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**To: The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)**

**Date: 4 November, 2021**

**Subject: Housing and Homelessness Services Update**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny Board 4 on the progress of the Housing & Homelessness Service and the key initiatives that have been implemented
- 1.2 To discuss the key Housing issues that have arose due to Covid 19
- 1.3 To provide information regarding the plans for ensuring there is an appropriate supply of affordable accommodation in Coventry to meet housing needs

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
  1. Note the information contained within this report; and
  2. Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member

## **3 Background and Information**

- 3.1 The Council approved its Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2019-2024) in March 2019 and is the core strategy the drives the service forward. The strategy has four key areas of focus:
  - Preventing homelessness & supporting homeless households
  - Support for people and communities
  - Improving existing homes
  - Housing development
- 3.2 The Housing and Homelessness Service has undergone a significant transformation over the previous 2.5 years with a number of initiatives/projects being worked on with the intention of:
  - Reducing the financial burden on the Authority whilst providing better quality temporary accommodation options
  - Increasing the number of households where homelessness is prevented or relieved and therefore decreasing the number of households in temporary accommodation.
  - Increasing the number of properties available to households in exceptional housing need that are either ant social/affordable rents or at the Local Housing Allowance rates if in the private rented sector

### 3.3 Statutory Homeless Service improvements and progress

The table below sets out a number of projects/improvements that have been implemented over the previous 2 years and the outcomes these have achieved.

Project	Progress	Next steps
Re-commissioning of Homelessness Support Services	All contracts were mobilised and in place by the target date of April 2020.	Monitoring the outcomes and working with providers to ensure continuous improvements
Operational data	All Data and reporting across the service has been improved and is now being used to drive improvements.	Continue to use data to drive performance including forecasting future demand
Implement Homefinder Allocations Scheme	The new Homefinder allocations scheme went live on the 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2021 following procurement and implementation of a new IT system for the service	To continue to ensure households previously on the scheme re-register and monitor the delivery of the new scheme
Rough Sleeping team	The team are continuing to work with rough sleepers to secure accommodation and additional funding has been secured to provide a range of different accommodation options. Change into Action (CIA) has been launched as an alternative giving scheme	Continue to promote the Change into Action scheme including more ways for the public to donate Planning for winter provision has commenced
Rough Sleeper Strategy	The city's rough sleeping strategy was approved in December 2020. Obviously there has been significant changes and learning following the Covid 19 pandemic.	The strategy is being reviewed during October 2021 and a new action plan co-created with experts by experience and partner organisations.
Reduce cost of expensive Temporary Accommodation	Households have been consistently moved from more expensive accommodation to higher quality and lower priced accommodation over the past 2 years. The service delivered a significant underspend in 2020/21.	The Accommodation team will continue to review costs and ensure best value for money. We will be seeking to undertake a Private Sector Leasing scheme to deliver TA from the summer of 2022. We also continue to consider alternative TA options which deliver good quality accommodation alongside financial savings.
Eliminate use of B&Bs for families	No families have been placed in B&B accommodation for 2 years (except in an emergency and then moved the following working day).	Maintain this achievement amidst an increase in families approaching as homeless
Eliminate use of B&Bs for single people	The service has worked hard to reduce significantly the number of single people in B&B accommodation and it is only used in emergencies or if there is no other option on the day they approach as homeless.	Maintain this achievement and continue to purchase HMOs
Alternative TA for families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frank Walsh House Project completed</li> <li>Caradoc – Project completed</li> <li>Refurbished properties through Citizen – Project completed</li> </ul>	Monitor take-up and ensure 90% plus occupancy across the schemes

