



Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: John Mitchell

Housing Board

Date: Monday, 21 September 2015
Time: 10:00
Venue: Walden Place
Address: Myddleton Place, Saffron Walden, CB10 1DQ

Members: Councillors Heather Asker, Alan Dean, Terry Farthing, Marie Felton (Chairman), Janice Loughlin, Sharon Morris, Alan Mills, Vic Ranger, Julie Redfern, Howard Ryles

Other attendees:- David Parish and Daphne Cornell (Tenants' Forum representatives)

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015 5 - 12
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Presentation on Health and Housing by Marcus Watts - Principal Environmental Health Protection Officer
- 5 Housing Strategy 2016-2021 13 - 64
- 6 Homelessness Strategy 2016 -2021 65 - 102

7	HRA Business plan 2015 - 2045	103 - 140
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9	Carnation Nurseries Newport	147 - 150
10	Date of next meeting	

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

Telephone: 01799 510433, 510369 or 510548

Email: Committee@uttlesford.gov.uk

General Enquiries

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 4ER

Telephone: 01799 510510

Fax: 01799 510550

Email: uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk

Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk

**HOUSING BOARD held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 10am on 30 JUNE 2015**

Present: Councillor M Felton (Chairman)
Councillors H Asker, A Dean, T Farthing, J Loughlin, S
Morris, A Mills, V Ranger, J Redfern and H Ryles.

Also present: Mrs Daphne Cornell and Mr Ernie Bottler (Tenants'
Forum Representatives).

Officers in attendance: S Baxter (Housing Enabling Officer), P Evans
(Housing Business and Performance Manager), R
Harborough (Director of Public Services), E Horner
(Specialist Accountant), R Millership (Assistant Director
Housing and Environmental Services), A Rees
(Democratic and Electoral Services Officer), G Smith
(Head of Environmental Health), J Snares (Housing
Needs and Landlord Services Manager), M Watts
(Principal Environmental Health Officer) and S Wood
(Housing and Planning Policy Manager).

HB1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from David Parish (Tenant Forum
Representative).

*Councillor Ranger declared a non-pecuniary interest as a tenant of the
Council.*

HB2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January
2015 as a correct record.

HB3 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Redfern, as the Cabinet Member for Housing and Economic
Development, welcomed the new Members of the Housing Board to
their first meeting and gave an overview of the objectives of the
housing board and outlined the main ongoing projects which the
Housing Board had helped to implement. She then gave an overview of
some of the key issues coming up.

Councillor Redfern explained that she felt one of the aims of the
Housing Board was to help develop a portfolio of schemes which would
be ready for development once funding became available.

HB4

HOUSING STRATEGY 2016-21

The Housing and Planning Policy Manager presented her report on the Housing Strategy to Members. She explained that the previous Housing Strategy was published in 2012 and set priorities for a three year period. The new Strategy would aim to set priorities for a five year period.

The first draft of the Strategy was brought to the Housing Board in January for discussion and it was agreed the consultation should be delayed until after the elections to allow new councillors an opportunity to comment on the Strategy. This meeting provided an opportunity for comment before the next draft of the Strategy was prepared in time for the next meeting of the Housing Board. There would then be a public consultation period before the final draft was put before Members for approval. It was anticipated the next Strategy would be in place by January 2016.

Councillor Dean queried what impact the expansion of Right to Buy would have on the Strategy and what could be included in the Strategy in order to mitigate any affects the potential expansion of Right to Buy could have.

In response, the Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services explained the Council was looking at the potential impact of any expansion to Right to Buy.

The report was noted.

HB5

HRA 2014-15 OUTTURN AND BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

Members received a report from the Specialist Accountant on the HRA outturn and the Business Plan. She said in April 2012, the Localism Act 2011 introduced a new self-financing system for the HRA, in place of the old subsidy based system. As part of the transition to new system the Council made a one-off payment of £88.407 million to the Government, which was financed through a number of loans from the Public Works Loans Board.

The Specialist Accountant said the draft HRA outturn had produced an expected favourable variance. This was mainly due to slippage in projects including the Mead Court development and the method in which expenditure was profiled. The total investment in stock had been £8.31 million. There had been a higher number of Right to Buy sales than those estimated in the business plan.

Discussion moved onto the Council's exposure to its loans caused by Right to Buy. In response to Members, the Assistant Director Housing

and Environmental Services explained that the Government had made an assumption on the number of Right to Buy sales when the self-financing settlement had been calculated. If the amount of Right to Buy sales exceeded this number the Council did have some exposure to risk.

Councillor Dean queried the £3.4 million surplus as it appeared the money had not been spent. The Specialist Accountant again explained the surplus was slippage which had arisen from delays to developments. The rest was a result of projected profiling and had been allocated to projects.

The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services, in response to a question by Councillor Loughlin, explained that the contractor was liable for costs resulting from additional unforeseen works. Such costs were included in the contracts. The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services then responded to a question by Councillor Asker and explained the contractors had conducted thorough surveys and tests prior to the build and had been unlucky to miss the asbestos in the ground which had been left by a previous developer.

In response to a question by Councillor Loughlin, the Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager said the Council was responsible for the purchase of IT equipment that was installed in its internet cafes.

The report was noted.

HB6

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said that the ongoing projects were as outlined by Cllr Redfern at the beginning of the meeting.

In response to a question by Councillor Dean about Manor Road, Stansted, The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said the Council were currently trialling a solution at one of the flats. In reply to a follow up request by Councillor Dean, the Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services agreed to bring an update on Manor Road to the next meeting of the Housing Board.

Members discussed the potential development at St Johns Close in Saffron Walden. The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services explained the Council wasn't successful in its bid to buy back one of the two Right to Buy properties. Despite this it was still possible that the redevelopment could still take place, provided the Council was successful in buying back the other property.

Councillor Dean queried the unit cost of £163,000 for the redevelopment at Reynolds Court. He had been in discussion with Councillor Hargreaves who felt the unit cost was higher than comparable developments.

In response the Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said the estimated unit cost included communal facilities, including lifts, which were being built as part of the development. The cost had been examined by a cost consultant who had considered the cost of the development to be in line with current market values.

The report was noted.

HB7

HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

Members received an update on homelessness from the Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager. She said the level of homelessness in 2014/15 was higher than 2013/14, but the rate of increase had slowed from 2012/13. Homelessness had proven difficult to deal with in Uttlesford due to unaffordable rent levels, which made it difficult for people who were homeless to secure tenancies. This issue had been made more prominent as it had been difficult to persuade private landlord landlords to take on tenants who were reliant on housing benefit.

The main positive was the average amount of time spent by accepted homeless families in Bed and Breakfasts had decreased significantly. This was due to the number of temporary units now provided by the Council.

The Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager outlined the process the Council would undertake to develop its new Homelessness Strategy. It was proposed that the strategy would return to being a standalone document, as opposed to being a chapter in the Housing Strategy. A draft Strategy would be brought before the next meeting of the Housing Board before being put out for public consultation.

Members discussed the benefits of holding training on homelessness and agreed to incorporate this training with other training which was to be given to Members.

Discussions moved onto the long term effects of Right to Buy. Councillor Redfern, in response to Councillor Dean, said that whilst the Council did not collect information on residents after they had exercised Right to Buy she was aware of some instances where people had ended up homeless after purchasing a property through the scheme. The Housing Business and Performance Manager said the Council had improved its practices to support people who used Right to Buy.

In response to questions by Members, the Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager said the Council owned most of the temporary accommodation it used. Housing Benefit covered the cost of bed and breakfast if the Council needed to use this type of accommodation.

The report was noted.

HB8

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager presented the report on the Allocations Policy and the amendments made to the Policy following recent Government guidance.

The new guidance meant the Right to Move had to be incorporated into the Policy. This meant the Council had to remove the local connection criteria for applicants who needed to either; move into the district to take up a definite employment offer, or maintain their current employment. These applicants would be given additional preference and would be placed one band higher subject to meeting the Right to Move criteria.

The Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager said the Council had also re-examined its eligibility criteria and proposed amending it so that those who lived outside the district but worked within it, would now qualify for housing after three years instead of two, the same as the residency criteria.

Another proposed amendment added the wording on rural exceptions sites found in Section 106 agreements. This amendment followed legal guidance and had been agreed between the main provider of rural exception site schemes and the Council's legal officers.

The final amendment helped clarify when tenants of flats would be eligible for housing of a similar size. The Policy now included criterion that tenants must have lived in the flat for two years and conducted their tenancy in a satisfactory manner. This wording had been omitted from the original Policy.

Members discussed the Council's housing waiting list. In response to questions by Members, the Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager said the Council's waiting list was currently around 1,050 applications. This figure was lower than it was previously due to the stricter eligibility criteria included in the current Policy. A choice-based letting system was used so waiting times varied depending on property size and location.

In response to Councillor Loughlin it was agreed that Members would be given paper copies of the Policy once it had been agreed by Cabinet.

Councillor Dean questioned the Policy's ability to deal with exceptional circumstances. Members agreed that regardless of the criteria in place, someone would always fall marginally outside of the criteria boundaries. It was noted that the Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services could use her discretion in such scenarios. Councillor Dean said he was reassured by this point.

AGREED that the Allocations Policy was recommended to Cabinet as amended in the appendix to the report.

HB9

PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014-15 OUTTURN

The Housing Business and Performance Manager presented her report. She outlined the three levels of performance indicators; Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), Performance Indicators (PI's) and Local Performance Indicators (LPI's). Housing's performance indicators were all managed through Covalent, with KPI's and PI's being monitored by CMT and the Performance and Audit Committee. LPI's were monitored by CMT only.

Due to a change in the reporting format for Housemark data, officers were currently compiling reports for the Tenant's Forum and Housing Board. This meant no Housemark data was attached to the report.

In response to a question by Councillor Dean, the Housing Business and Performance Manager explained PI 15 had been put on hold as a new system of tracking performance was being implemented. Currently performance was tracked using a random sample of people who had works carried out for them. The new mobile system would allow a satisfaction survey to be completed by every resident who had repairs carried out for them.

The Housing Business and Performance Manager explained, in response to Councillor Morris, that although the Council did use contractors, repairs work was completed using in house staff. The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services added that the performance of external contractors was monitored through monthly meetings with the contractor. Additionally, a new contract had been signed with the contractor which incorporated performance indicators.

Councillor Loughlin questioned why data was no longer being collected for some of the PIs. The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said that Fire Risk Assessments would be monitored differently through a team of officers.

The report was noted.

HB10

BRE STOCK PROFILES AND QUANTITATIVE HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Principal Environmental Health Officer outlined his report on the recent British Research Establishment (BRE) Housing Stock Modelling and Health Impact Assessment. He said the Council is required to assess the districts housing stock under Section 3 of the Housing Act 2004.

Previously, these surveys involved taking a random sample of dwellings and extrapolating the findings. However, this approach was considered ineffective and the BRE survey method was now favoured.

The stock modelling approach utilises information from a number of sources (including English Housing Survey, census data and Experian consumers database) to provide information on the likely condition of housing stock at a local level.

The Council had also commissioned a quantitative Health Impact Assessment (HIA), which enhanced the information from the BRE and the housing stock modelling. The HIA estimated the costs of housing intervention and the benefits to health arising from potential works. The Council uses this to inform the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and to make funding bids.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer outlined the main findings of the HIA and explained hazards were split into two categories; Category 1 hazards were serious hazards which the Council had to act to rectify, Category 2 hazards were less serious so the Council had discretion as to whether it carried out works.

The HIA said there were 9,468 hazards in Uttlesford, 286 of these would cause incidents requiring medical attention, with most of these being for excess cold and falls. The estimated annual cost to society was estimated at £4million. Hazards were examined by looking at their payback periods. The shortest payback periods were for hazards associated with collisions, with longer payback periods for hazards such as excessive cold.

In response to questions from Members, the Principal Environmental Health Officer said houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) were split into two categories; licensed and un-licensed. The Council's strategy will look at improving licensed HMOs first. The Council had powers under the Housing Act to serve notice on properties, which enabled a more proactive approach.

The report was noted.

HB11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Head of Environmental Health presented a leaflet to Members on air quality. He said air quality levels were under the limits set by the Government and air quality is likely to improve in the long term. The Council would continue to monitor air quality vigilantly to ensure that national air quality standards are not breached. Consultation on a new air quality action plan would also commence shortly.

Mr Bottler noted birds nesting in buildings had caused delays to capital projects and suggested putting up netting around drainpipes to prevent this from happening. He also suggested creating a critical path for future capital projects to allow for greater contingency planning.

HB12 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

It was agreed there would be meetings on 21 September 2014, 9 December 2014 and 8 March 2015.

The possibility of holding the meetings at external venues would be explored, as would organising a bus tour of the district.

The Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services said that a training session would be organised and that Members should email her with any topics they would like to see covered in the training. In the meantime they could always contact her or the team if they had any specific questions.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm.

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 21st September 2015

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Title: Housing Strategy 2016-21

Author: Suzanna Wood, Planning and Housing
Policy Manager, Ext 543

Summary

1. The Housing Strategy 2016-21 sets out the Council's vision and aims for housing in the District for the next five years. It describes the key issues affecting the local housing market and what the Council intends to do to help overcome these challenges and create the right conditions to support growth and improve housing outcomes for local people.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board notes the report and considers the draft Housing Strategy 2016-21 before a six week consultation period.

Financial Implications

3. It is envisaged that the strategy's Action Plan will be delivered from within existing resources.

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

5. None

Communication/Consultation	A consultation event was held in October 2014 to begin to set priorities. A draft was prepared and submitted to Housing Board before the election but it was decided that it should be put on hold until a new Council was elected. A further draft has now been prepared for Housing Board and will then be sent out for consultation with partners and the wider community.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	Equality impact assessment has been

	completed on the draft strategy The strategy will again be EIA before it is finalised following the period of public consultation
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The Council's energy officer has been involved in the drafting of the document
Ward-specific impacts	Whole District
Workforce/Workplace	Housing, Planning, Environmental Health

Situation

6. The last Housing Strategy was written and published in 2012 and set priorities for a three year period. During that time, many of the key priorities have been achieved. These include the following:
 - Delivered 284 affordable homes
 - Landlords forum held once a year
 - Successful Housing Strategy conference held once a year
 - Delivering 1 and 2 bed bungalows on S106 sites
 - Reviewed opportunities for delivery of further regeneration and new build including exploration of alternative delivery models
 - Development of a new Allocations Policy
 - Brought 185 empty properties back into use since October 2013
 - Assisting in the development of the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme
 - Administered and provided 62 grants totalling £455,428 to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes
7. It was agreed that a new Housing Strategy needed to be written and published in 2015 and a conference was held in October 2014 to scope future priorities for the next 5 years. This was well attended by Councillors, tenant forum members, key partners and organisations.
8. A first draft of the Strategy was provided to Housing Board in January however it was agreed that this should be put on hold until after the elections. A discussion was had about the Strategy at the Housing Board meeting in June and gave new Councillors a chance to influence the future direction of housing.

9. The new housing strategy for 2016-2021 sets out the main changes in the housing market, identifies the key challenges in delivering new homes and housing services locally, and informs on what action will be required to help meet both current and future housing needs and aspirations.

The four key strategic aims suggested for the new Housing Strategy 2016-21 are:

- a. Increasing housing supply across all tenures
 - b. Helping people to live independently
 - c. Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes
 - d. Creating sustainable communities
10. The new Housing Strategy will provide a coherent plan for housing policy, a sound evidence base and seek to inform the new Local Plan for the District. The Strategy is aligned with the Housing Business Plan and will stand alongside the Homelessness Strategy.
 11. Accompanying the Housing Strategy is a Housing Strategy Action Plan which sets out detailed objectives and outcomes for each of the themes above.
 12. Due to the number of policy changes currently being proposed by Government, the Housing Strategy and Action Plan will be kept under review and updated regularly in order to reflect changes in policy, practice or economic conditions.

Risk Analysis

16.

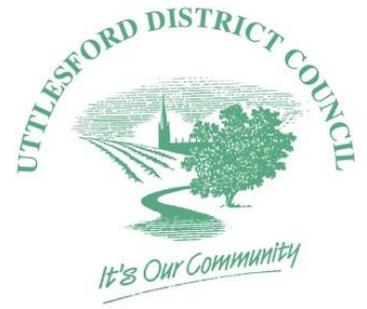
Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Document is delayed/not approved	1 – little risk, partners and members will be involved in scoping the document and tight timescales have been set	3 – a future plan is needed and could cause delays to key projects	Draft document has already been prepared to go out for public consultation. It will be put before Cabinet for approval in December prior to the expiry of the current document

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT

Housing Strategy

2016-21

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Action Plan

Foreword from Housing Portfolio Holder

As I am sure you know Uttlesford is a beautiful rural area rated by many as one of the best places to reside in the country. This along with our commutability to London and proximity to Cambridge makes this district a most desirable place to live. This in turn inflates house prices making it difficult for young people and local families to get a foot on the housing ladder.

We also have a lack of availability in both the privately owned and rental markets of bungalows and other suitable types of property for our more mature residents. This is particularly a problem in many of our villages. This makes it difficult for people to move from larger family homes into something more appropriate for their changing needs.

Housing is a key priority for councillors in Uttlesford. The housing and planning departments are working together to help deliver the accommodation that meets the needs of those living and working in Uttlesford. We are doing this through both our new Local Plan and Housing Strategy.

I'm really proud to say that this Council is ahead of many as we started a building programme a few years ago. Having completed two phases of council built new housing in Leaden Roding, we now have an ambitious development programme replacing out of date sheltered housing with new houses and bungalows in Stansted and upgrading other sheltered housing in the District to make it fit for the future and a desirable place to grow old in.

As a council we continue to work closely with the **RCCE** to buy more time and help for Parish Councils to bring forward plans for exception sites. This provides local people an opportunity to continue to live in the areas where they already have roots and personal connections.

We believe that there are many ways of delivering housing, be it working with developers and registered providers or encouraging empty home owners to become landlords. We know times are very challenging in so many ways but we want to make the most of the opportunities that are available and I believe we at Uttlesford are up to the challenge.

Cllr Julie Redfern
Portfolio Holder, Housing

Summary and Introduction

The Council's new Housing Strategy draws on a wide ranging consultation with stakeholders as well as building on existing evidence and local knowledge. As the new Local Plan is drafted, the Housing Strategy will form part of the evidence base of the Local Plan alongside the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

The Council is committed to producing and adopting a sound Local Plan and has set out the programme for completing this work. The Council will continue to work towards the delivery of the Housing Strategy through both Local Planning and Development Management.

The new Strategy also stands alongside the HRA Business Plan, Homelessness Strategy and Developers Guide and sets out how we plan to deliver our key priorities and objectives for the next three years.

Our key objectives

Increasing Housing Supply across all tenures

Helping People to live independently

Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes

Creating sustainable communities

Achievements from 2012-15

- Growth area funding gained and used to provide rural housing in Hatfield Heath
- Completion of a second Passiv haus scheme with Hastoe and a further one planned
- Delivered 284 affordable homes as part of market housing development on sites across the District.
- An annual Landlord forum
- An annual Housing Strategy conference
- Delivering 1 and 2 bed bungalows on new development sites
- New commuted sum policy that is providing a pot of funding for affordable housing development in the District.
- Successful delivery of the investment programme including the delivery of environmental improvements

- Development and adoption of a new Allocations Policy
- Implementation of an in-house Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme
- New tenancy strategy
- Brought 185 empty properties back into use since October 2013
- Assisting in the development of the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- Administered and provided 62 grants totalling £455,428 to enable disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes
- Administered and provided 18 grants totalling £31,167 to residents in receipt of means tested benefits to carry out home repairs and improve energy efficiency
- Investigated 105 complaints of poor conditions in private sector housing

The National Context

Key Policies

The Governments' Housing Strategy

The Government's national policies for housing have recently been updated and published in the Productivity Plan. The Plan sets out the steps the Government are going to take to ensure more homes are built that people can afford, through planning reform, progress on delivering 200,000 starter homes and the extension of the Right to Buy.

Legislative changes

The introduction of the Localism Act in 2011 gave local authorities new powers to discharge homelessness duties into the private sector, a new duty to introduce a Tenancy Strategy, and new flexibilities to determine housing allocations and qualification criteria. It also introduced reforms to social housing tenure which enabled social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time.

The Localism Act introduced significant housing related changes, including:

Social housing allocations reform – social housing is in great demand and the Act gives local authorities more freedom to develop policies about eligibility to enter the housing register. While this means that local authorities can prevent people who do not need social housing from joining the list, they are still obliged to ensure that social homes accommodate those most vulnerable.

Social housing tenure reform – this allows for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future by enabling social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length over time.

Reform of homelessness legislation – this enables local housing authorities to discharge their statutory homeless duty into a suitable private rented accommodation.

Reform of council housing finance – this enables local authorities to retain collected rent and spend it on local priorities.

Right to buy – Discounts increased from £16,000 to £75,000 to encourage tenants to access the housing market and buy their Council property.

The **Welfare Reform Act 2012** made the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. It introduced a wide range of reforms which aimed to make the benefits system simpler. The main elements of the welfare reform were:

- Universal Credit
- Benefits Cap
- Personal Independence Payment
- Council tax benefit
- Housing Benefit

Of equal significance to the raft of new legislation passed was the dismantling of the existing infrastructure within which local authorities have been used to operating. Key changes saw the removal of regional government, the abolition of the Audit Commission and the demise of the Housing Corporation and its successor body the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). Housing associations moved from being Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to Registered Providers (RPs) and their regulation and funding was assumed by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). In the transition, regulation became 'light touch' with an emphasis on value for money and financial viability.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme introduced Affordable Rent, a new form of social housing and the main type of new housing supply. Housing providers can let a property at an Affordable Rent (inclusive of service charges, where applicable) of up to 80% of the gross market rent reflective of the property size and location. Affordable rent will also be used to support funding for future delivery.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which councils and local people can produce their own distinctive Local Plans or Neighbourhood Development Plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of their communities.

It specifies that local authorities have a duty *“to plan for a mix of housing for different groups, including older people, based on robust data, needs analysis and local demographic projections.”*

It also set out the requirement for local Authorities to maintain a five year land supply of deliverable sites for housing

New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus was introduced during 2011/12 and has meant that for every new home and empty property brought back into use, local authorities receive the equivalent of the annual council tax raised, together with an additional £350 for

affordable units. This scheme intends to incentivise local authorities and local communities to accept and encourage residential development.

Help to Buy Scheme

The 'Help to Buy' scheme was introduced to help first time buyers by providing Government loans of 20% of the price of a newly built home, with no interest to pay for the first five years of the loan. This was intended as a stimulus to generate a greater number of people able to take up home ownership and to support the building of new homes.

The Care Act 2014

The wellbeing of people is at the centre of the new Care Act. Councils now have a duty to think about the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of people who need care. Councils also have a new duty to provide preventative services to keep people healthy in the first place.

The aim of the act is to put people and their carers in control of their care and support. In addition the Act will put a limit on the amount anyone will have to pay towards the cost of their care.

