

**BUSINESS SUPPORT
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 NOVEMBER 2017
HOUSING STRATEGY ANNUAL REVIEW**

Report from: Mark Breathwick, Head of Strategic Housing Services
Author: Chris Giles, Acting Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager

Summary

The current Housing Strategy contains a commitment to review achievement against stated aims on an annual basis. This report gives an overview of progress against the four key strategic priorities:

- Increase the supply of suitable and affordable homes;
- Improve the quality of homes, environment and people's lives;
- Promote sustainability by supporting people within their community; and
- Improve the flexibility of accommodation.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Housing Strategy 2015-18 was developed in conjunction with the Strategic Housing Partnership Board and a diverse range of statutory and voluntary sector partners and stakeholders.
- 1.2 The Housing Strategy sits alongside a number of other Council policies and has direct links to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy.
- 1.3 The Housing Strategy 2015-18 is consistent with the Council's Policy Framework.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing Strategy was approved in February 2015. It contains a commitment to annually review progress against the targets detailed in the Housing Strategy Action Plan. This review then forms the basis of an annual report to DMT and Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The Housing Strategy aims to reflect policies and procedures at a national, regional and local level. It will steer how we deliver the strategic housing priorities for Medway and sets the direction for housing in Medway through to 2018. The strategy is designed to deliver against four strategic priorities:

- Increase the supply of suitable and affordable homes;
- Improve the quality of homes, environment and people's lives;
- Promote sustainability by supporting people within their community; and
- Improve the flexibility of accommodation.

2.3 The Council works with a range of partners on both the delivery and monitoring of work carried out. Monitoring against progress is carried out across a number of separate forums and reporting structures. This report represents a consolidation of the overall information against performance and presents it for consideration.

2.4 An updated copy of the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2015-18 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 Across the four strategic priorities significant progress has been made against agreed actions. Of 40 actions; 15 have been completed and a further 22 are open ended or are on track for completion.

4.2 Three actions are off track and are not likely to be achieved within the lifetime of the strategy.

4.3 One action has been ended, (the KASHH service) as it was a central government initiative around advice for people who were not in priority housing need, which had a specific timeframe. The funding for this was stopped during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy and the project was discontinued.

4.4 Two actions are on hold due to a requirement to reframe these in light of restructures in other Medway Council services. As these relate to engagement with specific mental health social workers in Adult Social Care, the social care restructure has meant we will need to look at alternative solutions to meet these actions. We are exploring options to engage with the voluntary sector (e.g. MIND) to provide an additional source of operational advice.

4.5 A detailed report on progress against each of the priorities, for the current year as well as the lifetime of the strategy to date, is given below.

Strategic Priority One - Increase the supply of suitable and affordable homes

For the year 2017-18 to date (two quarters)

- 32 units of affordable housing have been handed over during the first two quarters. This represents a lower figure than in previous years but there are a number of sites coming online. Delays to 100 units at Capstone are due to utilities company's late delivery of provision to site. The Extra Care 63 unit scheme at Horsted has been delayed due to retrofitting of sprinklers following the fire at Grenfell Tower. These are now on track giving us a projected figure of 218 by year end.
- This year £3,680,000 has been invested in affordable housing in Medway.
- A range of properties have been handed over comprising; 12 two bed flats, 12 two bed houses and 8 three bed houses.
- 28 Rented units have been handed over (87%) and 4 units of Shared Ownership (13%)
- 2 extra care schemes are under construction
- Discussions are being held with RP's to secure specialist accommodation on S106 sites
- Currently 966 units of privately owned properties are empty which represents 1.01% of housing stock. This is comparable with Kent and below the regional/national averages. Letters were sent out with council tax notifications providing advice about bringing properties back into use by selling or renting. Further consideration is being given to using increased planning fees to provide a dedicated resource to tackle empty properties.

For the lifetime of the Strategy Feb 2015 to date

- 416 units of affordable housing have been handed over during the operating period of the strategy.
- This comprised; 67 one bed flats, 158 two bed flats, 1 three bed flat, 36 one bed bungalows and 9 two bed bungalows, 65 two bed houses, 60 three bed houses and 9 four bed houses.
- A total investment of £47,840,000 has been made into affordable homes in Medway.
- 290 Rented units have been handed over (70%) and 126 units of Shared Ownership (30%)

| Total Action Points | Actions Completed | Actions on Target | Actions off Target |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Strategic Priority Two – Improve the quality of homes, environment and people's lives

For the year 2017-18 to date (two quarters)

- All households in Medway were sent a letter in July giving advice on discounted insulation and replacement boilers.
- A new Collaborative Working Agreement was signed with Public Health to cover the period 2017-2019.
- 274 vulnerable households have received commissioned floating support services (including specialist substance misuse and domestic abuse services).
- We commission 194 units of supported housing and 1202 units of sheltered housing. This reduces the burden on social housing stock and prevents homelessness.
- Number of Medway Landlords accredited for year to date 44
- Number of people who have attended the tenant accreditation courses - 94

- Number of training sessions delivered to landlords 3
- 120 HMOs currently licensed (15 have had licences renewed this year)
- 11 licensable HMOs are working towards gaining a licence
- Providers we commission to run housing related support services have reported higher levels of service monitoring, feedback and discussions around service development from Medway Council, in comparison with other local authorities they work in. Below are some indicators demonstrating positive impact from individual schemes –