Discharge Homeless Duty into the PRS policy and Let's Rent Coventry.	Let's Rent Coventry scheme, to incentivise private landlords to make properties available for homeless households, has been launched and 56 families have been rehoused permanently.	Let's Rent delivered its target and financial savings. The size of the team will be increased in order to deliver additional properties
Temporary Accommodation charging policy	Project completed. Charging policy has been in place since May 2020 and expected collection targets have been exceeded	Continue to monitor income collection and assess any impact on individuals
Temporary Supported Accommodation	Proposal developed for new Council-owned Hostel buildings and Houses of Multiple Occupation for single homeless people. Eleven have been purchased providing 76 rooms for single homeless people	Continue purchasing in line with Cabinet approval. Monitor use of the properties and ensure 90% plus occupancy and effective management
Housing Advisers Programme	Successful bid for LGA money to fund research and development to increase the number of affordable permanent homes in the city. Meetings held with Cabinet Member, senior Elected Members and Senior Officers to discuss options before the forum options appraisal and business case.	Options and discussion undertaken with Political Cabinet. Options appraisals being developed
Cornerstone Contracts	Secured Cabinet & Council approval in March 2020 for 2 contracts with Cornerstone Partnership 1. To provide 78 units of temporary accommodation for 2 years 2. Provide a total of 103 PRS properties over a 2-year period	All temporary accommodation properties provided and utilised. 48 PRS properties have been let at Local Housing Allowance rates to households in temporary accommodation. Continue to monitor

### 3.4 Covid 19 impacts

There have been some significant impacts on Housing and Homelessness as a result of Covid 19, nationally, including:

- An increase in the number of reported ASB incidents being reported to Social landlords
- Some delays in lower level repairs being completed by landlords
- Been an increase in people seeking alternative housing due to their current accommodation being unsuitable
- Although evictions were delayed during the pandemic these have now started to increase particularly from the Private sector
- Positive work with tenants to ensure that arrears levels have remained relatively low, though some RP's have experienced an increase in arrears

### 3.5 Increasing Affordable Housing

The council works with Registered providers & other organisations/landlords in the city in order to ensure that there is appropriate levels of accommodation built in the city to meet the needs of residents. This includes the following:

- Working with Citizen on regeneration projects across the city including The Spirit Quarters, Spon End and Wyken
- Ensuring the delivery of affordable housing through s106.

- Planning Policy and Housing have developed a new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will help deliver best outcomes for affordable housing provision from planning applications.
- Working with and supporting all Registered Providers in the City to increase the amount and appropriateness of affordable housing.
- Joint Venture with Citizen Housing regarding adjoining land interests has delivered 152 units ( 72 units St Margaret's Road/Gerald Avenue/14 units Stretton Avenue/36 units Almond Tree Avenue/ 30 units at Ebbw Vale \* HWC flats) and the promotion of infill/ garage sites within their portfolio, which has recently identified 205 possible affordable homes
- Planning permission secured for 15 units on a council owned site at Cheltenham Croft which will be 100% affordable provision
- Working with the LGA in order to develop and implement initiatives to increase the level of affordable accommodation in the city
- Promoting large-scale sites through the planning system to secure residential planning permission including – Elm fields Farm (going to committee 30<sup>th</sup> September), Allard Way (planning permission approved for 125 units) and Browns Lane (consultation for 350 units has just commenced until the 10<sup>th</sup> October)
- Working with Community led organisations to bring forward community housing schemes in the city
- Increase the capacity of the Let's Rent Coventry rent guarantee scheme which secures PRS properties at the Local Housing Allowance rates on a minimum of a 12-month tenancy

### 3.6 Future pressures

The service is likely to see an increase in demand from both families and single people as we move through 2021 and 2022. These increases are likely due to the following

- The delay on evictions has ended and we are beginning to see an increase in the number of families approaching as homeless
- With the likelihood of a recession and therefore unemployment increasing more households will struggle financially to meet their housing costs, whether this is rented or mortgage payments, and many will end up homeless
- During previous financial downturns there has been an adverse impact on young people living at home who are evicted by their parents/guardians due to pressures on the family.
- It is likely we will see an increase in homelessness across all groups and therefore an increase of people living in temporary accommodation and an increase in rough sleepers

**Name of Author** Jim Crawshaw

**Job Title** Head of Housing & Homelessness

**Organisation** Coventry City Council

**Contact details** jim.crawshaw@coventry.gov.uk