The Care Act contains core legal duties and powers relating to adult social care. Local authorities will be responsible for providing a broader care and support role towards the local community.

We will need to recognise and incorporate the strategy that Adult Social Care and the West Essex Clinical Commissioners develop into the Housing Strategy.

Implications of the 2015 Budget

As this document is being drafted, there are many new proposals coming from the 2015 Budget and the Productivity Plan, the implications of these are not currently known and many will have an effect on our work programme and priorities in the coming years.

- 1% rent reduction for the next 4 years for social housing tenants

This has implications for both the Council and our Housing Association partners. Future development programmes are based around rental income and borrowing capacity from new and existing stock. With cuts of 1% per year, housing providers are facing significant losses to their balance sheets. Our Housing Association partners are all currently assessing the impact of this and looking at their future development programmes. This will mean that many providers cannot progress schemes that they have expressed an interest in or will be renegotiating with developers and offering lower prices for schemes.

- Extend the Right to Buy scheme to housing association tenants.

This has implications for our Housing Association partners who have not factored this into their business plans financially. It is also a concern on rural exception schemes whereby development is allowed on Greenfield sites as the properties are held in perpetuity to meet a local need, whether homes on such sites will be exempt, or other safeguards will be offered is unknown as yet. We will respond to consultation on these mechanisms once the detail is known, drawing on our depth of experience of the operation of rural exception schemes.

It also proposed the following:

- selling off the most expensive council houses when they become vacant. These are classed as properties over £xxxx
- Those on higher incomes in social housing will have to pay the market rate for their homes. That applies to those earning above £40,000 in London and £30,000 elsewhere in Britain.
- The cap on benefits will be cut from £26,000 to £23,000 in London and £20,000 in the rest of the UK. Working-age benefits will be frozen for four years, including tax credits and housing benefit

As these proposals are developed, the Council will be looking at the impact and reviewing the Housing Strategy to take account of it.

Developer Contributions

Throughout the life of the last Housing Strategy, we were collecting commuted sums from developers on small sites and using this to fund our Council house building programme.

In November 2014, a Ministerial statement was published which made small developments exempt from affordable housing contributions. This had a significant impact on the Council and we were unable to collect £1.4million of affordable housing contributions from developers.

This has since been appealed by two Councils and the policy has been quashed. The government has now removed paragraphs from a section on planning obligations in the national planning practice guidance related to the small development policy and the vacant building credit.

We will be reviewing our policies in the light of this announcement and publishing a new Developer Contributions document by the end of 2015.

The Local Context

Partnerships and Policies

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

Locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and business that play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and creation of jobs. Uttlesford works with two LEP the South East LEP (SELEP); and the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCGPEP) Both are focused on helping to drive forward sustainable economic growth in our area – with local business, education providers, the third sector and the public sector working together to achieve this.

West Essex Commissioning Care Group (CCG)

In April 2013, the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group became the statutory body responsible for buying healthcare services on behalf of 290,000 people in the Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford districts. The commissioning group is made up of 38 general practices who work together to ensure the best possible healthcare is available to everyone in west Essex.

Representatives from the CCG sit on the Local Strategic Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board. Working jointly will help to meet the future needs of residents in Uttlesford in the future.

Housing Related Support Partnership

Officers are represented on the Housing Related Support Partnership group which is made up of officers from the District Councils across Essex, County Council officers, Provider representatives, Police, Probation, mental health commissioning and Essex Drug and Alcohol Team (EDAAT).

The aim of this group is to inform and recommend the strategic direction of the housing related support (HRS) programme in Essex. It will identify opportunities for joint or aligned commissioning of services which will meet a wider range of outcomes, especially within the context of the developing Social Care, Public Health and Health agendas. The group will also look at the best use of reduced and non-ring-fenced resources.

Local Strategic Partnership – Uttlesford Futures

The Uttlesford LSP “Uttlesford Futures” is a collaboration of organisations including the district council, the county council, the local health service, the emergency services, the voluntary sector and statutory social care partners.

Their vision is to bring partners together to help resolve community priorities and challenges, with a view to maximising effectiveness and sustainability.

LSPs allow public bodies to work together on projects they wouldn't be able to do on their own. Uttlesford Futures' work is guided by the priorities that are set out in the district's [Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2018 \[143kb\]](#).

The key themes in this strategy are:

- Children and young people matter
- Staying healthy
- Developing business
- Feeling safe
- Protecting the environment
- Getting around

These themes come from a combination of priorities that have been identified as being important locally and ones which central government have said that LSPs need to look at.

The Housing Strategy works alongside the Sustainable Community Strategy and both documents aim to complement the work of each other.

Corporate Plan 2015-20

The Council has recently published its Corporate Plan 2015-20 and has the following priorities:

- Remain a **low tax** Council
- Continue to listen and respond to our communities so we stay focused on the delivery of **high quality** key services that matter.
- We will have shared the benefits of growth with our communities in an **responsible** way that protects and enhances our environment
- Delivering thriving communities

Local Plan

The adopted Local Plan, together with national policy and guidance, sets out the framework for development within the District. The Council is working to produce a new Local Plan and recently adopted a new Local Development Scheme which sets out the timescale and process for completing this work.

The Housing Strategy forms a key part of the evidence base for the Local Plan as well as Development Management decisions on applications and will need to be taken into account.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Uttlesford District Council worked with the adjoining authorities of Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow in 2008 and commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake an assessment of the housing markets of these districts, which for the purposes of this study is collectively called the London Commuter Belt (East)/M11 sub-region.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a framework that the district council can follow to develop a good understanding of how housing markets operate. It assesses housing need and demand and will be used to development the housing policies in the Local Development Framework.

A further update commissioned by Epping Forest, Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford Councils was published in September 2015 and informs this Strategy.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan sets out how the Council will resource the maintenance of its homes and its investment priorities for the future.

The purpose of the business plan is to demonstrate that the council can maintain its housing assets, and deliver the levels of service, home and neighbourhood improvements. It is first and foremost a financial document, which determines how the council will meet the needs of present and future tenants, demonstrating that Government and local targets can be achieved and ensuring the long-term viability of the stock.

An effective Business Plan has become crucial since the government announced the reform of the rules governing local authority housing finance and the introduction of the self-financing system. This has been a major change in national housing finance and has introduced new opportunities for the Council's housing service but also caused exposure to risks. It is therefore critical that the HRA continues to be managed on sound business principles.

The document can be found at www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Scene Setting – The Uttlesford Area

Uttlesford is a sparsely populated rural locality in Northwest Essex. The District borders Hertfordshire to the West and Cambridgeshire to the North. It is the largest District in Essex at 63,752 hectares and is mainly rural in character with two market towns - Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow, a range of key villages; Elsenham, Takeley, Great Chesterford, Newport, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted and a number of smaller parishes.

Uttlesford has a population of around 83,500 (2014 figure) which is set to increase over the next 10 -15 years with new housing development. 53% of residents are aged 25 – 64. Around 30% are under 24 and 16.5% are over 65. When compared to the East of England and England, it is clear that Uttlesford has less young people and more older people. With a lower number of working age adults supporting both the retired and the young.

There are good road and rail links into London, Cambridge and Harlow from settlements in the M11 Stansted-Cambridge and A120 Stansted-Braintree corridors, although public transport in the more rural locations is poor. Stansted Airport lies within its boundaries.

Key Messages from the evidence base

- The Uttlesford District is projected to increase from 83,500 people to 105,800 by 2035.
- The number of residents living in the district who are aged 65 and over is expected to increase from 15,800 people to 28,000.
- Growing ageing population with 1,070 people aged over 65 in Uttlesford are thought to have dementia. This figure is estimated to rise to 1,920 by 2030.
- 70% of the population own their own home.
- Average house price of £450,300 compared to regional average of £299,400 (August 2015)
- Average house price is 11 times the average income.
- Average income in Uttlesford is £24,575 per annum.

The evidence base shows that house prices are high in Uttlesford and incomes low, meaning that mortgages are unaffordable for a large percentage of our population. This places a strain on the Council's housing stock and the private rented sector. Young people, families and those providing our key services (for example care staff, teachers, cleaners etc.) are moving out of Uttlesford away from family and support to be able to buy their first home.

Our population is getting older, living longer and requiring greater care. This is already having implications for the housing market. Requirements for extra care, residential homes and a specialist dementia facility are needed to meet these needs.

Partnership Working

Strong partnerships are an essential part of this strategy and ensures that key projects can be delivered even with limited resources. Partners include all of the Local Authorities in Essex through the Essex Housing Officers Group, Registered Providers, the Homes and Communities Agency and Essex County Council. Another key partner for Uttlesford is its Local Strategic Partnership, Uttlesford Futures which is the key driver for Uttlesford's Community Strategy.

Housing Strategy Conference

As a result of the successful Housing Strategy Conference held in July 2012, the Council hosts a yearly conference to share best practice, monitor achievements and set future objectives. This has helped set the objectives for this new Housing Strategy.

Housing Board

The Housing Board was set up to champion housing issues within the authority, to monitor the Housing Strategy and Business Plan and work on specific time limited housing projects. The group are currently progressing the councils new build programme and the redevelopment of Mead Court Stansted. The group includes Councillors and Tenant Forum members and reports to Cabinet.

The Tenant Forum

Tenant Participation is seen as a vital link between the Council and its tenants. There is one Forum representing Uttlesford, made up of 12 Council tenants and one leaseholder from within the District. The Forum members are consulted on a multitude of different areas of the Housing Service including rent setting, repairs, housing policy, etc.

Two tenants from the Tenant Forum (one of whom is the Chairperson) also sit on the Housing Board covering housing issues.

Homelessness Partnership

The Council has a homelessness partnership that meets quarterly. This is the forum for partnership working and to discuss and implement the Action Plan of the Homelessness Strategy. Partnership working underpins the delivery of a comprehensive and holistic housing options and homelessness service. Invariably the delivery of sustainable housing solutions requires the addressing of non-housing problems, this requires a multi-agency approach. As advice and support services can be delivered by an often complex and fragmented range of organisations, without partnership working and a co-ordinated approach, it is easy for people to slip through the net.

Private Sector Landlords Forum

Locally and nationally some of the worst housing is in the private rented sector, and the Council has recognised the need to work proactively with landlords and letting agents to achieve improvements. The Council organises a private sector landlord forum once a year. Topics have included the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, tenancy deposit protection schemes, the Local Housing Allowance and bringing Empty Homes back into use.

Consultation

Housing Conference

A successful Housing Conference was held on 3 November 2014 to help inform the new Housing Strategy. District and County Councillors, Parish Councils, key partners and Officers came together to hear about and debate future issues and initiatives that will affect the Council in the next three years. Presentations were made about the new allocations policy, rural housing, future provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites, findings from the emerging Strategic Housing Market Assessment and an update from Essex County Council about delivering the health and social care agenda.

Workshop groups then addressed the key issues in more detail. Discussions included the need for a new key worker policy to meet the needs of low paid workers providing services in the District (in particular health workers), exception site housing to meet the needs of the older population (maybe include some private/shared ownership, Gypsy and Traveller sites distributed across Uttlesford, incorporating health facilities as part of new developments.

Registered Providers (RP) Event

An event was held with our RP partners to discuss our affordable housing development programme, how our current policy is working and look for ways to work together more closely.

A lively debate took place about clustering on schemes, the provision of lifts in blocks of flats, parking courts, scheme viability. This has helped us scope our new Guide for Developers which will be published in 2015.

Learning Disability Action Group and meetings with service users at Home Farm Trust

Officers took part in Local Action group meetings with providers, support services and service users to understand the issues faced by the Learning disability community. A workshop was held with service users living in Uttlesford and East Herts to understand their aspirations for their future housing need and a follow up session held with staff who manage Home Farm Trust in Ugley.

Service users have agreed to help us pull together an easy read copy of the Housing Strategy. This will help them understand the future housing policies of the Council and ensure that they can help influence them.

Workshops and home visits with older people

Workshop sessions were held in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow along with some home visits for those less able to access our workshop sessions. The aim was to understand the future needs of older people living in our District in order to better plan for their needs.

Research with young people

We carried out a survey within one of the local schools, to find out what their 16-18 year old pupils felt their housing options were in the future. Many were planning to go to university and anticipated staying in those areas afterwards, others wanted to move to London. Very few saw their future in Uttlesford due to the cost of house prices and private rental costs.

Health and Wellbeing Group

This group work towards one of the themes in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Their work helps inform and set future priorities in the Housing Strategy. The group consists of health professionals, Essex County Council, Mind, Citizens Advice Bureau, Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Alzheimer's Society, Age UK, Carers UK.

Tenant Forum/Housing Board

The Tenant Forum and Housing Board play a key part in the preparation of this new strategy from influencing new policy to monitoring key progress made.

Parish Councils

All of our Parish Councils will be given the chance to comment on this new Housing Strategy through the consultation process and their comments will be considered and used where possible. Their comments were very useful in the drafting of the last Housing Strategy.

Housing Needs, Supply and Demand

The Housing Market

There are approximately 32,862 properties in the Uttlesford District. 28,286 of these are in the private sector and 2,833 are owned by the Council. Smaller numbers are owned by Registered Providers and the Ministry of Defence.

Renting in Uttlesford

As with most areas, there are three main types of landlord in Uttlesford – The Council, Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and Private Landlords. The Government's subsidy system for building and maintaining Council and RSL homes leads to them being able to charge a lower rent than most private landlords.

The table below shows the average Council social rents per week in Uttlesford.

Table 1: Average social rents per week

BEDS	Type	Average (£)
Bedsit	Flat	81.39
1	Flat	81.16
2	Flat	91.99
3	Flat	102.89
1	Bungalow	90.88
2	Bungalow	100.55
3	Bungalow	104.36
1	House	95.52
2	House	103.50
3	House	111.66
4	House	122.47
5	House	115.61

Source: UDC data August 2015.

The average monthly private rent in Uttlesford is:

Table 2: Average monthly private rent

	Saffron Walden	Stansted	Great Dunmow
1 bed	£650	£700	£750
2 bed	£900	£995	£800
3 bed	£1350	£1200	£1200
4 bed	£1650	£1600	£1450

Source: Research completed on Rightmove, August 2015.

The lack of private rented properties in Uttlesford has meant that rents charged are high. This has implications for low earners and those living on Local Housing Allowance. As can be seen in the tables below, the LHA rates do not cover the costs of a rental property in the District.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rates

A Local Housing Allowance rate is the maximum amount of eligible rent that local authorities can use in the assessment of a housing benefit claim which falls under the LHA scheme. LHA rates are applicable from the 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

Table 3: Cambridge area (i.e. North of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Category	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Shared Room Rate	A	£80.52	£348.92
1 Bedroom	B	£126.05	£546.22
2 Bedrooms	C	£140.74	£609.87
3 Bedrooms	D	£168.45	£729.95
4 Bedrooms	E	£218.16	£945.36

Table 4: Harlow and Bishops Stortford (i.e. South of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Category	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Shared Room Rate	A	£68.08	£295.01
1 Bedroom	B	£133.32	£577.72

2 Bedrooms	C	£164.79	£714.09
3 Bedrooms	D	£198.11	£858.48
4 Bedrooms	E	£279.69	£1211.99

Table 5: Stevenage and North Herts (i.e. West of the Uttlesford District)

Number of Bedrooms	Category	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Shared Room Rate	A	£72.04	£312.17
1 Bedroom	B	£122.36	£530.23
2 Bedrooms	C	£155.37	£673.27
3 Bedrooms	D	£186.46	£807.99
4 Bedrooms	E	£238.80	£1034.80

Source: UDC Data 2015

House Prices

The attractiveness and desirability of the Uttlesford District has a major effect on house prices and land values. The average house price here is currently £450,300 compared to the regional average of £299,400 (Hometrack, August 2015)

Table 6: Average House Price

Breakdown by bedroom size	Price
1 bed flat	£123,300
2 bed flat	£172,100
2 bed house	£257,300
3 bed house	£331,700
4 bed house	£521,600

Source: Hometrack August 2015

Affordability is still a problem in Uttlesford; this is measured by affordability ratios. These show the relationship between income and house prices. Data shows that average house prices in Uttlesford are almost 11 times the average income. Mortgages are calculated on 3.5 times household so this shows how unaffordable property is for those on an average income.

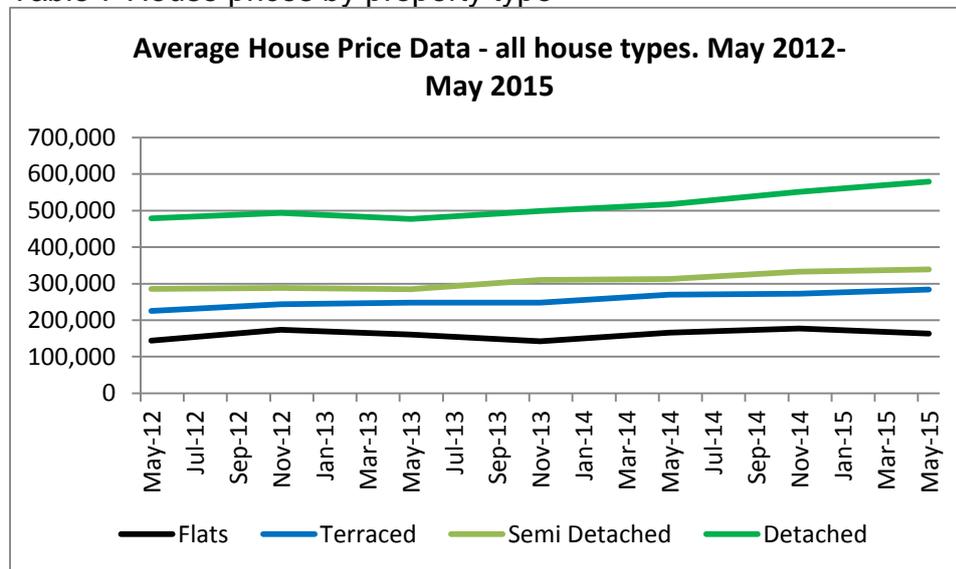
If you look at house prices in the lowest 25% price band, households will still need 8 times their income to buy a property.

An example: Mr and Mrs Smith want to buy a 2 bedroom house in Saffron Walden. They have a good deposit so only require an 85% mortgage. The mortgage payments equate to £197 per week assuming a 2.88% mortgage rate. To private rent a property, it would cost £184 per week and the supply isn't available to meet the demand.

Table 7 shows the average house prices by property type in Uttlesford between May 2012 to May 2015.

Average figures for flats have risen by £19,384, terraced properties have risen by £58,488, semi-detached have risen by £53,552 whilst detached properties have risen by £99,836. Over the past 2.5 years, terraced properties have risen the greatest by 26%.

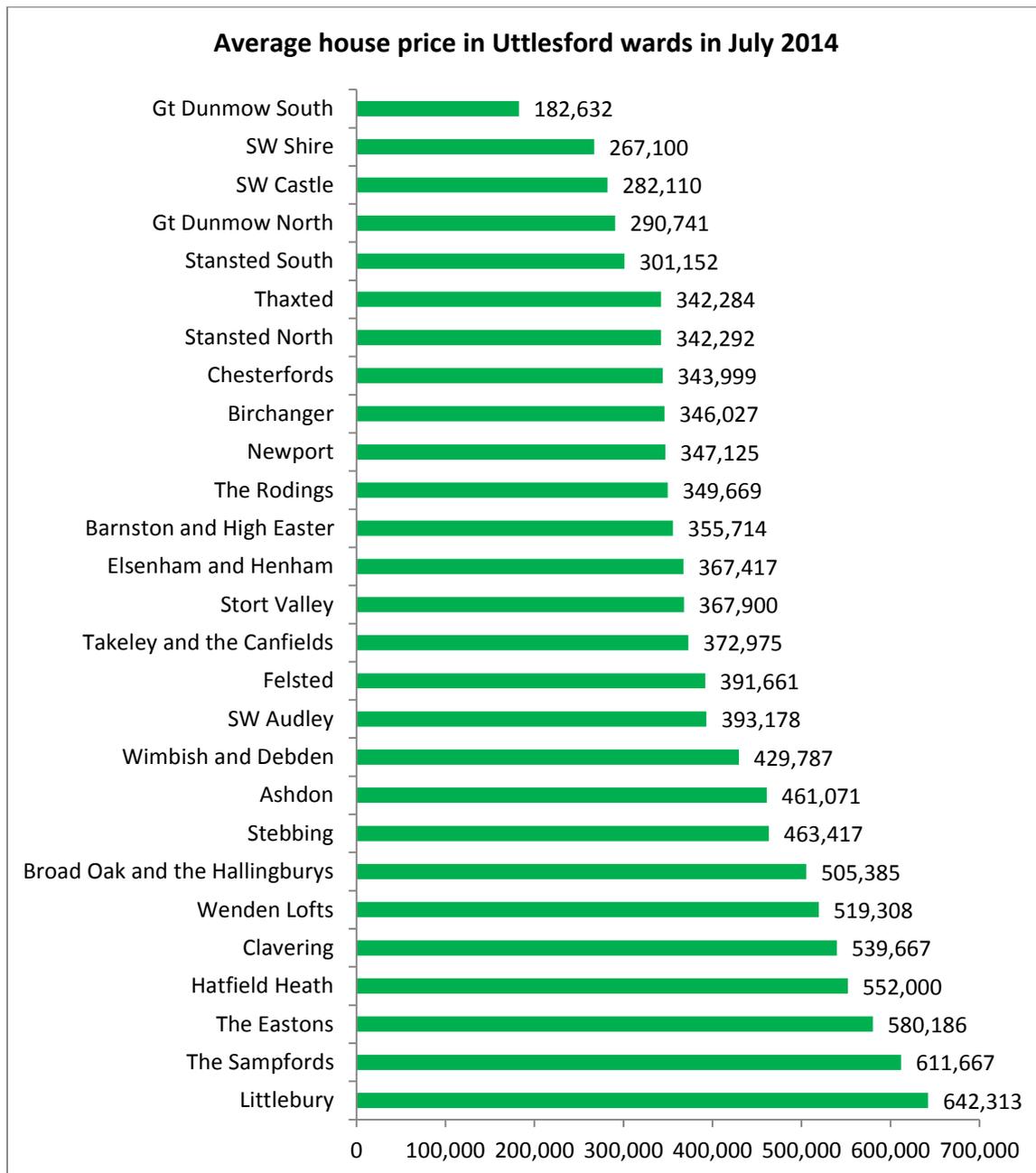
Table 7 House prices by property type



Source: *Hometrack Aug 2015*

The chart below (figure 15) shows the lowest average price is Gt Dunmow South with £182,632 compared to the highest average price in Littlebury with £642,313.

Table 8 Average house prices



Source: *Hometrack July 2014*

Shared Ownership

Residents interested in home ownership but whose household income is insufficient to meet their full housing needs may be eligible for Shared Ownership. This model allows the applicant to purchase up to 75% of the property with rent paid on the remaining share. Properties are managed by Registered Providers.

