implementation

Manager: To be confirmed

4.6 To complete a review of support to residents in WDC supported housing following the withdrawal of Supporting People funding, to maximise the use of any remaining Housing Related Support funding from WCC and make changes to staffing affecting our supported housing and our Lifeline services.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

4.7 To improve awareness of WDC Lifeline services in both the public and private sectors and their value to vulnerable people.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

4.8 To work with DWP and voluntary agencies to ensure residents are aware of Welfare Reform changes, especially the introduction of Universal Credit and minimise the impact on the sustainability of tenancies.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

4.9 To develop regular meetings regarding financial inclusion in partnership with other agencies across the District.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources

Manager: Income Recovery and Financial Inclusion Manager - John Gallagher

4.10 To improve support to existing tenants by identifying those at risk of not sustaining their tenancies and having action plans and support provided to ensure tenancies do not fail.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

4.11 To ensure that we have a clear set of policies and procedures affecting the management of our housing stock.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources

Manager: Housing Property and Management Team

4.12 To ensure our estates are safe with effective liaison with the Police and other agencies and effective action taken on any reports of anti-social behaviour.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

4.13 To review the cleaning of our blocks to ensure all are adequately cleaned.

Resources / Funding: Existing budgets / Housing Revenue Account

Manager: Sustaining Tenancies Manager - Simon Brooke

4.14 Take forward any housing related actions arising from the results of the Warwick District armed forces survey.

Resources / Funding: Existing resources / General Fund

Manager: Housing Advice and Allocations Manager - Elaine Wallace

The strategic process

Taking into consideration the strategic context within which we are operating we decided to develop a single overall strategy which offered a longer-term solution.

We publicised and circulated the previous key priorities from both the Homelessness and Housing Strategy to various stakeholders for comment:

- Parish, town, District and county councillors;
- Warwick District Council housing staff and tenants' representatives;
- The Housing Sounding Board (which includes a range of voluntary sector organisations);
- Warwickshire County Council's Public Health, Supporting People and Social Care teams;
- Local housing associations' development and management staff;
- Warwickshire Rural Community Council;
- Neighbourhood forums;
- Neighbouring local authorities;
- Landlord Steering Group; and
- The Local Enterprise Partnership.

In addition to this an article was placed on our website inviting views from all staff; a press release was issued inviting views from the public and an alert was placed on Twitter.

We met with the Housing Sounding Board to gather feedback from a range of voluntary sectors and stakeholders.

A wide range of background information was gathered to complement the views collated via consultation, and this document was published on our website for public review.

The online survey on our website ran for 12 weeks, so as to gather further responses.

There were a large number of responses from both our survey and consultations; these comments were analysed to identify key themes and issues and which helped develop our strategic objectives.

In January 2017 the draft Strategy was presented at the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and at the Housing Advisory Group. Further work was then carried out to draw up the detailed action plan in this document.

Approval for this Strategy will be sought from the Executive and the Council in March 2017 with the action plan to be reviewed on an annual basis (2017-2020) to ensure it meets its given objectives, reflects any significant changes and to ensure its priorities remain relevant.

Background references and further reading:

- *Local Plan* – Warwick District Council, April 2014; as amended in 2017
- House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: Number 6080, 8th August 2016 *“Paying for Supported Housing”* by Wendy Wilson
- House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: Number 05638, 8th August 2016 *“Housing benefits and measures announced since 2010”* by Wendy Wilson, Cassie Barton and Richard Keen
- House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: Number 06416, 15th June 2016 *“Stimulating Housing Supply – Government Initiatives”* (England) by Wendy Wilson
- The Academic – Practitioner Partnership, July 2016 *“Good Housing: Better Health”*
- House of Commons, Third Report of Session 2016-17 *“Homelessness”*
- Warwickshire County Council - *“Extra Care Housing in Warwickshire”* October 2016
- Warwick District Council *“Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2017-2020 Evidence Base”*
- *“Social Housing Written Statement”* – HLWS274 – Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, 21st November 2016
- *“Desperate to Escape: the experience of homeless families in emergency accommodation”*, Shelter, November 2016
- The role of housing and housing providers in tackling poverty experienced by young people in the UK: Summary and Conclusions; Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, November 2016
- *“The Homelessness Reduction Private Members Bill”*, Department of Communities and Local Government, 24th October 2016
- *“New measures to tackle overcrowded housing”* Department for Communities and Local Government, 18th October 2016
- Shared ownership: *Ugly sister or Cinderella?* By Anna Clarke, Andrew Heywood and Peter Williams, October 2016
- *Autumn Statement*, 23rd November, 2016