Domestic Abuse

- 82% of service users are linking into a form of education, employment or community work.
- 100% of Service users are reaching their identified goals

Offenders

- 72% of service users are accessing a form education, training, employment or community facility

Young Persons Accommodation

- From a snapshot of former tenants 93% who have moved on in the past year are maintaining their tenancies

For the lifetime of the Strategy Feb 2015 to date

- 940 vulnerable households have received commissioned floating support services (including specialist substance misuse and domestic abuse services).
- The cost of supporting vulnerable people in our commissioned housing averages at £85 per week on top of housing costs, and floating support around £35 per week. This is a very economical provision compared to statutory services. Independent research by CapGemini indicates that preventative services of this nature saves £2.11 elsewhere in the system for every £1.00 invested.
- Total number of Medway Landlords accredited between Feb 15 to date - 78
- Total people who have attended the tenant accreditation courses - 249
- Number of training sessions delivered to landlords - 9

| Total Action Points | Actions Completed | Actions on Target | Actions off Target |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 11 | 5 | 5 | 1 (cancelled) |

Strategic Priority Three – Promote sustainability by supporting people within their community

For the year 2017-18 to date (two quarters)

- Homeless Prevention work has increased and in the first two quarters of 2017-18 homelessness was prevented or relieved in 160 cases.
- We have piloted a triage service where support staff from our commissioned floating support service are based at Kingsley House to support the Prevention work carried out and identify urgent referrals of vulnerable households.
- We have added a ‘Street Homeless’ section to the Blue Light project. Since July 2017 we seek ways to link individuals who are rough sleeping to existing services.
- Our work with the Blue Light project has been recognised for good practice and partnership work and the project was a finalist in this year’s Make a Difference awards.
- We have set up a rough sleeper forum – this is facilitated by one of our commissioned service providers – to understand what rough sleepers need to assist them in their recovery and moving from the streets
- The Rochester traders group submitted a petition to Medway Council regarding issues on Rochester High Street relating to begging and rough sleeping. Both residents and traders have responded positively to the high level of engagement, and evidence of what we are doing to tackle these issues.
- We have recently started attending gang activity focussed monthly Complex Strategy Meetings along with Children’s Services, Police, etc
- We input to a bi-monthly SEND steering group looking at accommodation options for Medway young people transitioning from learning disability residential schools back into the local area
- Our Sanctuary service has provided additional security for 41 households where there has been Domestic Abuse
- 78 Disabled Facilities Grants have been completed year to date.

For the lifetime of the Strategy Feb 2015 to date

- We have contributed to over 1000 prevented or relieved homeless cases.
- The Institute of Public Care have completed a needs assessment of older people in Medway (jointly commissioned with Social Care)
- Ex-offenders are being helped to secure and maintain accommodation via our supported accommodation providers
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) now take place on a weekly basis with housing representation
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) meetings are attended by housing representatives
- A specialist worker has been recruited within Children’s Services to jointly assess 16/17 year olds who approach Medway Council as homeless
- We are involved in developing the Early Help panel with Social Care and attend on a regular basis to help identify cases for early intervention
- We attend the Blue Light meeting (which discusses individuals whose alcohol or substance use requires high levels of intervention from police and other emergency services) on a monthly basis.
- Our Sanctuary service has provided additional security for over 300 households where there has been Domestic Abuse
- 334 Disabled Facilities Grants have been completed

| Total Action Points | Actions Completed | Actions on Target | Actions off Target |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 22 | 9 | 11 | 2 (on hold) |

Strategic Priority Four – Improve the flexibility of accommodation

For the lifetime of the Strategy Feb 2015 to date

- Medway is now part of the national online mutual exchange system.
- A review the council's Tenancy Strategy has been undertaken
- Homes advertised via Kent Homechoice detail any adaptations at the property. The Housing Occupational Therapist assists in assessing the suitability of properties to ensure that they meet the needs of the client
- A review of the accommodation available for Young People has been undertaken in partnership with Children's Services. This feeds in to our development of a young person's homelessness plan.

| Total Action Points | Actions Completed | Actions on Target | Actions off Target |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 5 | 1 | 4 | 0 |

5. Risk management

5.1 The following risks have been identified.

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------|
| Failure to achieve | That progress made is insufficient to meet the aims of the strategy | Regular monitoring over lifetime of the strategy using covalent/pentana and regular reviews within Strategic Housing Services. | D3 |
| Failure to respond to changes | That the strategy is unresponsive to the changing environment | Monitoring against actions note where circumstances make specific actions unviable or requiring reframing within the action plan | D3 |

6. Consultation

6.1 Consultation to assist in shaping the priorities and practical commitments for the new Housing Strategy was held on 30 October 2017. This will be combined with evidence derived from the 2015-18 action plan, current and projected needs analysis and best practice. The draft Housing Strategy will be presented for consultation in spring 2018.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The Housing Strategy is used to target and direct resources internally and to direct and provide evidence to attract external funding, including from the Homes and Community Agency and other partners.

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this review.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Committee is asked to note progress against the aims of the Housing Strategy 2015-18 and that future action plans relating to strategies will include ongoing monitoring of the impact of the actions detailed.

Lead officer contact

Mark Breathwick, Head of Strategic Housing Services
01634 33 3540
mark.breathwick@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy 2015-18 Action Plan

Background papers

Housing Strategy 2015-18
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/housing/housingpublications/housingstrategies.aspx>