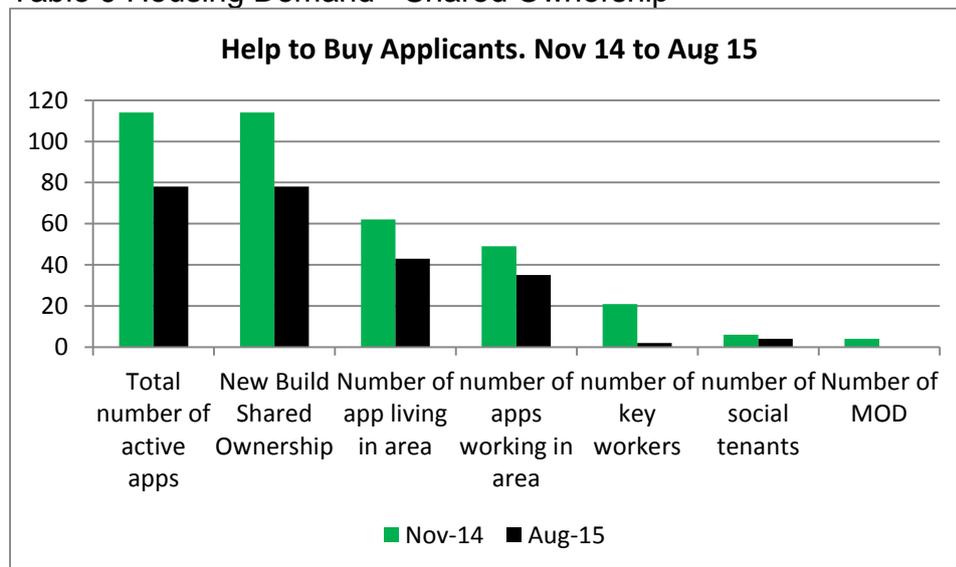
The following data is provided through the Help to Buy website which manages all applicants. Applicants are registered for all products from the Help to Buy agent which could include an equity loan. The registrations data does not indicate which financial product applicants are interested in.

The number of applicants registered for this model is given in Table 9. A comparison of data for Nov 2014 and August 2015 highlights the continuing interest in the model.

The total number of interested applicants amounted to 114 for 2014 reducing slightly to 78 for August 2015. The number of applicants who are social housing tenants has remained similar whilst more Key Workers were registered in November, 2014 than August 2015.

A refresh of the data was carried out earlier this year which may account for the differences in figures. However, the data is a useful benchmark to highlight the interest and financial ability of residents to access home ownership.

Table 9 Housing Demand - Shared Ownership



Source: (Help to Buy Aug 2015)

Housing need and demand

Housing need and demand is measured and assessed from a variety of sources, this can include formal studies and information already held by the Council.

Identifying Housing Needs

For some years, Government guidance on housing and planning has emphasised the requirement for local authorities to assess local housing need and develop strategies to address that need. This assessment process has generally been achieved by conducting Housing Needs Surveys. The Council last undertook a District-wide Housing Needs Survey in 2002, covering the period

from 2002 to 2007 and an update of this work took place in 2004. In 2006 a framework was introduced under Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) for carrying out Strategic Housing Market Assessments, with final guidance published in March 2007. These assessments continue to provide information on the level of need and demand for housing locally, but they also contribute to the sub regional and regional levels of planning.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) analyses the entire local housing market, which is likely to be wider than the local authority boundaries. It forms a crucial part of the evidence base that informs the Local Plan. A survey was initially conducted in 2010 comprising of six districts in the sub region, including Uttlesford, Brentwood, Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping and Harlow, who joined to form London Commuter Belt (East) and commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a comprehensive SHMA. The research used secondary data from sources such as the UK Census, Homes and Communities Agency, HM Land Registry and the Office for National Statistics, along with a qualitative consultation programme with a wide range of stakeholders. This research has now been updated, the study was carried out in partnership with East Herts, Epping and Harlow Councils and was published in September 2015.

Headline findings showed:

6.6% of households in the LCB M11 east are overcrowded. However when looking at those living in the social rented sector, 13% were overcrowded in Uttlesford.

Over the 22 year period between 2011 and 2033 it is projected there will be an additional 36,899 households living within the SHMA study area. 9,877 additional households will be living in Uttlesford.

It is predicted that across the study area there are 13,291 households in housing need, 576 are currently in housing need with a further 2,541 needing affordable housing between 2011 and 2033 in Uttlesford.

Of the 3,117 households requiring affordable housing in Uttlesford, 8% need a 1 bed, 47% need a 2 bed, 40% need a 3 bed and 4% need a 4 bed house.

The policy implications from the SHMA will be considered by the Planning Policy Working Group in October 2015 and the Housing Strategy will be updated to reflect this.

Housing Supply

Delivery of Affordable Housing

The Council are very successful in delivering affordable housing in partnership with registered providers. During 2012/15, 284 properties were completed. These properties are allocated to those on our Housing Register.

The Council has a good programme moving forward with the total numbers of units projected to be completed between 2015-2020 amounting to 3,733 with 1,330 being delivered as affordable housing. Further details of this programme are available in Appendix 2 and 3.

Rural Housing

Since 1989, we have provided 350 affordable homes in rural areas through the rural exception policy. Schemes have recently completed in Hatfield Heath and Arkesden with future schemes progressing in Little Hallingbury, Wimbish, Newport, Hatfield Broad Oak and many more. Further details of this programme are available in Appendix 2 and 3.

The key to success is supporting Parish Councils to bring forward rural housing schemes to meet the needs of their local communities. This will be developed through the use of Neighbourhood plans in the future.

After a rural scheme has completed, we survey the residents allocated the properties, the local residents living close to the scheme and the Parish Council.

Research has shown that

- 100% of respondents were allocated a property based on the local connection criteria.
- 86% rated their property either excellent or good, 14% satisfactory
- 95% of local residents agreed that the affordable housing had benefitted the local community
- 48% were attending local groups in the community.

The research has given the Council a greater knowledge of what is successful/not successful in a scheme, has shown how it has allowed young people to remain in the village and that they were allocated to those with a local connection. It has also encouraged Parishes to move forward with affordable housing schemes in their area.

Housing Register

As at August 2015, there were 954 applications on the housing register, of those applications 397 were in bands A-D and considered to be in housing need.

Choice Based Lettings

In 2007 the Council agreed that a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme should be developed for Uttlesford. The government had set a target that all housing authorities should be operating a CBL scheme for allocating social housing by 2010. The government considers that CBL schemes can enhance mobility between areas and tenures and provide a balance between the needs of prospective tenants and choice and so may contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods.

The Council joined a Consortia of five other Local Housing Authorities (Broxbourne, Epping Forest, Chelmsford, East Herts and Brentwood), and 25 registered social landlords and successfully bid for government funding to assist with the development and initial set-up of a CBL scheme. The CBL scheme called HomeOption went live in November 2008.

Since that time, the Council have also introduced an online application form and moved from a points based lettings system to a banding system. This has made it clearer for applicants to understand the process and know where their application sits in terms of priority.

We have also introduced a new Allocations Policy which places greater emphasis on those with a local connection. This policy was introduced in January 2015 and will ensure that those applying for housing have the relevant links to Uttlesford before joining our housing register.

Lettings through Home Option

Between April 2014 and March 2015, a total of 281 properties were let via the Home Option system, 178 of these properties were Council owned. Where properties become empty the Council have set targets on its various properties from the date the key is returned to the date the next tenant gets the key to their new home.

The Council needs to ensure that with an increase in demand for social housing that its own stock is used in the most effective way. In some cases an increase in the void period may be because possible tenants did either not bid or did not wish to take up the offer of that property. This is particularly an issue for some of the Council's sheltered housing schemes where average re-let times are higher than general needs properties.

Older Persons Housing

The Council currently provides 406 units of older persons accommodation spread across the District. This ranges from one and two bedroom bungalows to flats and bedsits. Some of these schemes are no longer fit for purpose and we have been updating and regenerating them during the life of the last Housing Strategy.

However the need for more accommodation for older people is growing as our ageing population grows.

Table 10: Uttlesford Population aged 65 and over, projected to 2030

	2014	2015	2020	2025	2030
People aged 65-69	5,100	5,200	4,700	5,600	6,500
People aged 70-74	3,600	3,800	4,900	4,500	5,300
People aged 75-79	2,800	2,900	3,500	4,600	4,300
People aged 80-84	2,100	2,100	2,500	3,100	4,100
People aged 85-89	1,300	1,400	1,700	2,000	2,600
People aged 90 and over	800	900	1,200	1,600	2,100
Total population 65 and over	15,700	16,300	18,500	21,400	24,900

Source: Poppi August 2015

The charts below show the number of people requiring supported housing growing significantly in the next 15 years.

Table 11 People aged 65 and over living in a care home with or without nursing in Uttlesford, by age, projected to 2030

	2014	2015	2020	2025	2030
People aged 65-74 living in a LA care home with or without nursing	0	0	0	0	0
People aged 75-84 living in a LA care home with or without nursing	0	0	0	0	0
People aged 85 and over living in a LA care home with or without nursing	0	0	0	0	0
People aged 65-74 living in a non LA care home with or without nursing	25	26	27	29	33
People aged 75-84 living in a non LA care home with or without nursing	109	111	134	172	187
People aged 85 and over living in a non LA care home with or without nursing	314	328	414	513	656
Total population aged 65 and over living in a care home with or without nursing	448	465	575	714	877

Source: POPPI 2014 data

Table 12, People with dementia living in Uttlesford, projected to 2030.

Dementia - all people	2014	2015	2020	2025	2030
Show by gender					
People aged 65-69 predicted to have dementia	65	65	59	69	81
People aged 70-74 predicted to have dementia	101	105	134	123	145
People aged 75-79 predicted to have dementia	157	164	204	268	245
People aged 80-84 predicted to have dementia	251	262	298	369	486
People aged 85-89 predicted to have dementia	261	283	339	417	495
People aged 90 and over predicted to have dementia	268	268	357	474	622
Total population aged 65 and over predicted to have dementia	1,104	1,146	1,391	1,720	2,075

Source: POPPI 2014 data

Table 12 shows that the numbers living with dementia in Uttlesford will almost double in the next 15 years. This will have an impact on the housing we need to provide and the services to support those living with dementia.

Supported Housing

Learning Disability Schemes

There are two learning disability schemes in Saffron Walden. They provide 12 units of accommodation at Ferguson Close (Family Mosaic) and 3 at Gallows Hill (Family Mosaic)

Officers from the Council are represented on the local Learning Disability Action Group (LAG); this group helps the Council to look at future and current need in the District and creates effective partnership working.

Mental Health

There are two schemes for mental health consisting of 8 units at Station Street, Saffron Walden managed by Granta and 3 at St Edmunds Field, Great Dunmow managed by Springboard that have been refurbished.

There is a requirement for a new scheme to replace the units at Station Street as it is no longer fit for purpose. The residents currently share a bathroom and kitchen which does not encourage them to live independently

Officers are working with Metropolitan Housing Association to identify a future location for the scheme that will meet the needs of those with mental health needs.

Physical Disability

For those with a physical disability, we request bungalows as part of our affordable housing requirement. However we will be working with the Housing allocations team throughout 2015/16 to analyse the data they hold and begin to build properties that meet the needs of those on our register.

Young Parents Scheme

This scheme is in partnership with Brentwood and Epping Forest Councils and has provided 12 units of supported accommodation for young parents living in Uttlesford, Brentwood or Epping Forest. The scheme has been provided on a new development in Ongar and provides the three Councils with nominations to the project. It provides the young parents with the skills they need to care for a child, access benefits and housing to ensure they can move on to manage their own tenancy.

As can be seen below, the Council do not have a significant problem with young parents presenting as homeless and could not justify a scheme in the District, partnership working with Epping Forest and Brentwood meant a more viable option

Table 13: Acceptances from young parents, 2012-15

Year	Acceptances
2012	2
2013	4
2014	1
2015	2

Source: Homeless data from Housing Dept. (August 2015)

Bromfield House

The Council continue to work with Genesis Housing to develop Bromfield House as a first class facility offering supported housing to 16 – 25 year olds. It is staffed 24 hours 7 days a week and residents have support plans which they work on with staff. They are regularly reviewed to ensure that goals are being achieved. Staff meet with Council staff on a quarterly basis to update on residents progress and the Council facilitate move on accommodation when clients are ready to move out of a supported environment. This has worked really well and residents are moving on successfully and living an independent life.

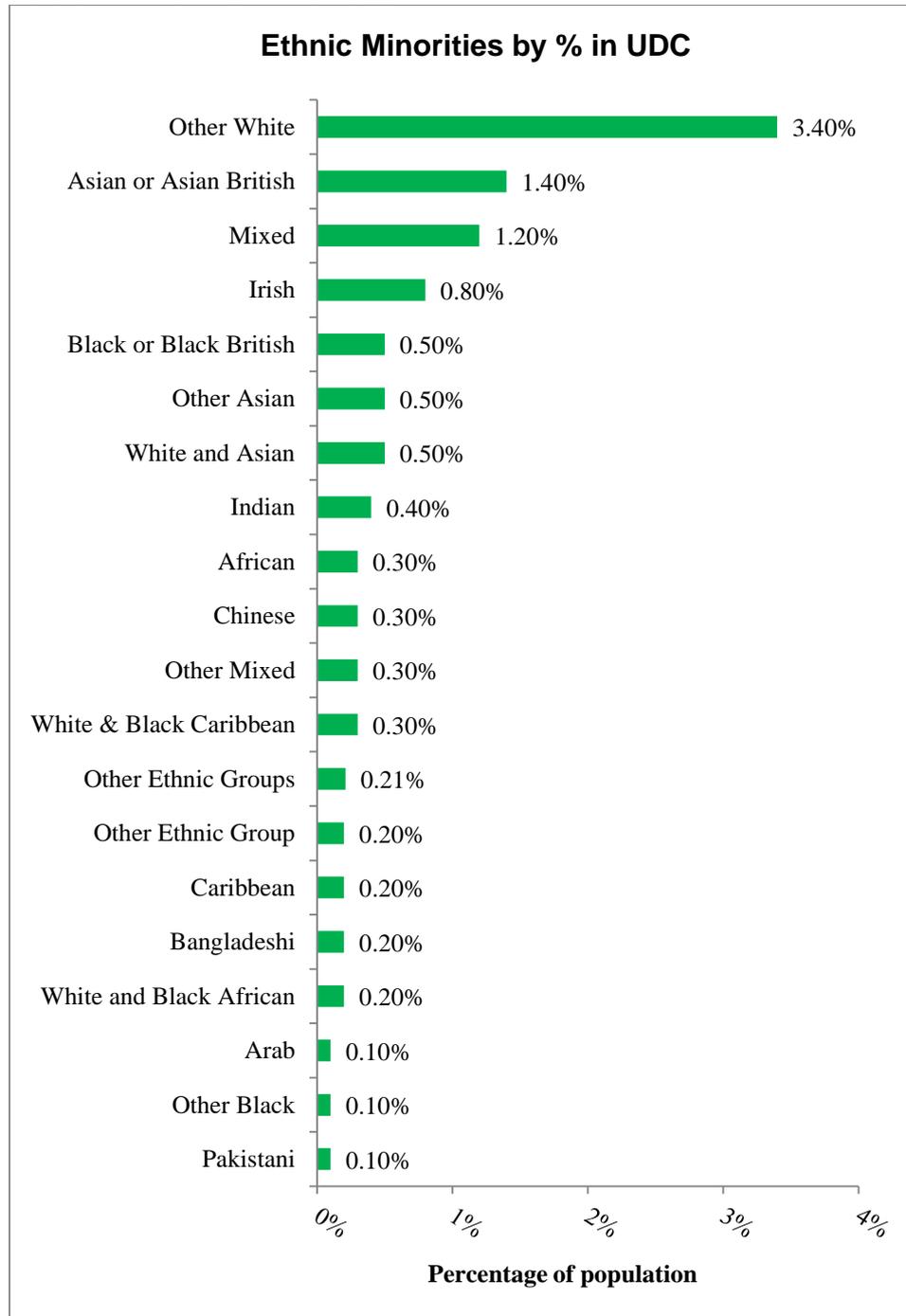
Black and Minority Ethnic

The Council must promote and monitor the needs of those in minority groups. As part of this requirement, Officers took part in the Essex wide research Facing the Facts. This was delivered through the Essex Housing Officers group and looked at

the Housing requirements of the BME population in Essex. Engagement with communities in Uttlesford was difficult as our population is so small.

The current population of Uttlesford indicates the following:

Table 14: Ethnic Minorities



Source: (Census 2011)

The population of Uttlesford is predominately White with 96.6% of the population stating this as their ethnicity whilst 92.3% considers themselves to be British.

The total percentage of Ethnic Minorities in the district is 3.40%. The breakdown of these communities is given in Table 14. Other White is the highest with 3.40% whilst Arab, Other Black and Pakistani amount to only 1% of the population.

The Council recognises that the information it holds on needs and demand for this group is not complete. Further research then needs to be carried out over the life of this strategy to investigate the housing needs of this group further.

Gypsy and Travellers

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Policy for Travellers sites sets out the Governments policy for travellers sites. It is the responsibility of Local planning authorities to assess their need for traveller sites and to plan for sites over a reasonable timescale. To increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply.

Uttlesford currently has the following sites within the District.

Table 15: Private Gypsy and Traveller Sites in Uttlesford

Location	Sites	Total caravans
Barnston	1	0
Broxted	2	3
Clavering	1	1
Great Dunmow	1	2
High Easter	1	1
High Roding	1	3
Little Canfield	1	4
Little Hallingbury	1	5
High Easter	1	5
Radwinter End	1	2
Stansted	1	10
Stebbing	1	3
Takeley	1	8

Source: Data taken from www.iform.co.uk Feb 2015.

Table 16: Public site owned and managed by Essex County Council

Location	Sites	Total caravans
Felsted	17	25

Source: Data taken from www.iform.co.uk Feb 2015.

Table 17: Unauthorised sites yet tolerated

Location	Sites	Total caravans
Barnston	1	2
Lindsell	1	1

Stansted	1	2
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Source: UDC data Sept 2015.

The Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (2014) concluded that Uttlesford needs to provide 26 additional pitches over the period 2013 to 2033. These will be identified through the ongoing Local Plan process.

Addressing Our Key Priorities

1. Increasing Housing Supply Across all Tenures:

The Council has an ambitious programme of development moving forward to ensure that we meet the needs of local people living in the District along with meeting specialist housing needs. This is a key priority for the Council throughout the life of this strategy.

Council house building

Having completed two phases of council built new housing in Leaden Roding, we now have an ambitious development programme replacing out of date sheltered housing with new houses and bungalows in Stansted and upgrading other sheltered housing in the District to make it fit for the future and a desirable place to grow old in.

We will also be looking at all Council owned land to ensure that we make the best use of the resources available and maximise development potential in the District.

Developing affordable housing as part of market led schemes

We will continue to deliver affordable housing on market led sites, working with registered providers to ensure that the completed homes meet local need and that tenants receive a good service from their landlord.

The Council will continue to expect 40% affordable housing on market led sites delivered in partnership with one of our registered providers. Full guidance is published in our Guide for Developers which is available on our website.

For a number of years, we have been working with Registered Providers on market led schemes and also rural exception sites to deliver affordable housing. During this time, our partners have changed, new providers have expressed an interest in working in Uttlesford, whilst others can no longer build viable schemes and have stopped developing here.

As with our own housing and part of good practice, we monitor our performance and ensure that our tenants gain a good service from us as a landlord. We are planning to extend this further and analyse the performance of our registered providers as landlords, to ensure that those who are allocated a Housing Association property are provided with a good service. This work will be carried out through 2015/16.

During 2015/16, we will be exploring the proposals published in the Governments Productivity Plan. We will be working with our Housing Association partners and local communities to understand how we can provide starter homes for young first time buyers.

Rural housing

Delivering rural housing on exception sites is an important priority in Uttlesford. In the last 3 years, we have delivered schemes in Arkesden, Wimbish and Hatfield Heath. Future schemes are progressing in Little Hallingbury, Great Hallingbury, Newport, Chrishall and Hatfield Broad Oak.

The key to our success is supporting parish councils to bring forward rural housing schemes to meet the needs of their local communities, and ensuring that rural housing continues to be delivered in our villages. This will be developed through our neighbourhood plan process over the coming years.

Growth Area Funding

We were fortunate to receive an allocation of Growth Area funding in 2010 for two affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites. The first scheme in partnership with Hastoe Housing completed in February 2015 and residents have now moved in. This scheme is built to Passiv haus standards and means that residents will experience very low heating costs in their homes.

The second scheme is progressing well and should be submitted for planning during 2015. This will provide 34 homes in Newport for local people in partnership with Hastoe Housing.

Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy:

100 affordable homes delivered per year

40% affordable housing gained on market led sites.

3 rural housing needs surveys carried out and a site secured for rural housing in one of our villages

15 new Council homes built per year

Development review completed and sites identified for sale or Council own development.

Growth Area Funding scheme completed in Newport

SHMA findings implemented across all Council Policies

2. Helping People to Live Independently

Helping people to live independently is an important priority in this strategy, whether they are living in the Councils sheltered housing, a supported housing scheme, in their own home or in a private nursing or residential facility. We want to ensure that our residents have choices when they need support and we intend to deliver this through our action plan.

Older Persons Housing

The Council has an ambitious programme of development to ensure that its sheltered housing schemes meet current needs. The Mead Court redevelopment in Stansted is on site and progressing well. This scheme will complete by September 2016 and will provide 29 houses and bungalows for affordable rent and 4 flats to be used as temporary accommodation.

Hatherley Court, Saffron Walden – Remodelling of existing sheltered scheme. A Planning application has been approved and a start on site programmed for April 2016.

Reynolds Court, Newport – a new build redevelopment of an existing sheltered scheme. Planning application submitted. Start on site targeted for October 2015.

We will continue to request 1 and 2 bed bungalows on S106 schemes, this means that older people can downsize to accommodation that is fit for purpose but still maintains their independence. It also meets a need for those with a physical disability who require accommodation on one floor.

As part of S106 obligations, we have negotiated with developers to provide two independent living schemes. One in Saffron Walden and one in Great Dunmow. These will provide a mix of affordable rented, shared ownership and units for sale to meet the needs of those over 65 who require an element of care in their home. This will complement our sheltered housing service and the private retirement villages and care homes in the District.

The Council continue to encourage residents to organise activities in sheltered housing. This includes armchair aerobics, bingo, coffee mornings, computer training and visits out of the schemes. This helps combat social isolation often experienced by older people living alone or supporting a partner with health issues.

Specialist housing to meet local needs

As part of our consultation on the Housing Strategy, we met with providers of **learning disability** schemes in the District and also spent time with service users living in Uttlesford. It became apparent that service users wanted to live independently rather than having to share facilities.

We are already progressing a scheme in Saffron Walden to provide a number of flats for those with a learning disability and funding has been gained from Essex County Council. This will be delivered during 2016/17. The scheme will enable service users to live a more independent life.

We are also having early discussions with one of our providers in Ugley along with Essex County Council to look at the possibility of providing a number of independent living flats for those currently residing in residential care. This would help meet the needs of those wanting to lead a more independent life.

We will continue to further liaise with current providers of specialist housing to ensure that their needs are met in the District. A review will be carried out to assess the housing requirements of those with **mental health** issues to ensure their housing needs are met.

We currently require developers to build new homes to lifetime homes standards. These standards apply to all new housing including blocks of flats for both social housing and private housing. We also require developers to provide an element of wheelchair accessible housing in new developments over 10 properties. These properties are important in helping us meet the needs of residents who use a wheelchair or those with a mobility problem.

We will also be working with a care provider to progress a dementia scheme that is planned in Uttlesford. This scheme will help meet the increasing needs of those with high level dementia, which is levels 5, 6, and 7 on the Global Deterioration Scale for Assessment of Primary Degenerative Dementia who we currently struggle to accommodate and as a result residents need to be relocated outside the district.

In the last Housing Strategy we identified the need for a scheme for those at risk of **domestic violence**. A piece of Council owned land was identified and a partner chosen. This scheme is now progressing and will complete in 2016/17.

We also identified the need for another **homeless facility**. We currently work with Genesis Housing on a scheme in Saffron Walden that successfully meets the needs of single (often young) people who approach the Council as homeless. It helps them get back on their feet, provides them with advice and support and helps them move on to independent living. We are now looking to provide a scheme in Great Dunmow, a site will be identified in the Local Plan and we are talking to partners about how to progress this. This scheme will emerge through the life of this strategy

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

The Council administers and provides DFGs allowing disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their home. Since 2012, 54 grants have been awarded to a value of £456,943. The Council works in partnership with a Home Improvement Agency who are available to act on behalf of the applicant if the applicant chooses to engage their services.

In 2014 the funding allocation for DFGs has passed from central government to Essex County Council (ECC). Historically the funding allocation for DFGs has been one of the lowest in the Country and the Council regularly adds to this funding from its own capital budget. We will work with Essex Health and Wellbeing Board to increase our funding allocation.

Home Repair Assistance

The Council offers discretionary grant assistance to occupiers of dwellings and mobile homes to carry out essential structural repair work or improvements. All applicants need to be on a means tested benefit to receive the grant, which is up to £3000 or up to £5000 in the case of mobile homes where thermal insulation or energy efficiency measures are carried out in addition to repairs. For additional work over the grant limit, an interest free loan of up to £7000 can be given, which becomes repayable once the property is sold or the applicant no longer lives there. Since 2012, the Council has provided 12 HRA grants totalling £34,587. We will continue to offer this service to those in need.

Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy:

New mental health facility provided.
New learning disability scheme provided
UDC Wheelchair standards reviewed and used as policy.
Access Group visit to new build bungalows and findings used to improved future schemes.
Extra care scheme delivered in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow
Dementia scheme delivered
5% bungalows delivered on all market led sites
Sheltered housing upgraded.
Supported housing scheme for vulnerable adults built.
Domestic violence scheme built
Homelessness Strategy published.
Allocations policy reviewed.
Documents published in easy read format

3. Ensuring Decent, Safe and Healthy Homes

We expect that our residents should be able to live in a decent home, that is safe and is not detrimental to their health. This priority looks at how we ensure that our residents live in good quality healthy housing.

Council Housing

The Council has published a HRA Business Plan covering the period 2015-2045. This gives detailed information about how the Council will maintain and manage its housing stock. The information below is just a summary. For more information, please visit our website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Stock figures

The Council's stock, as at 1 August 2015, was 2,805 rented properties. In addition to the tenanted stock there are 122 right to buy leasehold properties that the Council continue to manage.

The Council's stock consists of traditionally constructed houses, flats, and bungalows. The stock is mostly low rise, although varied in archetype. There are no high-rise flats. All non-traditional build properties, such as Airey and PRC houses, have been re-built however there are a small number of Swedish units.

Programme of council housing stock improvements

The council is continuing to deliver a significant programme of investment in the first five years of the HRA business plan - the largest investment in the stock/service for many years. Since the introduction of self-financing over £11.2million has been spent to improve the standard and availability of council housing.

Energy Efficiency/Sustainability

The Council has a strong commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability. A key strategic objective of the business plan is to tackle climate change by reducing the carbon emissions from the Council's housing stock. This will also address tenants concerns about fuel poverty, reducing the cost of heating by improving insulation and replacing electric systems with modern oil or gas central heating systems.

There are a number of homes (around 250) with solid walls that have poor thermal efficiency. Some of these have recently been upgraded and their thermal efficiency is being reassessed. Others will be prioritised for investment programmes in the short term.

The Councils development programme

Our Council housing development programme is now established and includes a number of sheltered schemes, garage and infill sites, and excess garden land being assessed for development viability. This will create a number of homes for those on our housing register. Negotiations are on-going with the HCA to bid for National Affordable Housing Programme (2015/18) Affordable Housing Grant in the future.

Private sector housing

The private rented sector makes up an important part of the housing market in UDC. 13% of all households in the district are privately rented. In the past 10 years the percentage of privately rented housing has increased by 5%.

The Council provides advice, assistance and enforcement on matters such as safety, disrepair, overcrowding, and energy efficiency in owned or rented homes, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and mobile homes. In addition, the Councils provides a range of home improvement services offering assistance with home repairs, improvements and adaptations.

Poor housing has a direct link to poor health, comfort and mental wellbeing. The work undertaken by the Council contributes directly to the health, protection and wellbeing of residents

Since 2012 Environmental Health Officers have investigated 172 complaints relating to poor housing conditions .

Due to the economic climate and challenges around housing demand and supply it is likely that the private rented sector is likely to continue to grow. This sector is the most under regulated sector of housing and contains the highest proportion of non-decent homes. In 2008, less than 50% of private rented homes housing people on benefits were considered decent.

One of the key challenges we face is how to improve standards in the private sector when the property maintenance and energy efficient are at the discretion of the landlord. We are therefore looking at opportunities to raise awareness with tenants and landlords to ensure high standards are achieved. Our participation and marketing of the Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme is one example of this.

We are keen to continue to raise standards in the private rented sector and plan to commission a stock modelling survey in 2015 to provide the Council with data on key housing indicators that will allow us to focus our resources and target specific housing related problems.

Since October 2013 we have employed a temporary empty homes and housing officer. This has increased our ability encourage owners to bring their empty home into better use through cooperation and using enforcement provisions if necessary. The enforcement provisions include the power to compulsory purchasing a property. Other provisions include the application of Empty Dwelling Management Orders

(EDMO) that gives the council the right to possession of the dwelling but not ownership. Since 2012 the Councils intervention has resulted in 185 properties brought back into use. We hope that this post will be made permanent and the work will continue throughout the life of the Strategy.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are known to present a high risk in terms of general property standards and fire safety. Larger HMOs require a license to operate although the Council has identified only 1. We will utilise the skills of the empty homes officer to identify more HMOs and implement initiatives working with our partners in the fire service to address any hazards.

In 2015 and beyond, it is our intention to contribute to the Council health and wellbeing agenda. As part of this work we attempt to measure the cost savings to the NHS from the Councils interventions.

Mobile homes - The Council is responsible for the regulation of mobile homes used for habitation, the main provision being by means of licensing to protect the health, safety and welfare of the occupants. The Council licences 38 caravan sites totalling 237 caravans. Since the introduction of the Mobile Homes Act 2013 the council will be better able to make sure site owners are complying with the terms of their site licence.

Energy efficiency

Fuel poverty and excess winter death are issues in Uttlesford. The latest Local Authority profile indicates that 9.4% of the Uttlesford districts households were deemed fuel poor (based on the "Low income, high cost" methodology) in 2012. This is less than the national average (10.4%), but the highest in Essex. (Essex highest: Uttlesford 9.4%, Essex lowest: Basildon 6.1%).

From 2011 - 2012 there were 54 excess winter deaths in Uttlesford. This is around 29.5% additional deaths, this is higher than the national average (16.1%) (Essex highest: 33.8% Braintree, Essex lowest: 11.73% Rochford).

We are rolling out the Government Green Deal ECO programme to target energy inefficient properties and deliver better health outcomes essential to reduce cold weather related illness and winter mortality.

We are also offering a scheme whereby residents can sign up to reduce utility bills by switching provider. This scheme is working really well and providing savings for residents.

The Council requires the development of new build properties to meet national sustainable standards across all tenures to ensure that high levels of energy efficiency can be embedded within high quality development.

Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy

Climate Local Strategy delivered.
Empty Homes brought back into use
Landlords Forum held
Winter campaign successfully run
Disabled facilities grants allocated
Home repair assistance grants allocated.
BRE Survey commissioned and action plan implemented.
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) action plan developed and implemented
Funding gained for improvements to private sector house condition.
Improvements to Council stock continue to be completed
HRA Business Plan published.
Tenant Regulatory Panel reports to Housing Board with review findings.

4. Creating balanced communities by delivering sustainable, safe, attractive and healthy places to live while meeting local housing needs.

We want to create balanced communities with a mix of tenure type and size, good amenities and services and healthy places for people to live and work.

Creating Sustainable Communities

As new developments are planned, planning, housing and health colleagues within the Council will work together to ensure that adequate facilities are provided alongside housing. This will include community facilities, health centres and schools.

Health and Wellbeing

We will work with Uttlesford Futures to ensure that the Housing Strategy can inform the West Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

We will continue to take part in the Health and Wellbeing group and the wider Local Strategic Partnership. These groups help us to understand the wider issues in the District, inform our work plan and progress projects together. This includes a project we are progressing which will help us understand the needs of the ageing population in Uttlesford and how we meet these needs in the future. This will be completed during 2015/16 and published jointly.

We are also planning to work with other providers represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that we understand other specialist requirements in Uttlesford. This includes The Alzheimer's Society, Carers UK and Mind.

Economic Development

Economic Development is a priority in Uttlesford, with thriving town centres and successful businesses providing key services.

The Economic Development Strategy seeks to enable people, communities and business to be what they want to be by providing:

- Help to start and stay in business
- Help to start exporting or export more
- Access to superfast broadband
- Help for town centres with their viability and vitality
- Help for business to expand in or locate in Uttlesford
- Help to persuade more people to visit Uttlesford

This document is available on our website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

The priorities in the Economic Development Strategy are critical for a sustainable community, residents need to be able to live and work in a sustainable location with good service centres.

Equalities

We want to ensure that all of our residents experience the same level of service when approaching the Council. Inclusion is very important to us and we are working towards the Achieving Level of the Equality Standard. This involves analysing our services and ensuring they all reach the same high standard. Our Single Equality Duty Scheme helps us to ensure this.

We are committed to completing an equality impact assessment on all of our new policies as they are published to ensure they meet this standard.

For the purposes of Equality Impact assessments undertaken by the Council, we also consider 'Rurality' due to the nature of the district. To ensure that we understand who makes up our communities, we try to work with groups and information available to us, to ensure that we maintain inclusion as a strong theme for cohesion. In developing this understanding, we work principally with the following groups;

The Uttlesford Area Access Group, Support4Sight, Deaf Blind UK, Council for Voluntary Services Uttlesford, the Volunteer Centre, Uttlesford Community Travel, Uttlesford Taxi Forum and the Uttlesford Transport Forum, the Tenants Forum, individuals and groups from our larger ethnic populations of Eastern European and Nepalese residents.

We also work with parishes and Carver Barracks, where rural isolation can reduce access to services to meet a community need. We want to make Uttlesford a safe place to live and projects around Hate Crime and Anti-Social behaviour are put in place to do this. The Council has supported the Essex Pride event each year and has flown the Rainbow Flag to support staff and residents and had also undertaken an exhibition to support Disability History month and included many local organisations in putting this together.

Black and minority ethnic requirements - As our evidence base shows, the majority of residents are white British, however we want to ensure that our housing and services meet the needs of the whole community. We will continue to analyse data about the District, review our housing waiting list and ensure that those from BME communities are treated fairly and have the same chances available to them as the wider community.

Gypsy and travellers – Gypsies and Travellers were captured as a distinct ethnic group for the first time in the 2011 Census and make up 0.2 % of the overall population. Currently there are 43 Gypsy and Traveller pitches on 17 private sites with permanent planning permission, 17 pitches on one county council owned site and 1 Travelling Showpeople site within Uttlesford. However the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (2014) concluded that Uttlesford needs to provide 26 additional pitches over the period 2013 to 2033. Progress on this will be made through 2015/16 alongside the new Local Plan.

We want to ensure that Gypsy and Traveller rights and needs are integrated in our policies and services.

Meeting the needs of our Council tenants

We will continue to relaunch the tenant participation service under the 'Get Involved' banner and visit local areas holding community fun days. These have been really successful in encouraging residents to engage with Council services.

Annual tenancy inspections are now in place and ensure that tenants are given the help and support they need in maintaining their tenancy.

We have successfully set-up a tenant regulatory panel who are delivering comprehensive co regulatory framework. Their current project will pull together service standards for sheltered housing.

An Anti-Social Behaviour policy has recently been put in place which will give greater guidance for staff and residents when there are problems in a neighbourhood.

Housing for local people

We have also introduced a new Allocations Policy which places greater emphasis on those with a local connection. This policy was introduced in January 2015 and will ensure that those applying for housing have the relevant links to Uttlesford before joining our housing register.

All of these documents can be found on the Councils website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Council doesn't tolerate anti-social behaviour and has a dedicated officer focusing on this issue. Their role is to work with the local community and partner organisations to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve community relations.

Uttlesford District Council is a member of the District wide Community safety partnership (CSP). This group pledged their commitment to a set of anti-social behaviour standards set by the Home Office in 2010.

Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership also works alongside Uttlesford District Council to reduce the occurrence of hate crime and provide an appropriate response to any reports received. Alongside all the relevant agencies, the Council actively encourages the reporting of hate crimes and incidents.

Floating Support

Funded by Essex Supporting People and provided by Family Mosaic, Floating Support is a short-term service that **provides support to vulnerable people, regardless of their tenure**, who may be experiencing problems with maintaining their accommodation or have health or other issues which affect their ability to cope with day-to-day living.

Their aim is to enable people to live independently in the community and assist with looking at housing options for those in need of a home. They also provide assistance for those with tenancies or owner-occupiers. With the intention of gradually reducing the support as the situation improves, they can work with residents for up to two years or until they no longer need the support.

Working with Service Users

We will continue to involve service users in shaping the services that they use and that affect their lives. This will be through the tenant forum, ongoing consultation events with older people, young people, those with specialist needs etc. We will continue to host a yearly Housing Strategy conference to create a chance to debate key issues and update and inform the Housing Strategy.

We will publish an easy read executive summary of the Housing Strategy to ensure that all service users can understand and shape our priorities.

Key Outcomes in delivering this Strategy

BME review data published and a way forward identified.
Equality impact assessments completed on new documents.
Economic Development Strategy delivered
Gypsy and Traveller sites identified and delivered.
Progress made on meeting equality standards.
Service users fully involved in key decisions.
Housing Strategy informs the West Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Easy read executive summary of the Housing Strategy published.

Monitoring the Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy has been written at a time when Government policy is changing, as these proposals are developed, the Council will be looking at the impact and reviewing the Housing Strategy to take account of it. This will be done in consultation with the Housing Board and will need to be approved by Cabinet.

The Housing Strategy action plan will be monitored and updated twice a year, a report will then be presented to the Housing Board and Tenant Forum.

Our Housing Strategy Conference will be held annually to discuss progress on the Housing Strategy, set new targets and celebrate success.

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 21 September 2015

6

Title: Draft Homelessness Strategy

**Author: Judith Snares – Housing Needs and
Landlord Services Manager Ext 671**

Summary

1. In 2012 the council included its Homelessness Strategy within the Housing Strategy document. The Housing Strategy is now being renewed and the decision has been to once again have a stand-alone Homelessness Strategy to better illustrate the council's commitment to tackling homelessness. The draft Homelessness Strategy is now ready for member and public consultation, prior to its adoption in December 2015.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board notes the report and considers the draft Homelessness Strategy 2016-21 before a six week consultation period.

Financial Implications

3. It is envisaged that the strategy's Action Plan will be delivered from within existing resources.

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Members, tenants, all partner agencies and public consultation via the website
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	Equality impact assessment has been completed on the draft strategy The strategy will again be EIA before it is finalised following the period of public consultation
Health and Safety	N/A

Human Rights/Legal Implications	It is a requirement for the council to have a homelessness strategy
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	Housing, Planning, Environmental Health

Situation

5. The council's current Homelessness Strategy is contained within the Housing Strategy which expires at the end of this year. As the council is legally required to have a Homelessness Strategy a new draft document has been prepared and this time the strategy will revert to being a stand-alone document. The new Strategy will run from 2016 -2021.
6. The document details the council's homelessness service's achievements since 2012. It also looks at the legal context for having a homelessness strategy and the National and Local context of homelessness and other strategies that the document links to.
7. The Strategy also contains a review of homelessness within Uttlesford and details homelessness statistics for the past 4 years. These clearly show the impact that the recession has had on increasing homelessness during this period.
8. The Strategy contains an Action Plan that outlines how the council will meet the four strategic priorities that have been set for the council's homelessness service during the lifetime of this new document. These priorities are:-
 - Prevent homelessness, by providing a high quality housing advice service to clients in all housing tenures, by sustaining tenancies and by mitigating the negative effects of welfare reform
 - Provide good quality suitable temporary accommodation and work towards ending the use of bed and breakfast even in an emergency
 - Engage with the private rented sector to improve access to accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
 - Improving the Health and Wellbeing of homeless people
9. The draft Strategy will now be put out for a 2 month period of public consultation, this period will also allow time for members and our partner agencies to be able to review document and make comments. Any

amendments required following this period of consultation will be made and the final document brought back before the Housing Board for the Board to recommend its adoption by Cabinet In December.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The council fails to have carried out a homelessness review and have an updated Homelessness Strategy before the current document expires	1 Little risk – review and draft strategy already prepared in advance of current document being out of date	3 – the council may lose government funding if it cannot demonstrate it has a homelessness strategy in place	Draft document has already been prepared to go out for public consultation. It will be put before Cabinet for approval in December prior to the expiry of the current document

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT

Homelessness Strategy and Review

2016-2021

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Foreword by the Housing Portfolio Holder

The development of our new Homelessness Strategy comes at a time of great change within housing, welfare and social policy. There are continual pressures on housing within Uttlesford particularly with regard to the affordability of housing for many local people.

Since the publication of the 2011 Homelessness Strategy, which at that time was amalgamated with the Housing Strategy, significant achievements have been made in the prevention of homelessness in Uttlesford and the reduction in use of emergency bed and breakfast accommodation for all client groups.

We successfully reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation and achieved the Government's target in December 2010 and although since that time the economic climate of the county has meant that the numbers in temporary accommodation have risen, we have greatly improved the accommodation that we offer to homeless households whilst they wait for a permanent home to become available. This includes the building of four purpose built units on our new development at Mead Court in Stansted.

By working together with our partner organisations we look to build on these successes. The new Homelessness Strategy has been developed against fresh and bigger challenges that threaten to increase homelessness and make it more difficult for people to meet their housing need. People become and stay homeless for a whole range of complex and overlapping reasons and solving homelessness is now about much more than finding a home for people.

As an Authority we have increased the supply of available accommodation for people in housing need and continue to work closely with Landlords in the private rented sector to improve access to affordable private rented accommodation.

Whilst we will continue to work in partnership with organisations in Uttlesford to prevent homelessness, we will focus on our key priorities of providing housing advice to help people sustain their tenancies and to mitigate the negative impacts of

welfare reform, improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people, provide good quality temporary accommodation and work with the private sector to increase the supply of private sector housing for people who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

I would like to thank all our partner organisations for the work they do with us to prevent homelessness in Uttlesford.

Cllr Julie Redfern – Housing Portfolio Holder Uttlesford District Council

Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness and then publish a strategy on how they will try to prevent and tackle homelessness in their area. Uttlesford has published three homelessness strategies, the last being integrated into the 20012 - 2015 Housing Strategy.

This Strategy looks at the context of homelessness both nationally and locally, it reviews the levels of homelessness within the district and looks back at the achievements since the last document. The emphasis has been on preventing homelessness and offering advice and support to people to be able to remain in their homes, where this is not possible, the aim has been to provide good quality temporary accommodation and then to help people into stable affordable long term accommodation.

The document and has been developed in consultation with partners and sets out the council's strategic priorities for tackling homelessness within Uttlesford for the next five years.

Achievements since the Last Homelessness Strategy

There have been many developments in the council's Housing Options/ Homelessness service since the previous strategy was published within the Housing Strategy in 2012. Despite the huge challenges faced due to the economic climate that has prevailed during this time, the council is able to report on a number of important successes that have been achieved these include:-

- Development of the council's Housing Options Team – the council has invested in staff to develop the Housing Options Team who are now able to offer a high quality housing advice service to all clients on a no appointment needed basis and then where appropriate follow this with detailed case working for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- Development of an appropriate portfolio of temporary accommodation, providing good quality ready to occupy accommodation. This has enabled Uttlesford to have only minimal use of bed and breakfast for families unless in an absolute emergency and greatly reduced use for all other client groups.
- Development of an in-house rent deposit scheme to help clients into private sector accommodation and the employing of a dedicated Empty Homes Officer to bring empty private sector properties back into use. The council also holds an annual Landlords Forum to engage with private sector landlords as they are an important key to solving the problems of homelessness within the district.
- Working with the West Essex Mental Health Joint Referral Panel to engage with the providers of specialist supported housing to ensure clients with mental health issues are helped into appropriate housing
- Comprehensive review of Allocations Policy to take advantages of freedoms offered by the Localism Act. This has enabled us to rethink the way homeless households can engage with the council's choice based lettings system.
- Developed a comprehensive arrears policy including the appointment of a dedicated officer to work with council tenants who have debt issues or subject to the spare room subsidy to try to prevent the need to take eviction action to recover rent arrears within the councils own stock.
- Development of procedures for housing and the council's housing benefit department to work together on the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to be used to prevent homelessness.
- Worked with Essex County Council on the development of services for victims of Domestic Violence. Uttlesford has signed up to TUTIS a countywide reciprocal agreement to increase the options for tenants in social housing who need to move because of domestic abuse.
- Achieving recognition of the good quality of the homelessness services provided by Uttlesford Council by taking part in the National Practitioner Support Service Diagnostic Peer Review with 4 other neighboring authorities.

Context

This chapter puts the homelessness strategy in perspective by looking at the legal context, the national policy changes since the last strategy and the local context

Homelessness is expensive, not just to the individual or household experiencing it but also to the community and the taxpayer - it has been estimated that on average each homeless person costs the public purse £26,000 per year and the overall costs of homelessness in the UK exceed £1billion per annum (Homeless Link 2013).

Below are some of the individual costs associated with some of the public services used by homeless people:-

- £387– average cost of each homelessness assessment (Homeless Link 2013)
- £1,668 – average cost of an arrest (research shows homeless people are at significantly greater risk of offending) (Ministry of Justice 2010)
- £147 – average cost of a visit to A&E leading to admission (it is estimated that homeless people use A&E five times more than the general population) (Lesley Curtis – ‘Unit Costs of Health and Social Care’ (2011) and Inclusion Health (March 2010))
- £1,005 average weekly cost of residential care for older people (Lesley Curtis – ‘Unit Costs of Health and Social Care’ (2011))

The Legal Context

Definition of homelessness for the purpose of this strategy

Statutory homeless households as defined by the 1996 Housing Act and Homelessness Act 2002. These are more likely to be families with dependent children, pregnant women and adults who are assessed as vulnerable. (This definition of homelessness is relatively narrow and does not constitute the majority of homelessness cases).

Those households who do not fall into the above categories (sometimes called ‘non-statutory’ homeless) and are more likely to be single or couples (with no dependents) who are either sleeping rough, living in supported accommodation or are deemed as “hidden homeless” and are typically sleeping on friends or family member’s sofas as a temporary stop gap measure.

The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002

Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 continues to be the overarching piece of legislation that relates to homelessness and informs the way in which local authorities respond to homelessness.

The Act has since been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011. These subsequent pieces of legislation have placed a requirement on Local Authorities to adopt a strategic approach to managing and preventing homelessness.

The Localism Act 2011

Section 153 of the Localism Act 2011 prescribes the relationship between schemes and strategies that local authorities must have regard to in developing or modifying their local preventing homelessness strategies:

'In formulating or modifying a homelessness strategy, a local housing authority in England shall have regard to—
(a) its current allocation scheme under section 166A of the Housing Act 1996,
(b) its current tenancy strategy under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011

The National Context

Policy changes since the last strategy

A number of key national policy changes have been introduced since the last strategy in 2012. The following section attempts to draw some of the main policy changes that have had a direct or indirect effect on homelessness in Uttlesford

Localism Act 2011

The purpose of the act was to shift power from the state to local communities by:

- Lifting the burden of bureaucracy
- Empowering communities to do things their way
- Increase local control of public finances
- Diversifying the supply of public services
- Opening up government to public scrutiny
- Strengthening accountability to local people.

Welfare reform Act 2012

Against a background of financial constraints the coalition government introduced a number of changes through the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Some of these changes were the biggest seen since the introduction of the Welfare state in the 1940s, these include:

- Measures to simplify the system
- More stringent rules and eligibility criteria
- Stricter sanctions
- Making work pay
- More frequent benefit entitlement assessments
- Benefit rate freezes
- Caps to some benefits
- Loss of benefit uprating linked to actual costs
- Increase in a range of deductions made to benefits

- New payment methods
- Localisation of the social fund

Reduction in the value of working-age benefits

A significant number of the changes brought about by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 were made to reduce the value of working-age benefits for people who are on low incomes. These measures include:

- Restricting the annual uprating of working age benefits to 1%
- Lowering the rates for Local Housing allowance (LHA)
- The Benefits Cap
- Means testing Child Benefit
- Limiting contribution-based Employment Support Allowance
- The Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC)
- Replacing Council Tax Benefit (CTB) with Council Tax Support (CTS)
- Restrictions on Working Tax Credits
- Raising the deduction rate for non-dependents

Some of the above reductions have placed people in Uttlesford at further risk of homelessness.

Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment Act 2012 - Legal aid changes

In April 2013, the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment Act 2012 was introduced. The main aim of the act was to reduce the legal aid bill by £350m a year in England and Wales. The Act removed funding for a number of areas of civil law including some debt, housing and benefit issues. Legal aid is still available for debt and housing matters where someone's home is at immediate risk but for some people intervention at an earlier stage may have prevented them reaching this stage of threatened homelessness.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 introduced some of the biggest changes to the NHS since its introduction in 1948. The main focuses of the changes were around:

- Structure
- Accountabilities
- Funding arrangements
- Working arrangements

This has led to Local Authorities (Councils) taking a larger role in public health promotion requiring each local authority to undertake a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and creating Health and Wellbeing Boards. Uttlesford's Health and Wellbeing Group feeds directly into the Essex Board.

The Care Act 2014

The wellbeing of people is at the centre of the new Care Act. Councils now have a duty to think about the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of people who need care. Councils also have a new duty to provide preventative services to keep people healthy in the first place.

Domestic Abuse

There have been considerable legislative changes between 2010 and 2014 which address the issue of domestic abuse and its negative impacts. This increases awareness of the issue. It is a continual challenge to understand the true level of those affected by domestic abuse, and the impact that this has on homelessness. The introduction of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing and the DASH assessment form means that our approach to dealing with customers is more consistent and offers an opportunity for us to do effective action planning with the individual. This also helps the customer to measure their own risk levels, and minimise them.

The introduction of the Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC)

The introduction of the SSSC was brought about primarily to reduce expenditure on Housing Benefit and to reduce under-occupation in the social sector. The scheme reduces Housing Benefit for social tenants (of working age) with more bedrooms than they are required to have. Those people affected have had their Housing Benefit reduced by 14 per cent for one spare bedroom and 25 per cent for two or more spare bedrooms. As of September 2015 222 households were affected by SSSC in Uttlesford. The council's Allocations Policy in 2013 was amended so that the allocation of housing was in line with SSSC.

Incentivising Right to Buy

In October 2011, the Coalition government announced that they wanted to "raise Right to Buy discounts which will make the scheme attractive again and rejuvenate the housing stock." Since this announcement in April 2012 the government increased the maximum cap on the discount to £70k. This maximum cap is now raised on an annual basis from April 2015 by CPI. It is likely that these rises in discounts will mean that more council houses will continue to be sold in Uttlesford. Over the five year period between 2010 and 2015 38 homes were sold through Right to Buy.

Ending of mortgage rescue

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme was designed to support vulnerable owner-occupiers at risk of repossession to remain in their own home. Since its inception in

2009 there has been 5 successful mortgage rescues in Uttlesford. The Government ended the scheme in 2014.

Interest only mortgages

There is some concern that homeowners who took out interest only mortgages in the late 80s and 90s will struggle to find the necessary funds to repay the capital element of their mortgage when their mortgage term comes to an end. The Financial Conduct Authority estimates around 260,000 homeowners (10% of cases) whose mortgage matures before 2020 do not have a strategy in place to repay their mortgage at the end of their term.

National Strategies and Guidance

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011

The national housing strategy published in 2011 set out the government's approach for housing by giving local communities a greater say over decisions on housing in order to provide a stable, long term increase in housing supply.

It also identified addressing homelessness as a key priority for the government to tackle, with greater focus on prevention as well as targeting action for dealing with rough sleeping. The strategy introduced the Ministerial Working Group comprising of representatives from across eight government departments working together to prevent homelessness and crisis. The group published its first report "No Second Night Out nationwide in July 2011, this focused on ending rough sleeping. This report was followed in August 2012 by "Making Every Contact Count", a joint approach to preventing homelessness. The document provided detailed guidance for how councils should work collaboratively with other local authority services to prevent homelessness through early intervention in order to avoid households reaching crisis point.

No Second Night Out nationwide: Vision to End Rough Sleeping (July 2011)

- The report set out 6 joint commitments:
- Helping people off the Streets
- Helping people access healthcare
- Helping people into work
- Reducing bureaucratic burdens
- Increasing local control over investment in services
- Developing responsibility in tackling homelessness

The aim being for the working group to work across government to give local people the tools to tackle rough sleeping and put an end to second nights out on the street

Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness (August 2012).

The aim of the report by the Ministerial Working Group was to make sure that every contact local agencies have with vulnerable people and families has value. It brought together five government commitments to:

- Tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence
- Improve health
- Reduce involvement in crime
- Improve skills, employment and financial advice
- Pioneer social funding for homelessness

The report poses ten local challenges to the sector. The following table shows the current position of the council in relation to each challenge

Making Every Contact Count	Current Uttlesford Position
Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services	In place – see forward to this strategy
Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.	In place – Uttlesford Homelessness Partnership
Offer a Housing Options prevention service including written advice to all clients.	In place
Adopt a ‘No Second Night Out’ model or effective alternative.	In place
Having housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.	In development
Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups including advice and support to both clients and landlords.	In place
Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the mortgage rescue scheme.	In place
Have a homelessness strategy that sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs	In place

Not place any Young Person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.	In development
Not place any families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.	In development

The Government is also encouraging Local Authorities to take part in the Gold Standard Challenge and in doing so commit to continuous improvement.

Uttlesford has started this process by participating in the Diagnostic Peer Review process with 4 other neighbouring authorities.

Improving outcomes and supporting transparency – A Public Health Outcomes Framework for England 2013 – 2016 Part 1 January 2012

This document sets out the new framework for public health and recognises the factors that influence public health over the course of a lifetime including poverty, education, housing, employment, crime and pollution

The document outlines how the NHS, social care, the voluntary sector and communities will work together to plan and deliver services to improve health inequalities.

The new Public Health Outcomes Framework is in three parts. Part 1 introduces the two overarching outcomes that set the vision for the whole public health system.

Theses two outcomes are:

- Increased healthy life expectancy
- Reduced differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities

The document recognises the important link between health inequality and homelessness

The Local Context

Uttlesford Housing Strategy

The Council’s new Housing Strategy draws on a wide ranging consultation with stakeholders as well as building on existing evidence and local knowledge. As the new Local Plan is drafted, the Housing Strategy will form part of the evidence base of the Local Plan alongside the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

The Council is committed to producing and adopting a sound Local Plan and has set out the programme for completing this work. The Council will continue to work towards the delivery of the Housing Strategy through both Local Planning and Development Management.

The new Strategy also stands alongside the HRA Business Plan, Homelessness Strategy and Developers Guide and sets out how Uttlesford Council plans to deliver the key priorities and objectives outlined in the strategy over for next five years. The key objectives being:-

- Increasing Housing Supply across all tenures
- Helping People to live independently
- Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes
- Creating sustainable communities

West Essex Tenancy Policy and Uttlesford Tenancy Policy

The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy which must set out the matters to which registered providers are to have regard in formulating their policies relating to:

- The kinds of tenancies they grant;
- The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind;
- Where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of those terms; and
- The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

Uttlesford District Council joined with Epping and Harlow Councils to form the West Essex Housing Forum and produced the West Essex Tenancy Strategy the objectives of which are as follows:

- To fulfil the statutory requirement to publish a Tenancy Strategy, following consultation with stakeholders;
- To ensure that affordable housing meets locally, identifiable housing need;
- To provide guidance and direction to RPs regarding their use of social and affordable housing tenancies;
- To set out clearly to partner agencies and others, the expectations of the West Essex Housing Forum in relation to the use of flexible tenure;
- To indicate to home seekers what they can expect from their fixed term tenancy, if one is granted, including arrangements for statutory reviews;

- To provide a framework for working in partnership over flexible tenure, including establishing a joined up approach and joint governance arrangements;
- To ensure that local authorities have regard to the Tenancy Strategy when reviewing its allocations policies and exercising its housing management functions; and
- To keep the Tenancy Strategy under review.

Uttlesford Council then formulated its Tenancy Policy, taking account of the West Essex Tenancy Strategy and the local context within Uttlesford. Uttlesford's Tenancy Policy set out:-

- The type of tenancies we will grant and the circumstances in which we will grant tenancies of a particular type.
- The circumstances in which fixed term tenancies will not be renewed
- The use of Affordable rents

Uttlesford Council's Housing Allocations Scheme – Offer to those owed the full housing duty

In 2014 Uttlesford Council carried full consultation on a review of its Allocations Policy, this involved staff, elected members, partner agencies as well as public consultation via the Citizens Panel.

The review looked at whether Uttlesford, following government guidance, needed to strengthen its local connection criteria for applicants wishing to apply for social housing within the district. The consultation also covered financial eligibility criteria and the offer made to homelessness applicants.

Following adoption by the Council's Cabinet in December 2014 the new policy was implemented in January 2014 with some minor amendments being implemented in August 2015 following a six month review of the new policy.

The local connection criteria is now set at three year residence or three years working within the district (for full details please see the Allocation Policy). This is less than some of our neighboring authorities but members felt that this was the correct degree of connection to satisfy the public desire for local houses going to 'local people' in an area where alternative housing options, other than social housing, can be out of reach for many Uttlesford residents.

To ensure that tenants with young children living in flats, who are otherwise suitably housed but who have conducted their tenancies satisfactorily for a minimum of two years, get the opportunity to move to a house of the same size, the policy was changed to give these tenants priority over higher banded applicants that require the same size of accommodation. It was felt that as accepted homeless applicants were

often the highest banded applicants it would be fairer if their offer to discharge the council's full housing duty was to be firstly, if available, a private sector offer or if this was not available then flatted accommodation. The rational being that this was fairer to existing tenants with young children, who were not getting the opportunity to move to houses.

The current offer to accepted homeless applicants of all household types is as follows:-

Accepted homeless households are applicants to whom:

- The Council has accepted a duty under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless) **and**
- The council accepts a duty to provide suitable accommodation.

In the first instance the Council will look to discharge its homelessness duty for all accepted homeless applicants within the private rented sector. The Council will ensure that any offer of private rented housing is appropriate to the needs of the household, that the length of any tenancy is a minimum of 12 months and that the property meets the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012. An assessment will also be carried out to assess the affordability of the property, including the eligibility to receive Local Housing Allowance/Housing Benefit. The property may not be within the Uttlesford District.

Whilst the Council is looking for suitable accommodation within the private sector, applicants who meet the Council's Allocation Policy eligibility criteria will be allowed to make expressions of interest on suitable properties advertised through the CBL system. If after a period of 2 cycles from when the applicant received their S.184 decision letter they have either not been offered a suitable private sector property or been successful through the CBL system, the Council will express interest on their behalf and make one final offer of suitable accommodation. This will be in whichever tenure is available first and will generally be flatted accommodation. If this offer is refused, the Council's homelessness duty under the Housing Act 1996 to provide accommodation will be considered to have been discharged.

Accepted homeless applicants, who meet the Council's Allocation Policy eligibility criteria, who are housed in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, including Bed & Breakfast accommodation, hostels or homeless at home, will be placed in Band B. Accepted homeless applicants in severe need will be placed in Band A

Homeless applicants who do not meet the Council's Allocation Policy eligibility criteria will be made only one offer of suitable accommodation. This will be a final offer and will generally be a in the private rented sector. If a suitable private rented

sector offer cannot be made within 3 months of the Section 184 decision letter, the council may make one final offer of suitable flatted social housing accommodation. If this offer is refused, the Council's homelessness duty under the Housing Act 1996 to provide accommodation will be considered to have been discharged.

When a private rented property becomes available it will be offered to the accepted homeless applicant for whom the property is suitable and if this is more than one applicant, it will be offered to the applicant with the earliest homeless application date.

Any private rented tenancy that discharges the council's homelessness duty will be for a period of not less than 12 months. If within 2 years, beginning with the date on which the applicant accepts a private rented sector offer, the applicant re-applies for accommodation, or for assistance in obtaining accommodation, and if the applicant is found to be homeless (from the date of the expiry of the termination notice) and did not become homeless intentionally from the private rented accommodation, the Council will accept a homelessness duty regardless of whether the applicant has a priority need.

Essex Health and Wellbeing Board – Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Essex October 2012

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been developed and is being implemented by the Health and Wellbeing Board, which brings together key partners to improve health and wellbeing of communities across Essex.

The main source of evidence for this strategy has been the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This has provided information on the health and wellbeing of the population of Essex, the wider determinants of health and the quality of life in the county. The assessment has provided the basis for the key priorities of the strategy, namely

- Starting and developing well
- Living and working well
- Aging well

The main focus of the strategy is to reduce health inequalities and tackle the wider determinants of health to increase life expectancy and reduce inequalities between areas and groups.

Uttlesford council recognises the significance of the links between health and homelessness particularly amongst single homeless people and the effect it has on families. We also recognise that we need to work together to achieve better outcomes for people who are affected by homelessness and ill-health. We know that if someone becomes homeless they are likely to "suffer significant health inequalities in comparison with people in more secure accommodation, in terms of

both their health status and their ability to access health services. We also recognise the direct relationship between an individual's physical and mental wellbeing can have on their own housing situation if their health needs are not met.

All local authorities (unitary and district) have a general statutory duty to protect and improve health and wellbeing and to tackle inequalities and the 'social determinants' of health – that is, those aspects of people's social and economic condition that impacts on their health. Extending far beyond social care from education to housing, economic development to leisure services, planning to trading standards, they all have a significant impact on people's health.

In particular District authorities, such as Uttlesford, have a significant function and role in helping improve people's health and wellbeing through the homeless prevention work we do. Examples of this work include:

- The function of the housing options teams in helping vulnerable people find (or keep) safe and secure good quality housing
- Direct provision of permanent and temporary housing
- Joint commissioning of services to help reach out to vulnerable people who are either young, rough sleeping or fleeing domestic abuse
- Helping people stay in their own homes through grants and adaptations to help them live more independently
- Improving the quality of private sector housing for people
- Working with other Essex authorities on protocols for working with Social Care for families and 16 and 17 year olds

Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse 2015 - 2020

This Strategy aims to assist partnerships and agencies across Greater Essex in delivering appropriate joined up responses to those affected by domestic abuse, underpinned by a recognition and an understanding that no single agency can address this complex issue in isolation. The strategy has the aim of ensuring that by working together partners can make the best use of existing collective resources, and draw upon additional resources, to address the issue of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse impacts on quality of life and can ultimately destroy people's lives. Despite being a significant contributor to crime statistics and the causes of homelessness, it is also a pattern of behaviour that often happens behind closed doors and is grossly under-reported. It is an issue that cuts across all social, geographical and cultural groups. Domestic abuse causes harm to both adults and children, both directly and indirectly, and is of high financial cost to public agencies, the economy, the individuals concerned and wider society. Furthermore it produces patterns of behaviour that are often replicated from generation to generation and these inter-generational cycles must be broken.

Uttlesford District Council has been working with Essex County Council on and the wider work that has been undertaken across the county in relation to housing up domestic abuse services. The council has signed up to the countywide reciprocal agreement TUTIS to enable social housing tenants who are the victims of domestic abuse to move more easily across the county.

Uttlesford also takes part in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences for high risk domestic abuse cases and provides funding for an outreach service for victims within Uttlesford. The council is also currently looking at transferring land at nil cost for the development of a specialist refuge within the district.

Joint Protocol between Essex County Council and Local Authority Housing Services to Address the Needs of Intentionally Homeless Families with Children

This is a joint protocol agreed between Essex County Council Social Care and Essex Housing Authorities. The protocol covers the assessment and provision of services to families with dependent children who are homeless and no longer eligible for assistance from the Homeless Team within Housing Services. The Homelessness Act 2002 states the need for cooperation between Housing authorities and Children's Social Care when dealing with intentionally homeless households with dependent children and this protocol details how Social Care and housing will work together when dealing with intentionally homeless families.

Joint Protocol between Essex County Council and Local Authority Housing Services in Dealing with Homeless 16 and 17 Year Olds

This joint protocol recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount and all parties need to work together to ensure young people are safe and have their needs met. The protocol was developed following the House of Lords judgement in May 2009 in the case of G v LB Southwark and the subsequent statutory guidance issued by the department for Children, Schools and Families and Communities and Local Government department in April 2010. These clarified the legal responsibilities of Children and Young People's Services towards homeless 16 and 17 year olds and the interrelationship between duties under the Children Act 1989 and homelessness legislation.

Essex County Council (ECC) and the twelve district local housing authorities (LHA's) are committed to meeting the social and housing needs of young people who are at risk of homelessness and who are unable to live with their (wider) family or suitable friends.

The protocol details how Essex County Council and the 12 district local authorities in will work together with supported housing providers to deliver the most effective options for young people, ensuring they have appropriate advice and guidance, and that the young person continues to take responsibility for the decisions they take about their lives and the subsequent consequences of these. Both agencies have

responsibilities to ensure young people are safeguarded and that services are jointly planned and secured. These services will include: homelessness prevention services (provision of advice and guidance to young people), supported accommodation schemes, relevant support services and more specialised supported housing provision for more vulnerable young people.

Uttlesford has only one supported housing scheme within the district for single people. This is Bromfield House in Saffron Walden, which is a 17 bed until run by Genesis Housing Association. Although the until can take single people from 16 to 65 the majority of referrals are at the younger end of the spectrum. Bromfield House would be the first choice of accommodation for any 16 and 17 year olds that the local authority has a duty to house.

Review of Homelessness in Uttlesford since 2011

The Statistics

Uttlesford District Council is a stock holding council with 2850 properties scattered across 56 parishes in what is the largest geographical district in the county of Essex. The district has a population of around 83,500 (2014 figure).

The average household price across the district is £421,100 (Sept 2014) whilst the average income is £24,575

The Local Housing Allowance for a 2 Bedroom House in Saffron Walden is £609.87 (2015) whilst the average rent for a 2 bedroom house in Saffron Walden is £900.00

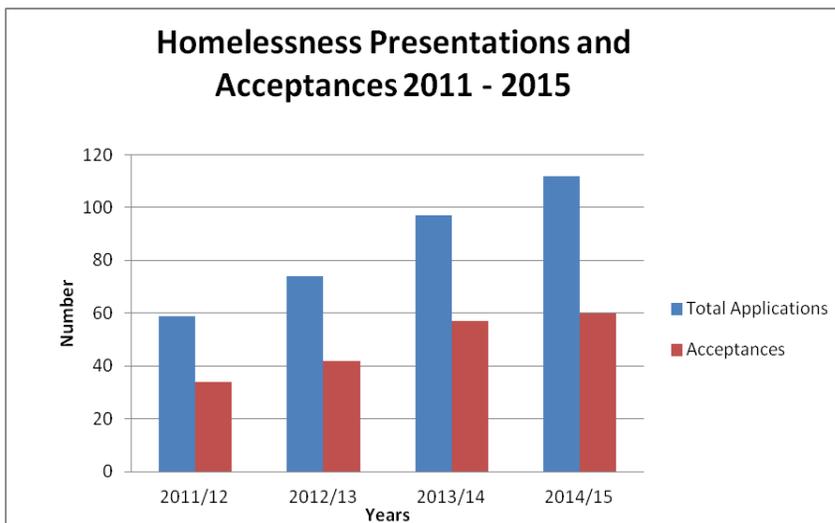
In the last 4 years Uttlesford has delivered 284 new affordable homes across the district

The housing register as at 1 April 2015 had 1193 registered applications with 483 of them within Bands A –D (in recognised need of alternative housing)

The number of social housing allocations from the housing register in Uttlesford in 2014/15 was 252

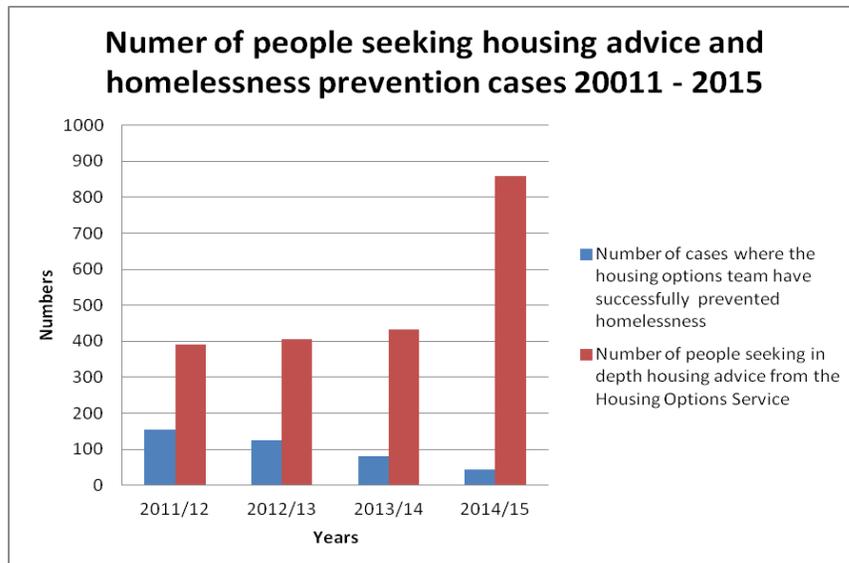
The estimated numbers for rough sleeping in Uttlesford was 2 as at November 2014

Homelessness has increased within Uttlesford, as it has nationally, over the past 4 years. The table below shows the number of homeless applications the council has taken in this time and the number of those applications for which the council has accepted the full homelessness duty – to find them permanent housing.



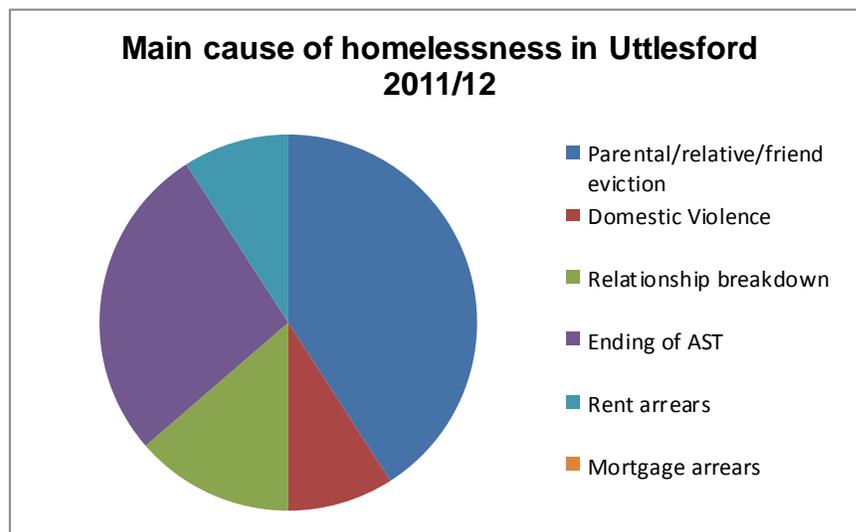
DCLG P1E data

The number of people making homeless applications is only one part of the homelessness picture with Uttlesford. The table below shows the number of clients that have sought in depth housing advice from the council's housing options service. These will be people who are having problems with their current housing and can be across any tenure type. Some of these clients will be people threatened with homelessness and the council will work with these clients and other partner agencies to try to prevent homelessness. The chart clearly demonstrates that as difficult economic climate has prevailed it has become increasingly difficult to prevent homelessness by finding suitable affordable accommodation for clients.

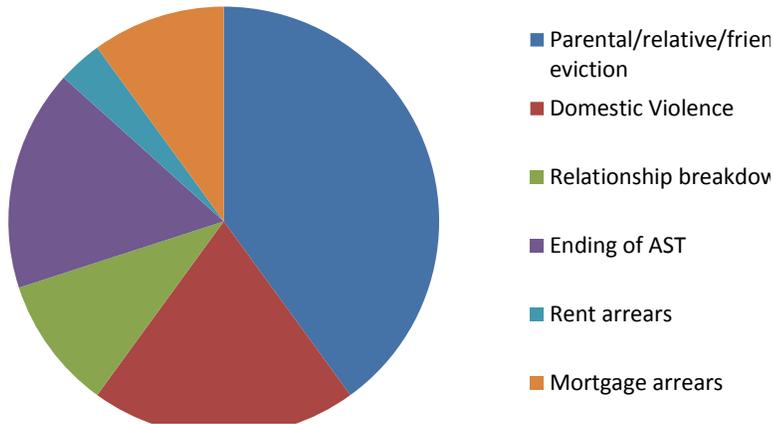


Council and P1E data

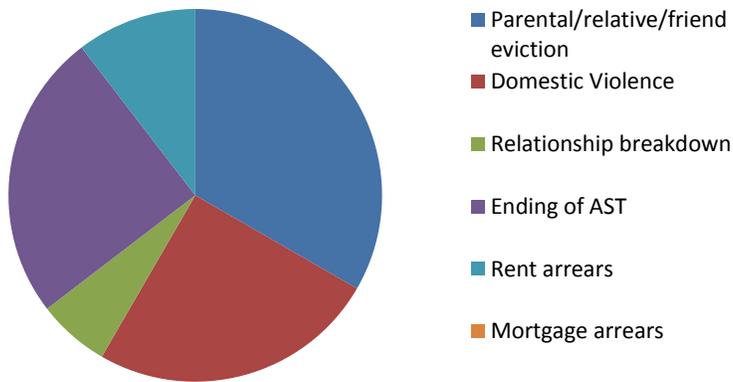
The following charts taken from the council's P1E returns data show the main causes for homelessness within Uttlesford over the past 4 years. They demonstrate how the main cause has changed from parental/relative/friend eviction in 2011/12 to the loss of private rental accommodation in 2014/15.



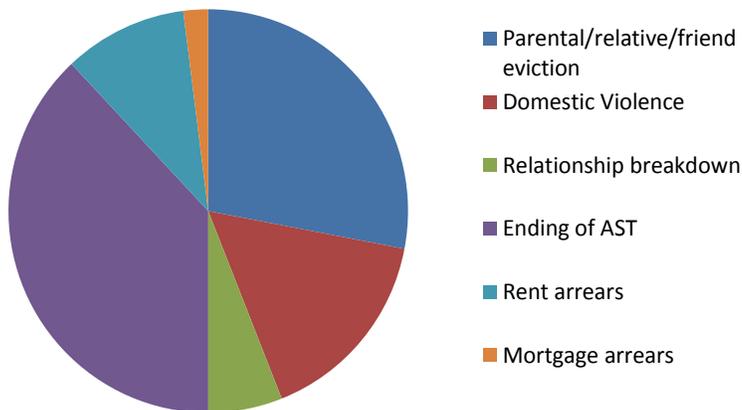
**Main Causes of homelessness in Uttlesford
2012/13**



**Main causes of homelessness in Uttlesford
2013/14**



**Main causes of homelessness in Uttlesford
2014/15**



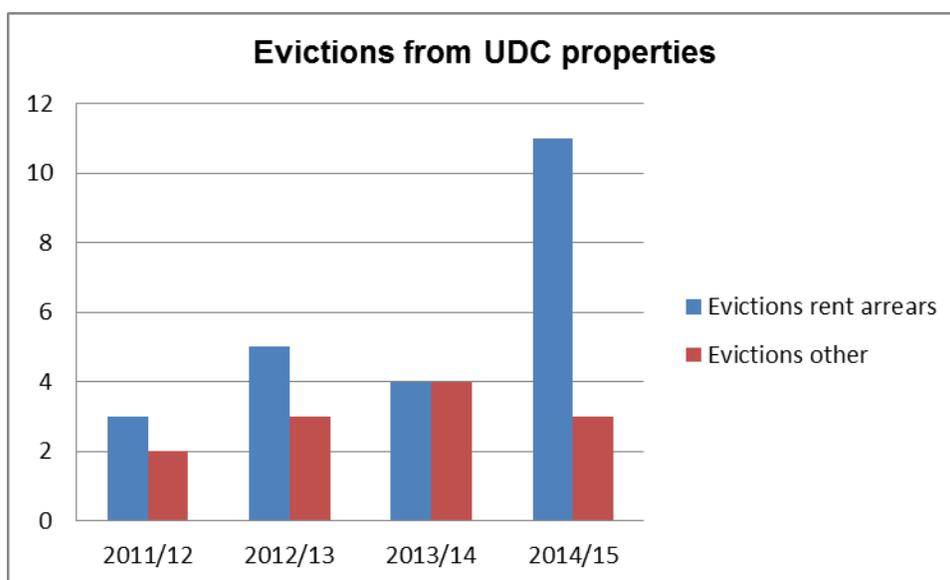
Uttlesford Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) statistics

Uttlesford CAB are an important partner to the local authority in preventing homelessness, particularly in the work that they do on debt, this is an area for which the council has used government grant money to assist the CAB in training their staff to deal with debt issues. The following statistics show the levels of debt work the CAB has carried out over the past two years and the increase in housing advice that clients have sought from them during the same period.

Debt	Unique clients	
	2013-14	2014-15
Mortgage and secured loan arrears	35	43
Hire purchase arrears	7	7
Fuel debts	38	66
Telephone and broadband arrears	14	40
Rent arrears – LA or ALMOs	28	50
Rent arrears – housing	25	33
Rent arrears – private landlords	16	11
Council tax arrears	70	82
Mag. Ct. – fines and compulsory orders	16	11
Maintenance and child maintenance	3	2
Bank and building society overdrafts	63	89
Credit, store & charge card debts	107	164
Unsecured personal loan debts	58	122
Catalogue and mail order debts	17	32
Water supply and sewerage debts	24	42
Unpaid parking penalty & congestion charge	6	9
Overpayments of WTC and CTC	11	20
Overpayments of IS / JSA / ESA	2	4
Overpayments of housing and council tax	19	15
Social fund debts	5	4
Payday loan debts	7	16
3rd party debt collection	8	-
Private bailiffs	8	-
Debt relief order	28	30
Bankruptcy	33	26
Logbook / bill of sale loan debts	-	2
Loan sharks / illegal lenders	-	1
Arrears of income tax, VAT or NI	-	26
Overpayment of other benefits	-	8
Other legal remedies	5	1
Other	125	130
Total	437	473

Housing	Unique clients	
	2013-14	2014-15
Discrimination	2	-
Actual Homelessness	44	60
Threatened Homelessness	91	132
LA homelessness service	26	23
Access to & provision of accommodation	61	50
Local Housing Authority	96	114
Housing Association property	44	40
Private sector rented property	127	141
Owner occupier property	53	48
Environmental & neighbour issues	35	45
Other housing issues	56	80
Total	468	518

The table below shows the number of evictions carried out by Uttlesford Council, although the numbers are low it can be seen that the trend is increasing particularly on rent arrears. The council works hard to avoid having to resort to court action on arrears and has processes in place for the council's housing management and housing options teams to work together to try to avoid eviction. Referrals are also made to other agencies who can support clients with debt problems such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the districts floating support provider.



Council data

Strategic Priorities for the Next Five Years

The following priorities have been developed alongside the key priorities within the council's Corporate Plan and the council's Housing Strategy:

1. Prevent homelessness by providing a high quality housing advice service to clients in all housing tenures, by sustaining tenancies and by mitigating the negative effects of welfare reform
2. Provide good quality suitable temporary accommodation and work towards ending the use of bed and breakfast even in an emergency
3. Engage with the private rented sector to improve access to accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
4. Improving the Health and Wellbeing of homeless people

Priority 1: Prevent homelessness by providing a high quality housing advice service to clients in all housing tenures and by sustaining tenancies

The review has highlighted the need for the council and its partner organisations to continue to prevent homelessness and help people to sustain their tenancies by early intervention and providing good quality advice and support services. Analysis of data regarding households who have approached the council as being potentially homeless shows that a significant proportion have accessed assistance from the housing options team more than once.

The Council recognises the importance of multi-agency working to tenancy sustainment and will look for new and innovative ways to prevent homelessness and help tenants remain in their homes

To meet this priority the council will need to:

- Implement the recommendations made to improve the housing options service following the Diagnostic Peer Review
- Develop good quality, easily accessible housing advice materials, including web based material which reflect the diversity of applicants needs and abilities
- Prevent homelessness by helping people sustain their tenancies across all tenure through the increased provision of debt and welfare advice
- Work with partner agencies to mitigate the effects of the introduction of Universal Credit and the Benefit Cap
- Increase prevention of homelessness caused by domestic violence by working with partners to keep victims safe within their current accommodation where this is appropriate

- Flexible use of the Discretionary Housing Payments

Priority 2: Provide good quality suitable temporary accommodation and work towards ending the use of bed and breakfast even in an emergency

The review recognises the need to provide good quality temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless so that the council can work towards ending bed and breakfast for all client groups and even in an emergency. The trend points to the growing need for smaller units of accommodation both as temporary accommodation and permanent housing

To meet this priority the council will need to:

- Ensure that enough ready to access temporary accommodation is available in the right location for homeless households to access support, maintain employment and education
- Ensure through the Council's Housing Strategy that the council is able to deliver sufficient units of social housing to allow the free flow of households from temporary accommodation into permanent housing
- Ensure through the Council's Housing Strategy that the council is able to deliver suitable supported housing for homeless households with complex needs

Priority 3: Engage with the private rented sector to improve access to accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

The review recognises that households made homeless from the private sector has increased and that access to this sector in Uttlesford is extremely limited, especially for clients reliant on local housing allowance to meet their rent payments as the local rates are well below local rent levels. As would be first-time buyers continue to struggle to access mortgages and turn to the private sector to meet their housing needs the sector has even less need to consider the clients of the council's housing options service as potential tenants. However as social housing is never going to be able to fully meet the housing needs of all those who would wish to access it, there is an increasing need to work with the private sector. The Localism Act gave the council the opportunity to discharge its homelessness duty into the private sector subject to certain criteria being met. The Act also allowed councils to end the idea of a tenancy for life with the introduction of Tenancy Strategies, this means that homelessness can no longer be an assumed route into social housing.

To meet this priority the council will need to:

- Promote the council's services to private sector landlords
- Continue to encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into use

- Refer tenants within the private sector to appropriate support agencies to help them maintain their tenancies when difficulties first arise
- Have closer links between the Housing Options Team and the Housing Benefit Department
- Review the council's Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to see if it can provide greater incentives for private sector landlords to work with the scheme
- Continue to hold a Landlords Forum and review other ways to connect with landlords

Priority 4: Improving the Health and Wellbeing of homeless people

The review recognises the impact that homelessness has on peoples' health and wellbeing and the role that the council and its partner agencies can have on improving outcomes for households who have experienced a period of homelessness

To meet this priority the council will need to:

- Work in partnership with other key agencies to prevent individuals and families from getting into a housing crisis
- Work with health partners to ensure that homeless households and linked into appropriate health services
- Work with the West Essex Joint Referral Panel to ensure clients with mental health issues are appropriately housed
- Make appropriate referrals to support agencies to ensure homeless households have access to support that meets all their needs
- Data sharing and data analysis with statutory and voluntary partners
- Review and strengthen existing protocols and implement new ones particularly with mental health, drug and alcohol services and probation

Consultation and Engagement

In preparing this Homelessness Strategy we have worked with a wide range of staff, elected members, partners and stakeholders to ensure that the document is shaped to reflect legislation as well as national and local priorities.

Consultation has been undertaken to get the views of as many people and organisations as possible to inform the development of this strategy. A draft document was circulated for comment and put out for public consultation via the council's website.

This has included work through the Homelessness Partnership and Housing Strategy Conferences.

The final document was been agreed by the council's Housing Board and Tenant Forum prior to be recommended to the council's Cabinet for adoption.

Implementing the strategy

How the council will deliver the priorities within this Strategy is contained within the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan which sets out clear tasks and targets within identified areas of work. The Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed annually by the Homelessness Partnership, a multi-agency group, so that it is responsive to emerging needs and achieves the priorities within it.

By adopting the Homelessness Strategy Uttlesford Council is making a firm commitment to tackling and preventing homelessness within the District.

Action Plan – Homelessness Strategy 2016 - 2021

Priority 1: Prevent homelessness by providing a high quality housing advice service to clients in all housing tenures, by sustaining tenancies and by mitigating the negative effects of welfare reform						
How this priority will be achieved	Key Actions	When	Resources	Target	Key Officers	Comments /Progress
Implement the recommendations made to improve the housing options service following the Diagnostic Peer Review	Implement the key actions within the DPR improvement plan document	April 16	Within existing resources	DPR improvement plan fully implemented	Housing Options Team Leaders	
Develop good quality, easily accessible housing advice materials, including web based material which reflect the diversity of applicants needs and abilities	Review and revise the information around homelessness on the councils website and leaflets	Start Jan 16 and ongoing	Within existing resources	Information provided to clients up to date, relevant and easily accessible, clients better informed	Housing Options Team Leaders	
Prevent homelessness by helping people sustain their tenancies across all tenures through the increased provision of debt and welfare advice	Utilise staff across housing department to support and advise tenants Make timely referrals to partners agencies	Ongoing	Within existing resources	No tenancy breakdown as a result of lack of ongoing tenancy support and advice	Housing Options and Housing Management team leaders	
Work with partner agencies to mitigate the effects of the introduction of Universal Credit and the Benefit Cap	Hold regular meetings with HB leads and CAB	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Minimize negative impact of welfare reform	Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager	

Increase prevention of homelessness caused by domestic violence by working with partners to keep victims safe within their current accommodation where this is appropriate	Work with partner agencies, including police and specialist support services	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Victims able to maintain local support networks	Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager	
Flexible use of the Discretionary Housing Payments	Work with HB department to review use of DHP	From April 16 and ongoing	Within existing resources	DHP money fully utilized by the authority	Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager	
Priority 2: Provide good quality suitable temporary accommodation and work towards ending the use of bed and breakfast even in an emergency						
Ensure that enough ready to access temporary accommodation is available in the right location for homeless households to access support, maintain employment and education	Carry out a review of temporary accommodation usage/location/access to inform development of portfolio of suitable TA	April 16	Within existing resources	Portfolio of suitable temporary accommodation available	Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager	
Ensure through the Council's Housing Strategy that the council is able to deliver sufficient units of social housing to allow the free flow of households from temporary accommodation into permanent housing	Regular meetings between housing and planning to identify the right mix of units in the required localities	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Regular supply of new affordable housing	Housing Strategy Manager	

Ensure through the Council's Housing Strategy that the council is able to deliver suitable supported housing for homeless households with complex needs	Carry out further work to establish the precise requirements and find a suitable partner to be able to deliver the project	April 18	Within existing resources	New supported housing units delivered	Housing Strategy Manager	
Priority 3: Engage with the private rented sector to improve access to accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness						
Promote the council's services to private sector landlords	Explore ways via different media to encourage private landlords to work with the housing department. Provide a named officer for landlords to deal with	April 16 and ongoing	Within existing resources		Housing Options Team Leaders	
Continue to encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into use	Take appropriate enforcement action Investigate potential for additional schemes to bring empty homes back into use	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Decrease in long-term empty homes	Empty Homes and Private Sector Housing Officer	
Refer tenants within the private sector to appropriate support agencies to help them maintain their tenancies when difficulties first arise	Work with CAB and floating support provider to make timely referrals	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Increased tenancy sustainment within the private sector	Housing Options Team Leaders	
Have closer links between the Housing Options Team and the Housing Benefit Department to increase access to DHP	Regular monthly meetings with HB colleagues	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Increased use of DHP to prevent homelessness	Housing Options Team Leaders	

Review the council's Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to see if it can provide greater incentives for private sector landlords to work with the scheme	Look at whether cash incentives could be used to incentivise landlords to work with the scheme	June 16	Within existing resources	Increase use of private sector to prevent homelessness	Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager	
Continue to hold a Landlords Forum and review other ways to connect with landlords	Carry out a consultation exercise with private landlords and agents as to what type of forum event they would like to engage with	June 16	Within existing resources	Annual Forum held with increased attendance	Empty Homes and Private Sector Housing Officer	
Priority 4: Improving the Health and Wellbeing of homeless people						
Work in partnership with other key agencies to prevent individuals and families from getting into a housing crisis	Work with the council's Homelessness Partnerships Group to identify ways for better partnership working to identify vulnerable clients at the earliest possible stage	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Increased number of sustained tenancies	Housing Options Team Leaders	
Work with health partners to ensure that homeless households and linked into appropriate health services	Provide clients with details of health services in the areas they are housed and where appropriate make direct referrals	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Homeless households linked in to local health services	Housing Options Team Leaders	
Work with the West Essex Joint Referral Panel to ensure clients with mental health issues are appropriately housed	Attend the West Essex JRP and make referrals where appropriate	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Homeless clients with mental health issues appropriately housed	Housing Options Team Leaders	

Make appropriate referrals to support agencies to ensure homeless households have access to support that meets all their needs	Review support available for clients moving in to temporary. Identify new sources of provision accommodation. Create referral routes (Uttlesford Frontline)	Ongoing	Within existing resources	No tenancy breakdown or re-occurrence of homelessness due to lack of resettlement support	Housing Options Team Leaders	
Data sharing and data analysis with statutory and voluntary partners	Through the homelessness partnership use data sharing to identify gaps in service provision	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Gaps in service identified	Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager	
Review and strengthen existing protocols and implement new ones particularly with mental health, drug and alcohol services and probation	Review exiting provision and develop new working arrangements through joint working	April 17 and ongoing	Within existing resources	New protocols in place that better support joint working	Housing Options Team Leaders	

If you require any further information about the Uttlesford District Council Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2020, please contact the Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager on 01799 510671 or email jsnares@uttlesford.gov.uk or write to:-

Housing Needs and Landlord Services Manager
Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
London Road
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB11 4ER

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 21 September 2015

7

Title: HRA Business Plan 2015/16 – 2045/46

Author: Roz Millership, Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services

Key decision: No

Summary

1. The 30 year HRA Business Plan has been reviewed and updated to reflect the current regulatory and economic climate, and builds on the 2015-16 HRA budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board notes the report and considers the draft Housing Revenue Account Business Plan before a six week consultation period.

Financial Implications

3. The Financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

- HRA Business Plan 2012
- MTFS
- HRA Revenue and Capital programme 2015 - 2045

5.

Communication/Consultation	Members, tenants, all partner agencies and public consultation via the website
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	Equality impact assessment has been completed on the draft business plan The business plan will again be EIA before it is finalised following the period of public consultation
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal	N/A

Implications	
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	Housing, Planning, Environmental Health

Situation

6. The updated HRA business plan has been developed from the previous business plan approved in 2012.
7. Major changes have occurred since 2012 in relation to assumptions within the original Business Plan including the most recent announcements in the July Budget Statement.
8. The updated business plan reflects current thinking about areas such as general inflation, national rental policy, Right-to-Buy (RTB) sales, works cost inflation, and interest rates.
9. These have potential to impact the Council's major investment plans, particularly the development of new homes, improvement of its sheltered housing and other planned maintenance programmes. It was originally proposed to update the Business Plan in 2017 however in September 2014 the Housing Board agreed that the document should be updated in 2015 to address these major changes.
10. A summary of the announcements from the July budget and potential impact on the HRA are as follows:
11. **Reductions in social rents** – The budget indicated that the government will reduce rents in social housing by 1% for the next 4 years to reduce their housing benefit expenditure, and that this will apply to local authorities as well as housing associations.
12. The Council's current 30 year business plan for the HRA is predicated on annual income rises of CPI + 1% so this shift could have a potentially large impact on rental income and therefore the ability of the council to continue to invest in stock and projects identified in the HRA business plan. The assumed reduction of 1% on rents for this period will result in a rental base that will be in the region of at least 12% lower in 2019-20 than anticipated.
13. There is currently insufficient detail to model the impact with any certainty. For example it is not clear whether the 1% reduction includes supported housing. If the reduction was applied on all current rents this could have a cumulative impact of at least £1.8m by 2018/19 compared with existing business plan assumptions. Over the life of the business plan losses will amount to £14.9m.

14. **Lifetime tenancies** - The government has again indicated that it will look to review the use of lifetime tenancies. No further information was presented.
15. **Enforced Sales of Voids** - The Housing Bill in May confirmed the Queen's Speech announcement that Right to Buy would be introduced to tenants in Housing Association properties, with replacement housing funded from 'expensive' local authority properties as they fall void. Under proposed regional figures to identify such stock at least 45% of the council's properties will fall into this definition. It seems likely that regional figures may be adjusted and therefore the business plan has not factored in any potential impact of this policy until further details are known.
16. **'Pay to Stay'** – The government announced plans to enforce market or near market rents on tenants with household income above £30k in this area. The additional rent raised by councils will be passed to the government and used towards national deficit reduction. The mechanism for introducing this policy is unclear and the government has said it will consult on the proposals along with setting out the detail. The impact is potentially large. There will be an administrative burden in monitoring incomes. If rents treble for tenants with incomes above £30k in many cases rent will become unaffordable. If they then vacate the property there is the further implication that the property may become void and have to be sold as part of the announcements relating to the expansion of RTB to Housing Associations. The Government estimates that 9% of tenants nationally will be affected – this would be around 250 tenants in Uttlesford.
17. **Other pressures on the HRA Business Plan:** The introduction of further welfare reforms will mean that additional resources are required to provide advice and support to tenants including help with budgeting and access to banking, and help in understanding responsibility for rent payments and other bills.
18. There will be further pressure on the HRA with potential Supporting People funding cuts. Essex CC is proposing to cut support funding for older peoples services over the next 2 years. As a result of these changes, a number of things could happen:
 - Tenants may be willing to make up the shortfall
 - Tenants may be willing to contribute a smaller amount for a reduced service
 - Tenants do not contribute and the service is reduced
 - The council may choose to absorb some or all of the additional cost (this would have large implications on the viability of the HRA)
 - Other funding sources (such as Housing Benefit) could be explored
19. It should be noted that inflation on contracts will continue through the period of rent reductions which places further pressure on the HRA.
20. An updated version of the HRA business plan model has been produced which uses the current budgets for 2015/16 and also the five year medium term forecast for projecting expenditure and income forward whilst adding

general RPI (inflation) increases. It takes into account all estimated investment, repairs and management costs required over the next 30 years, assuming compliance with national rent policy, as mentioned above, and taking account of a continued high level of sales under the Right-to-Buy scheme.

21. The plan also assumes for a modest development programme of 5 units a year. If RTB sales continue to escalate beyond those estimated additional finances will be required to ensure the 1 for 1 replacement programme can be achieved. No allowance has been made in the business plan for larger building or re-furbishing projects beyond year 5 (2017/2018). If members wish to see a continuation of the 1 for 1 replacement programme and progression of re-development projects options to re-finance the loans will need to be explored.

Summary

22. The business plan provides the framework within which the council would expect future budgets to be set, subject to changes in underlying assumptions and/or government or council policy, and gives an indication of the level of resources likely to be available to deliver new initiatives, build new housing, regenerate estates and potentially repay debt, should this be felt to be an appropriate course of action

23. Based on current financial assumptions the business plan demonstrates that expenditure proposals can be met. These include:

- The management and maintenance of the stock
- Payment of debt
- Investment in the stock
- Delivery of regeneration and new affordable housing
- Re-modelling of sheltered schemes

Risk Analysis

24.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
HRA Debt Settlement could be re-opened by Government	2 Possibility if council's do not demonstrate that they are delivering improvements	3 less financial resources	The Council has processes in place to manage the demands of local and national housing agendas
Higher construction costs	3 Construction costs	3 Schemes become	Value management to be undertaken

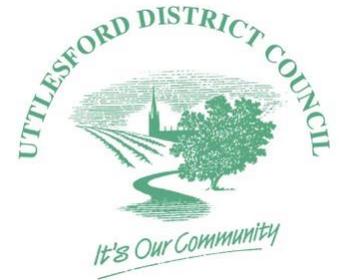
than estimated	escalating in the region	unviable	throughout design process
The Council approves plans which are not sustainable into the future, leading to increasing problems in balancing budgets	3 uncertainty around the continuing rise in contractor/ construction costs	3 schemes become unviable	Officers use medium and long-term modelling (up to 30 years) for HRA, to ensure decisions are made in the knowledge of long-term deliverability issues / implications
Rent and service charge arrears increase and bad debt rises, as a direct result of the Welfare Benefit Reforms	2 Introduction of Universal Credit will have an impact on rent collection	3 Income needs to be maintained to ensure schemes are delivered	Increased resources identified for income management. Performance closely monitored to allow further positive action if required
Enforced sales of voids	2 Government proposal – though it seems likely that regional figures may be adjusted	4 at least 45% of the council's properties will fall into this definition	Lobby Government to adjust regional figures
Introduction of Pay to Stay	2 Government proposal	3 High cost of administration Increase in arrears Increase in RTB	Increased resources will need to be identified to administer the scheme
Supporting People Cuts	3 Essex CC consulting on cuts	3 Service may need to be reduced Financial impact on residents receiving support	Start informing residents of the proposed cuts and options available to them

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

2015/16 – 2045/46

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Foreword from Housing Portfolio Holder

I am delighted to introduce this business plan, which sets out our ambitions for the future of council housing in Uttlesford. The plan sets out our scope for investment in new and improved homes; benefitting local people and the local economy.

This is the first revision of our five-year plan since the replacement, in 2012, of the housing subsidy system with 'self financing' arrangements for local authorities with retained housing stock.

Despite borrowing more than £88 million, the council is now in a much stronger position than under the previous arrangements and, as this plan describes, we can look forward to significant investment in new and improved housing to help meet the current and anticipated future needs of the district.

We have already successfully delivered 21 new council homes for rent. These new homes, which complement the communities in which they sit are, are a taste of things to come: they are attractive, well designed and constructed.

In scaling up the investment in our housing and new homes we are carefully considering our options: how best to improve our existing stock; what to build and where. These deliberations are intended to ensure that the best possible outcomes are achieved from our investments.

The future of council housing in Uttlesford is looking a good deal better and will play a continuing and important role in meeting the needs of local people; now and for generations to come.

Cllr Julie Redfern – Housing Portfolio Holder Uttlesford District Council

Introduction

The first Business Plan for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) under self-financing was published in April 2012. The Business Plan set out how the Council intended to manage, maintain and invest in its housing and deliver services to its tenants and leaseholders. The document has been reviewed annually and where necessary future projections amended in the light of changing circumstances.

Major changes have occurred since 2012 in relation to assumptions within the original Business Plan, including the impact of changes to rent calculations, the level of Right to Buy (RTB) sales, welfare reforms and trends in inflation. These have potential to impact the Council's major investment plans, particularly the development of new homes, improvement of its sheltered housing and other planned maintenance programmes. It was originally proposed to update the Business Plan in 2017 however in September 2014 the Housing Board agreed that the document should be updated in 2015 to address these major changes.

This updated Business Plan covers the 30-year period 2015/16 to 2045/46. The plan contains an investment programme, formulated on a 5 year and a 30 year basis, reflecting the Government's requirement for a longer term planning cycle. The 30 year projections are based on the most up to date information available. Current stock condition data has been built into the model on which the projections have been based. With the comprehensive information available, the 2015 Business Plan will be a key element in informing the future direction of the Housing Service by:

- examining the current position and the Council's performance as landlord
- estimating the money that that will be needed over the next 30 years to manage the housing stock and ensure that it is properly maintained
- setting out a 5 year plan for capital investment and maintenance
- setting out a 5 year plan for service development and improvements
- identifying options for additional investment as resources become available immediately and throughout the lifetime of the plan

This Business Plan also reports on achievements since the 2012 Business Plan was adopted and sets updated key priorities. It is primarily concerned with the Authority's landlord role and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Housing Strategy which has a wider cross tenure strategic purpose and establishes objectives for meeting housing need in Uttlesford in the coming years.

Progress with implementing the key objectives from the 2012 HRA Business Plan

The 2012 HRA Business Plan included key objectives and an action plan to achieve them. Significant progress has been made in a number of areas, while in others implementation is still in progress. More detailed analysis of progress with implementing these objectives is included in [Appendix.....](#)

Key achievements include:

- Successfully delivered 21 new council homes for rent through the following schemes:
 - Holloway Crescent
 - Mead Court (Phase I)

- Reviewed opportunities for delivery of further regeneration and new build including exploration of alternative delivery models
 - Mead Court (Phase II) - construction of 16 properties. On site and progressing well
 - Catons Lane, Saffron Walden - construction of 6 properties. On site and progressing well
 - Hatherley Court, Saffron Walden – planning permission for construction of 4 new flats and remodelling of existing sheltered scheme. Start on site programmed for January 2016
 - Reynolds Court, Newport – planning permission for redevelopment of sheltered scheme to provide 41 flats. Start on site programmed for January 2016

- Delivered one of the largest stock investment programmes in the council's history. Since April 2012 capital investment of £15m has been delivered which includes expenditure on:
 - 296 new kitchens
 - 210 new bathrooms
 - 905 replacement boilers
 - 1542 electrical rewires

- Agreed a revised lettable standard for the council's housing to ensure consistent standards are achieved for all maintenance contracts, including works to vacant homes

- Obtained significant external funding (£ ½ million) towards the costs of energy efficiency measures to council properties, work included:
 - Installing external wall insulation toproperties
 - 845 new front doors
 - Installing new energy efficient communal boilers at all sheltered schemes

- Upgraded 6 sheltered housing schemes with the provision of 'internet lounges'

- Delivered service improvements including:
 - Re-structured housing property services department -.....% of repair request now dealt with as 'first time fix'
 - Produced new tenants handbook
 - Produced repairs booklet for tenants
 - Implemented annual tenancy inspections
 - Procured housing repairs contractor

- Completed a comprehensive review of the Allocations Policy which resulted in a number of changes including increasing the time that housing applicants have to be living in the District to go on the Housing Register

- Reviewed and updated the council's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures that established a corporate approach to implementing the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Developed a downsizing / decant policy that explains the level of compensation that will be paid to tenants when they are decanted. The policy also details the payments that will be made to tenants who decide to downsize from a property that is larger than their needs to one of a more suitable size as defined in the Council's Allocation Policy
- Developed a Void Management Policy. This policy outlines how the council intends to provide high quality homes and sustainable lettings by delivering a cost efficient void management service
- Developed a Tenancy Strategy that enabled fixed term tenancies to be offered to meet an identified need and make better use of the asset
- Introduced an in-house Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme
- Converted 8 extra temporary accommodation units from within council stock
- Set up a tenant regulatory panel and delivered a comprehensive co-regulatory framework. Supported the Panel to complete its first review of the void property process which resulted in a number of recommendations being implemented, including a proposal to create a new role of Voids Administrator to co-ordinate the void process. Continuing to support the panel's ongoing programme of reviews
- Re-launched the tenant participation service under the 'Get Involved' banner

Background Information

The Housing Service

The Housing Service provides management and maintenance for just under 3,000 homes, within the Housing Revenue Account. Equally it performs the statutory duties in relation to advice and homelessness. There are around 80 staff delivering the housing service. The roles are diverse and include sheltered housing officers and maintenance operatives as well as office based staff and staff with technical roles. There are few problems with recruitment and retention, although there can be difficulties in recruiting to specialist roles such as development officers.

Housing staff attend courses to ensure their knowledge in the housing field is current and that best practice is always used. Staff are also encouraged to study for professional qualifications, including both day release and distant learning.

UPerform, the Council's appraisal scheme, identifies the training needs of staff and the division has its own training budget to meet identified needs. In addition all staff have access to 'Learning Pool' an interactive learning system.

The following chart shows the current breakdown of employee costs within the Housing Revenue Account in comparison to non-pay costs:

To be inserted

Self-financing

In April 2012, the Localism Act 2011 introduced a new financial regime for local authority housing. A new self-financing system replaced the previous subsidy system, giving Council's more freedom to borrow money and spend the income they receive from rents.

The new system required local authorities to take on a one off debt. Uttlesford District Council made a substantial single payment of £88.407 million to the Government, which it financed with loans from the Public Works Loans Board.

An effective Business Plan has become crucial since the introduction of the self-financing system.

Housing Revenue Account

The Council manages its properties and landlord services through its business plan and Housing Asset Management and Development Strategy. The finances for both are managed through the Housing Revenue Account.

Self-financing introduced new opportunities for the Council's housing service but also increased its exposure to risks. It is therefore critical that the HRA continues to be managed on sound business principles

Debt Cap

The government has imposed a limit on the amount of money the Council can borrow, and reserves the right to reopen the settlement in the event of major changes in housing policy. The borrowing limit constrains the ability of the Council to consider major regeneration and new build projects financed from this HRA business plan. If the borrowing limit is relaxed, as a result of government decisions in future spending reviews, this would increase borrowing capacity and enable a wider range of options to be considered.

Housing Reform

As well as self-financing the Government also introduced a range of reforms to the way social housing is delivered. These include giving greater flexibility to social landlords to determine the types of tenancies they grant to new tenants. The council has implemented a new Tenancy Policy which enables lifetime tenancies to be offered where this is needed, but also gives the flexibility to set shorter tenancy periods where that makes more sense. The rights of existing secure and assured tenants are protected.

Councils have become the housing provider for those who are most vulnerable and judged to be in greatest need. As a result of this changing profile of council tenants the council has to recognise and react to the implications this has for service provision.

Consultation

The Council will continue to monitor, review and develop the business plan in consultation with all stakeholders.

To ensure that the Business Plan is developed in an effective and inclusive way regular reviews and updates are taken to the Housing Board. This group is made up of tenant representatives, members and key officers from the Housing, Planning and Finance Departments. The board plays an important part in the development of the plan and will continue to play an important part in monitoring progress of the action plan.

Tenants and leaseholders are able to comment on and suggest changes to the Council's strategic ambitions through regular consultations. They are also encouraged to submit ideas and priorities for the housing service.

Strategic Priorities

Links to other documents

The business plan links in and draws upon wider regional and national priorities as well as the key priorities within the council's Corporate Plan and the council's key strategies.

Corporate Plan

The business plan priorities will be closely aligned with the Council's corporate priorities. As the major provider of social housing in the area the Council has a key role to play in supporting the Council's strategic objectives and priorities which are:

- Remain a **low tax** Council
- Continue to listen and respond to our communities so we stay focused on our customers' needs and the delivery of **high quality** key services that matter
- We will have shared the benefits of growth with our communities in a **responsible** way that protects and enhances our environment
- Delivering **thriving communities**

Housing Strategy

The council's Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 sets out how the council wants to improve both the quality of accommodation and lives of people who live in the district by:

1. Increasing housing supply across all tenures

2. Helping people to live independently
3. Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes
4. Creating sustainable communities

The Housing Strategy is complemented by the council's Tenancy Strategy and Housing Allocation scheme which ensure that the council meets housing need, appropriately allocates tenancies, provides tenancy options and promotes mobility.

Homelessness Strategy

The Homelessness Strategy sets out how the council will try to prevent and tackle homelessness in the district by:

1. Preventing homelessness by providing a first class housing advice service to clients in all housing tenures and by sustaining tenancies
2. Providing good quality suitable temporary accommodation and work towards the ending the use of bed and breakfast even in an emergency
3. Engaging with the private rented sector to improve access to accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
4. Improving the Health and Wellbeing of homeless people

Housing Asset Management and Development Strategy

Key priorities of the Housing Asset Management and Development Strategy are to ensure that:

1. Existing housing stock meets needs and achieves decent homes standards
2. The housing stock and other housing assets continue to generate an acceptable level of income
3. The council creates sustainable affordable housing both now and into the future

This Business Plan aims to detail what needs to be done to realise these overall objectives and identify how the council can maintain its housing assets to an agreed standard and continuously improve people's living environment.

HRA Business Plan Key Priorities

The purpose of the business plan is to demonstrate that the council can maintain its housing assets, and deliver the levels of service, home and neighbourhood improvements. It is first and foremost a financial document, which determines how the council will meet the needs of present and future tenants, demonstrating that Government and local targets can be achieved and ensuring the long-term viability of the stock.

The keys priorities of the Business Plan have been developed having regard to the council's Corporate Plan and strategic documents mentioned above, and are as follows:

1. Operate a sound and viable housing business in a professional and cost effective manner
2. Ensure that all the council's tenants live in a decent home in settled communities for as long as needed, consistent with the council's Tenant Strategy
3. Help tenants and leaseholders get involved with decisions about their housing
4. Regenerate the stock and build new affordable rented council housing in an efficient and effective manner

The above priorities were drawn up following consultation with tenants and leaseholders

Action Plan

An action plan has been drawn up focusing on the key priorities. A copy of the action plan can be found in **Appendix.....**

Monitoring the Action Plan

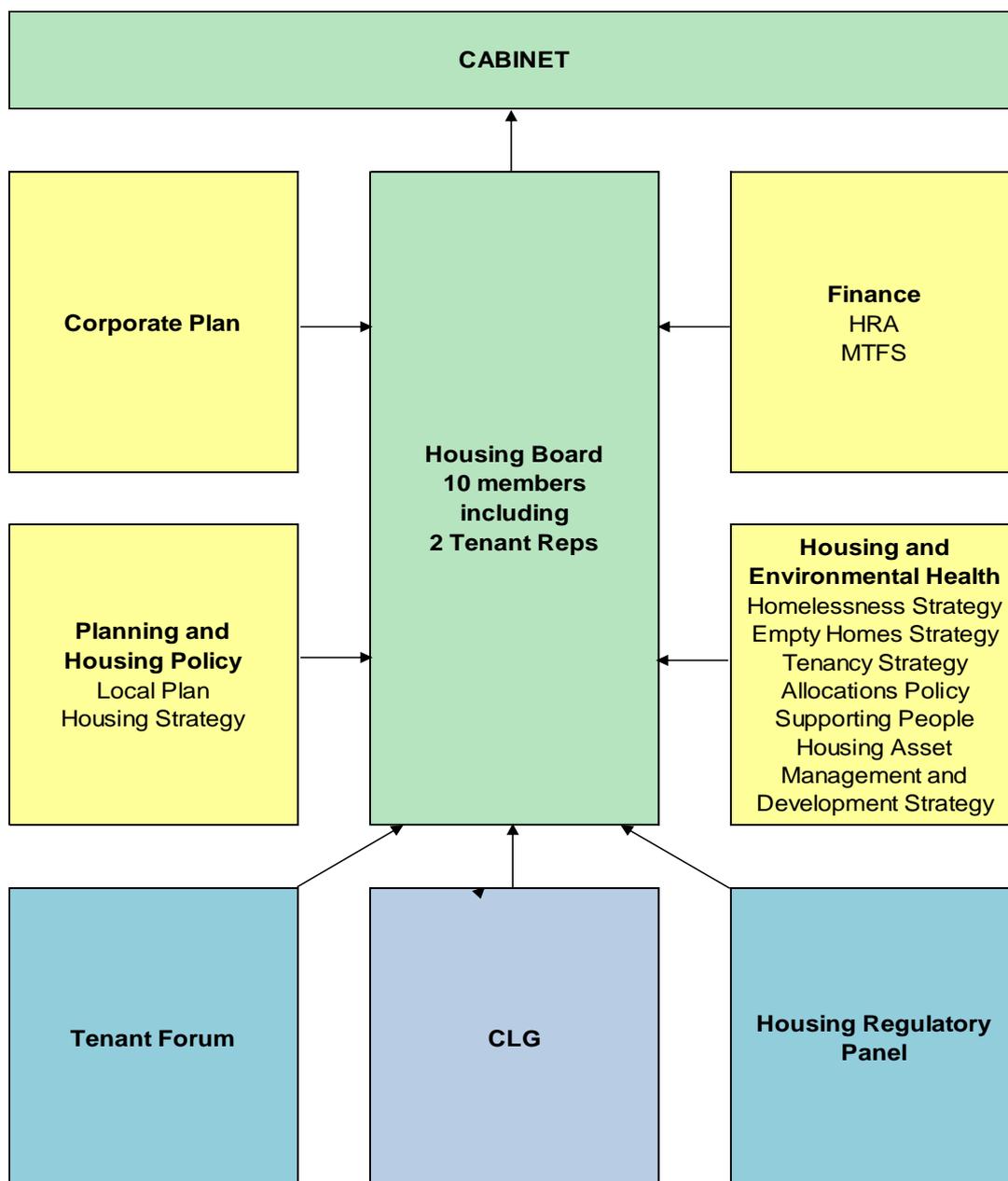
The Council will continue to work with tenants, members and partners to monitor the Council's performance against priorities via the action plan and will provide regular progress reports to the Tenant Forum and Housing Board.

Decision Making

The Housing Board

The Housing Board, consisting of members and tenants, monitors and reviews all matters relating to the council's housing strategic role and housing management function. The Housing Board will assist with influencing policy development and budget setting. The following terms of reference have been agreed for the Housing Board:

- Inform on and monitor the performance and delivery of all Council housing related strategies and policies
- Monitor housing related performance indicators
- Inform on and monitor the Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
- Monitor the Council's Housing Revenue Account
- Monitor and inform on the delivery of affordable housing units in the District
- Consider the use of existing housing stock and other housing assets



Reports from the tenant forum and housing regulatory panel feed into the board for discussion and action. Recommendations from the Board are taken to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet consists of senior elected councillors who make most of the Council's important decisions. They are guided by the Housing Portfolio Holder, who is a member of the Cabinet with special responsibility for housing matters. The Housing Portfolio Holder also sits on the Housing Board. The Full Council, however, retains the responsibility for the policy framework, which includes this Business Plan.

Monitoring Performance

Since the last business plan the Council has developed a stronger and more coherent Housing Service Divisional Plan and monitoring framework. Corporate Objectives, Strategic Priorities, and options identified in the Council's Housing Strategy and Business Plan are drawn together in the Housing Divisional Plan to

produce team targets for each team within Housing and Environmental Services. These targets then link directly to Performance Indicators and targets.

The Housing and Environmental Service Divisional Plan works in two ways. It allows Members and senior management to gauge progress against agreed targets. Also front line employees can connect their day to day tasks with the Council's corporate ambitions.

The Divisional Plan is monitored at monthly meetings with Service Heads so that progress against priorities, objectives and targets is constantly under review. Performance is monitored by recording and analysing statistical information and progress is shown graphically using 'traffic light indicators' (where green shows work on target or ahead of schedule and red shows that there is a risk of not delivering).

Performance since the last business plan has been strong in the following areas:

- Rent collection
- Tenant satisfaction with repairs
- Decent Homes delivery
- Gas servicing

This same monitoring identified the following area where performance could be improved:

- The time taken to re-let voids (major works)

A full list of the most recent performance indicators relating to the service is set out in the **Appendix.....**

Where performance does not meet targets, an action plan is developed, implemented and monitored, with tenant input where appropriate. For example in 2014 the Tenant Regulatory Panel carried out a review of the void re-let process. The focus of the review was to improve performance in relation to how quickly voids are re-let and therefore to reduce the amount of rent lost from void periods. As part of the review tenants visited other local landlords to understand and learn from best practice elsewhere. As a result of the review an action plan was developed.

The implementation of the action plan has been reviewed. This has shown the following results:

- Improvements in the management of voids, including weekly void meetings, clear responsibilities, improved record keeping
- Changes in operational processes including pre void inspections to improve the condition in which properties are left
- Improved void turnaround times, and improved proportion of homes accepted on first offer

In all service areas performance targets are set to achieve continuous improvement and to aim for performance to be in the top quartile when compared with other similar social landlords.

The Council also compares its performance regularly with other landlords through the Chartered Institute of Housing and National Housing Federation’s benchmarking service, Housemark.

Performance management information is regularly monitored by the Housing Regulatory Panel, the Housing Board and the Council’s Corporate Management Team (CMT).

Budget Monitoring

Budgets are monitored on a monthly basis by relevant staff as a minimum and problems, if identified, are addressed at an early stage. Close ongoing monitoring of the housing revenue and capital programme budgets has enabled the Council to ensure that available resources are used efficiently.

Officers re-assess the programmes to ensure that the resources resulting in any savings are used fully and effectively. For example savings from extremely competitive tenders received last year enabled the Council to re-direct money towards other major projects.

An analysis of spend on responsive repairs identified areas that could be addressed much more effectively by larger planned capital schemes. This has resulted in a more cost effective use of limited resources.

Asset Management

The Council’s housing stock is a valuable asset. As a major provider of social housing the Council makes a significant contribution to meeting the need for affordable housing in the district. The stock has been well maintained, with an investment strategy targeted at bringing all homes up to the decent homes standard.

Profile of the Housing Stock

The Council’s stock consists of traditionally constructed houses, flats, and bungalows. The stock is mostly low rise, although varied in archetype. There are no high-rise flats. All non-traditional build properties, such as Airey and PRC houses, have been re-built.

The council owns the following properties as of 1 April 2015:

Dwelling Type	Rented	Shared Ownership	Leasehold
Bedsit	66		
Flat	673		128
House	1,349	16	
Bungalow	745		
DWELLINGS TOTAL	2,833		
Garages	586		

470 Council homes are in “sheltered housing”, where tenants receive a support service. The council leases 128 flats and maisonettes that have previously been sold under the Right to Buy. The council has retained certain responsibility for these homes, including regular repairs maintenance, which the leaseholders pay for through their annual service charges.

The business plan draws upon the stock condition information and data analysis used in the formulation of the Housing Asset Management and Development Strategy, which sets out priorities for the physical care and improvement of the housing stock and related housing assets. It recognises the natural tension between competing investment needs, for example investment in the existing housing stock, investment in new affordable housing and investment in housing management services.

The overall objectives of the Housing Asset Management and Development Strategy are to ensure that:

- existing housing stock meets needs and achieves decent homes standards
- the housing stock and other housing assets continue to generate an acceptable level of income
- the council creates sustainable affordable housing both now and into the future

To maximise new affordable housing delivery the Council is considering options for the structuring and funding of new homes outside the HRA.

Sheltered Housing

In the previous business plan the Council outlined its ambition to improve housing options for older people in the district.

The council owns 16 sheltered housing schemes consisting of 451 properties. Some of the properties in these schemes currently fall below the desired standard for older people’s accommodation. The Council has explored opportunities for the refurbishment or redevelopment of this type of housing. Since 2012 six schemes have been re-furbished. Plans to re-model Hatherley Court and re-develop Reynolds Court are progressing well and work is due to commence in January 2016.

When developing the improvement programme for sheltered housing, it will be essential to plan for the long term requirements of an ageing population to ensure the sheltered housing stock will meet the demand for this type of accommodation in the future, as well as the changing needs and aspirations of older people.

It is hoped that the work carried on the schemes will improve housing mobility of older people who are under-occupying family-sized accommodation by offering desirable and accessible homes that are fit for the future.

Disposals

Disposals are considered on a case by case basis and would only be included if they are assessed as not being financially viable, i.e. investment will not generate

sufficient return. Any income from disposals or conversions will be re-invested back into the Council's housing stock, both to increase supply and improve its quality.

Greener Housing

The council is developing an Environmental Strategy that will sit alongside the Asset Management Strategy. This has the objectives of reducing climate emissions through the stock, alleviating fuel poverty, and improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

Disabled Adaptations

Funding for disabled adaptations of £250k per annum has been included within the 30 year Planned Maintenance Programme, which is assessed as being adequate to meet anticipated demand for adaptations from council tenants

Decent Homes

Based on survey information 100% of the stock complies with the Decent Home Standard. However approximately 10% of the stock annually would become non-decent without investment. The investment requirements in the business plan include all costs required to maintain the properties at the decent homes standard identified in the current stock condition database. It also includes costs for works that improve the stock beyond the basic decent homes standard including:

£5.9m over 30 years on sustainable energy projects to provide affordable warmth and improve the energy efficiency of homes

£3.1m over 30 years for environmental improvements to fund works outside the home including improved parking provision.

Decent Homes is a minimum standard that requires that the home:

- **Meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing**
- **Is in a reasonable state of repair**
- **Has reasonably modern facilities and services and**
- **Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort**

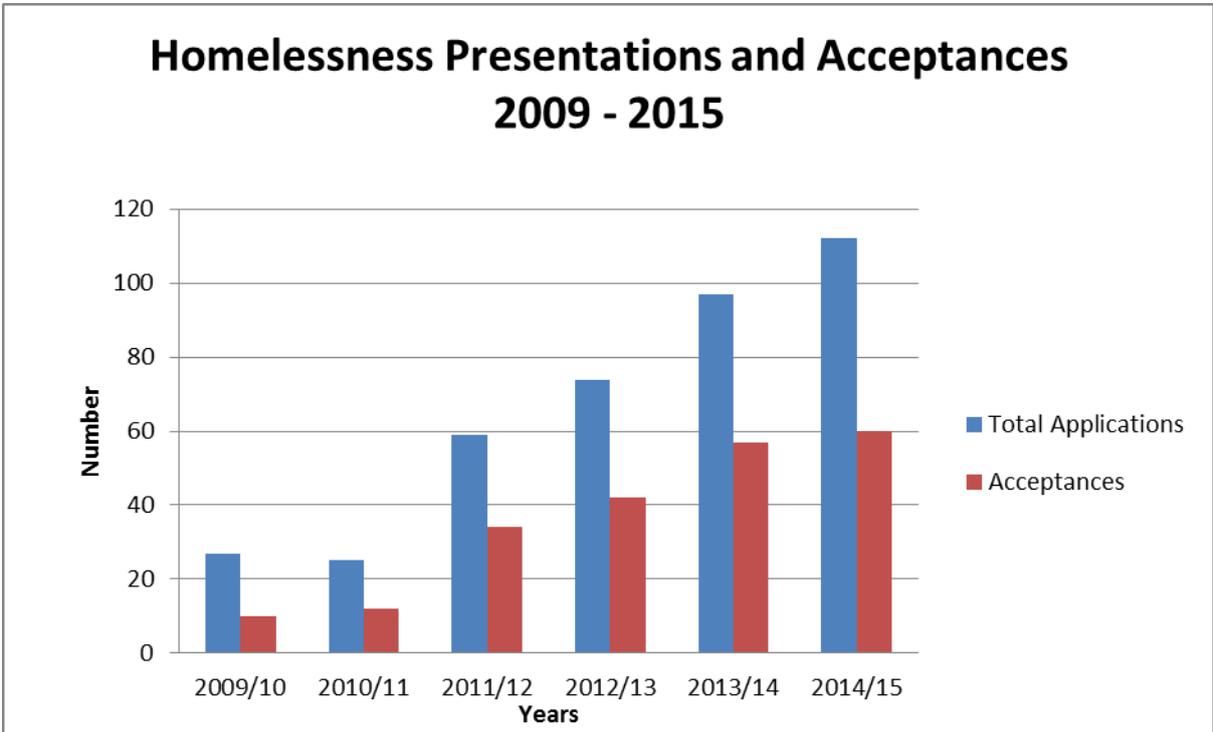
Stock Options

Detailed analysis work has begun to consider the financial contribution that particular categories of housing stock and assets such as garages and land make to the business plan. The Council will need to consider the best options for individual properties, or groups of properties that are a drain on the business model, and identify whether they require significant investment, redevelopment, strategic disposal, demolition or alternative use.

Any investment decisions in housing assets will need to be carefully balanced with both the financial impact on the business plan and social impact on tenants and leaseholders.

Housing Options and Homelessness

It is important that the HRA Business Plan reflects the known housing need in Uttlesford and predictions of how this might change in the future. Uttlesford has seen a steep increase in homelessness presentations in the past 6 years as demonstrated in the graph below. This is a trend being reported by most local authorities. Figures collated by Crisis show that there has been a 26% increase in homelessness presentations in England from 2010 to 2014. Research shows that there will continue to be a rise in the number of homeless households even as the economic downturn is reversed.



The council works closely with the Uttlesford Citizens Advice Bureau to prevent homelessness and refers to them cases requiring financial advice or support through the court eviction processes. The bureau has also experienced in recent years an increase in demand for their services.

The council has built 4 new purpose built units of accommodation on its Mead Court redevelopment site to use as temporary accommodation. These will add to the 8 units that have been developed by converting 4 existing council properties. In total the council currently now has access to 18 units of temporary accommodation which has resulted in a decreasing need to place homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Choice Based Lettings

Housing applicants are given choice about which home is let to them using HomeOption a “choice based lettings” (CBL) scheme. The council works with five neighbouring councils and the housing associations that work in the district to operate the scheme jointly. This reduces the costs of the scheme.



CBL schemes can enhance mobility between areas and tenures and provide a balance between the needs of prospective tenants and choice and so may contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods.

Between April 2012 and March 2015 a total of 950 properties were let via the HomeOption system, 551 of these properties were Council owned. Where properties become empty the Council have set re-let targets from the date the key is returned to the date the next tenant gets the key to their new home to ensure that rent loss is minimalised.

Uttlesford is an area of high property values and intense demand for social housing. This means that the council has not experienced significant difficulty when letting vacant property. There is however a need to maintain housing to a standard which is attractive to potential tenants, meets the changing nature of household formation and responds to other demographic or cultural issues.

The Council needs to ensure that with an increase in demand for social housing that its own stock is used in the most effective way. In some cases an increase in the void period may be because possible tenants did either not bid or did not wish to take up the offer of that property. This has been a particularly an issue for some of the Council's sheltered housing schemes where average re-let times far greater than general need properties.

Tenure

The tenancy agreement sets out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and the Council. The Council provides support and assistance to tenants who need it to sustain their tenancy. The tenancy agreement includes grounds for possession in the case of breach of tenancy. Eviction through a court order is used as a last resort in the case of continuous tenancy breach.

New tenants are offered an introductory tenancy which is converted to a secure/fixed term tenancy following a period of 12 months providing there have been no major breaches in the tenancy agreement in that time.

The Localism Act provided for a new form of tenancy for local authority tenants. It included a new statutory requirement for all social landlords “to offer and issue the most secure form of tenancy compatible with the purpose of the housing and the sustainability of the community”. This meant that Councils were no longer required automatically to let all new tenancies on long term secure tenancies (with or without an introductory or probationary period) but had the option to issue fixed term tenancies in some cases.

The Council responded to these changes to the law and introduced a new tenancy policy that enables fixed term tenancies to be offered to meet an identified need, and make better use of the asset.

Supported Housing - Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Uttlesford currently only has one scheme of general needs supported housing. Bromfield House in Saffron Walden provides 17 units of shared supported housing for people, predominately but not exclusively young, who need support to develop life skills before they are ready to live independently.

Whilst this scheme can assist clients with mental health, drug and alcohol issues, it can only do this for those at the lower level of support needs. The scheme is also often at full capacity leaving clients with support needs being housed in unsuitable accommodation. There is also, within the District, a lack of supported housing for those with higher and multiple support needs. Housing people in inappropriate accommodation causes management issues and tenancy failure.

Specialist Refuges - Victims of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the most complex issues requiring the co-operation of numerous statutory and voluntary agencies at a national as well as regional and local level. It is not a popular issue or one that easily attracts funding. It is however an issue that has been under resourced within Uttlesford where there has never been refuge provision within the district for victims of domestic abuse.

It is recommended that Local authorities provide 1 refuge space per 10,000 of population, depending on local needs. This would indicate that Uttlesford should consider providing a refuge of between 7 – 8 spaces. Currently Uttlesford victims of domestic abuse are referred out of area when they require a refuge, which may be appropriate; however Uttlesford is not providing any reciprocal services.

The council is currently working with Safer Places and have identified a site for a potential specialist housing facility in the district.

Financial Modelling of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

An updated version of the HRA business plan model has been prepared taking into account all assumed investment, repairs and management costs required over the next 30 years, assuming compliance with national rent policy, and taking account of a continued high level of sales under the Right to Buy scheme.

Rental Income

Following the Summer Budget on 8 July 2015 it was announced to the social housing sector that all rents within social housing would have to be reduced by 1%, rather than the previous guidance of annual increases of CPI plus 1%. The rent reduction is to be applied over a four year period. So for example a tenant currently paying £100.00 per week will see it reduced to £99.00 next April and then £98.01 the following year and so on until April 2020 when rents are proposed to increase by CPI plus 1% again.

The 2012 business plan was predicated on annual income rises of CPI + 1% so this shift could have a potentially large impact on rental income and therefore the ability of the council to continue to invest in stock and projects identified in the business plan. The assumed reduction of 1% on rents for this period will result in a rental base that will be in the region of at least 12% lower in 2019-20 than anticipated. If the reduction was applied on all current rents this could have a cumulative impact of at least £1.8m by 2018/19 compared with existing business plan assumptions. Over the life of the business plan losses will amount to £14.9m.

Capital Programme Priorities

Using the principles established in the Asset Management and Development strategy, the council has developed an investment plan that sets out the programme priorities over the next 30 years.

The investment plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to take into account changing levels of resources, any planned regeneration works, updated survey information and feedback from resident consultation on where investment priorities should be made.

The plan is based around creating sensible geographic concentrations of work for internal refurbishments, so that programmes can be efficiently managed and delivered from local site set ups. External works have been planned around the 5-6 year cyclical decorations programme, with the intention that where scaffolding is erected for external decorations other key components that require work are also replaced. This will prevent repeated costs of erecting scaffolding.

Surveys will be completed on an ongoing basis so that stock condition information is up to date and planned programmes can be adjusted accordingly.

The council is also developing ways of communicating the planned programme with residents. Estates that have been identified as being part of the 2016/17 programme will be visited as part of the 'get involved' roadshows. At these events officers will present what work is being considered and asks for residents' feedback on what their priorities are. These will then be factored into the programme planning.

The major investment in kitchens and bathroom replacement, as well as rewires and heating improvements will continue. Replacements of roofs and other external elements continue and will be those prioritised in accordance with the Asset Management and Development Strategy. In addition a programme of window replacements will begin, focusing on those areas where existing UPVC windows have reached the end of their useful life.

The total spending requirement on capital programmed works over the five year period is estimated to be £16.2m.

In total the average expenditure costs per unit are in the region of £45,500 per unit which are higher than benchmarked costs though this reflects the age and profile of the stock.

Revenue Maintenance Budgets

There is a close link between revenue maintenance budgets and the Capital Programme. Spending on revenue through planned and reactive maintenance programmes will extend the life of a property, thus minimising the capital spend on major works. The following table sets out the revenue and capital requirements/potential schemes for the next 30 years:

HOUSING REVENUE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON STOCK - 2015/2016 TO 2045/2046

	Budget Code	Description of Works	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YRS 6-10	YRS 11-15	YRS 16-20	YRS 21-25	YRS 26-30	
			15 / 16	16 / 17	17 / 18	18 / 19	19 / 20	£	£	£	£	£	£
			£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
A. HOUSING REVENUE EXPENDITURE	Ad Hoc	HRE001/2013	Ad-hoc Repairs	885,400	830,000	830,000	830,000	830,000	4,205,400	4,205,400	4,205,400	4,205,400	
	Cyclical	HRE001/2041	External and Internal Decorations	230,000	280,000	280,000	280,000	280,000	1,350,000	1,350,000	1,350,000	1,350,000	
		HRE001/2014	Pre-paint Repairs	100,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	80,000	420,000	420,000	420,000	420,000	
	Routine Maintenance - Service Maintenance Contracts	HHE001/2011	Estate Maintenance planned repairs	250,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	
		HRE001/2042	Servicing/Maintenance of Central Heating Boilers	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	1,750,000	1,750,000	1,750,000	1,750,000	
		HRE001/2043	Servicing/Maintenance of Communal Boilers	45,500	44,500	44,500	44,500	44,500	223,500	223,500	223,500	223,500	
		HRE001/2044	Asbestos Management	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	650,000	
		HRE001/2045	Legionella Management	56,300	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	276,300	276,300	276,300	276,300	
		HRE0014005	Electric Testing	72,000	72,000	72,000	72,000	72,000	360,000	360,000	360,000	360,000	
		HSH001/2012	Servicing/Maintenance of Communal & Disabled Lifts	22,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	142,000	142,000	142,000	142,000	
		HSH001/4012	Sheltered Furniture	28,000	17,500	17,500	17,500	17,500	98,000	98,000	98,000	98,000	
		HSH001/4001	Sheltered Equipment	14,000	17,500	17,500	17,500	17,500	84,000	84,000	84,000	84,000	
		SUB TOTAL A : HOUSING REVENUE EXPENDITURE			2,183,200	2,006,500	2,006,500	2,006,500	2,006,500	10,209,200	10,209,200	10,209,200	10,209,200
B. HOUSING CAPITAL EXPENDITURE	Planned Works	CHR200/6812	Central Heating Boiler Replacement	570,000	570,000	570,000	570,000	570,000	2,850,000	2,850,000	2,850,000	2,850,000	
		CHR201/6811	Sheltered Scheme Improvements	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	25,000	75,000	25,000	75,000	
		CHR212/6812	Adaptations for Disabled (Major)	260,000	260,000	260,000	260,000	260,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	
		CHR202/6812	Adaptations for Disabled (Minor)	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	
		CHR203/6812	Environmental Improvements	130,000	100,000	150,000	100,000	100,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	
		CHR204/6811	Chimneys	50,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	
		CHR205/6811	Energy Conservation/Plant Replacement	250,000	50,000	50,000	100,000	100,000	75,000	250,000	250,000	75,000	
		CHR206/6812	Security Programme	20,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	
		CHR207/6811	Structural Works	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	750,000	
		CHR208/6811	Sewage Plant Replacement Works	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	50,000	100,000	50,000	100,000	
		CHR209/6811	Roof works	70,000	100,000	120,000	250,000	250,000	2,250,000	1,250,000	1,250,000	500,000	
		CHR210/6812	Doors	70,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	
		CHR211/6812	Re-wiring	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	2,500,000	
		CHR213/6811	Major Work - Voids	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	
		CHR214/6812	Bathroom/Kitchen Upgrade	500,000	500,000	625,000	500,000	450,000	2,250,000	2,250,000	2,250,000	2,250,000	
		CHR215/6812	Re-windowing	35,000	35,000	35,000	120,000	120,000	600,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000	
		CHR217/6801	Insulation Works	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	
		PLANNED WORKS PROGRAMME			3,260,000	3,060,000	3,255,000	3,345,000	3,295,000	15,500,000	15,675,000	15,575,000	16,250,000
		CHR223/6812	UPVC fascias/downpipes	263,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	
		CHR500/6841	Cash Incentive to move grant	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	
		CHR401/6824	IT - Planned Repairs/Service Charge Module etc	65,000	0	0	0	0	350,000	100,000	350,000	100,000	
		CHR402/6824	Housing Contractors Portal & SAM	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		CHR301/6822	Energy Efficiency Works	380,000	280,000	0	0	0	1,600,000	1,600,000	200,000	200,000	
CHR501/6841	Learning Difficulties Support Unit	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
CHR104/6801	Mead Court Development	1,768,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
CHR219/6812	Sheltered Housing Alarms Equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
CHR221/6801	Internet Cafes	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
CHR600/6823	Vehicle purchase programme	0	0	102,500	96,400	0	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000			
CHR105/6801	New Build Development Sites	212,000	586,000	900,000	600,000	600,000	4,500,000	4,500,000	4,500,000	4,500,000			
CHR106/6801	Catons Lane	900,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
-	Sheltered Scheme Developments	0	0	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	4,000,000	4,000,000	0	0			
CHR107/6801	Reynolds Court	2,450,000	4,200,000	620,000	0	0	0	0	0	0			
CHR108/6801	Hatherley Court	865,000	897,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
CHR109/6801	Walden Place	10,000	0	0	0	0	1,700,000	0	0	0			
BUSINESS PLAN/ADDITIONAL WORKS TOTAL			7,143,000	6,113,500	1,772,500	2,346,400	2,250,000	13,000,000	11,050,000	5,900,000	5,650,000		
SUB TOTAL B : CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME			10,403,000	9,173,500	5,027,500	5,691,400	5,545,000	28,500,000	26,725,000	21,475,000	21,900,000		
TOTAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON HOUSING PROJECTS UNDER SELF FINANCING: A + B			12,586,200	11,180,000	7,034,000	7,697,900	7,551,500	38,709,200	36,934,200	31,684,200	32,109,200		

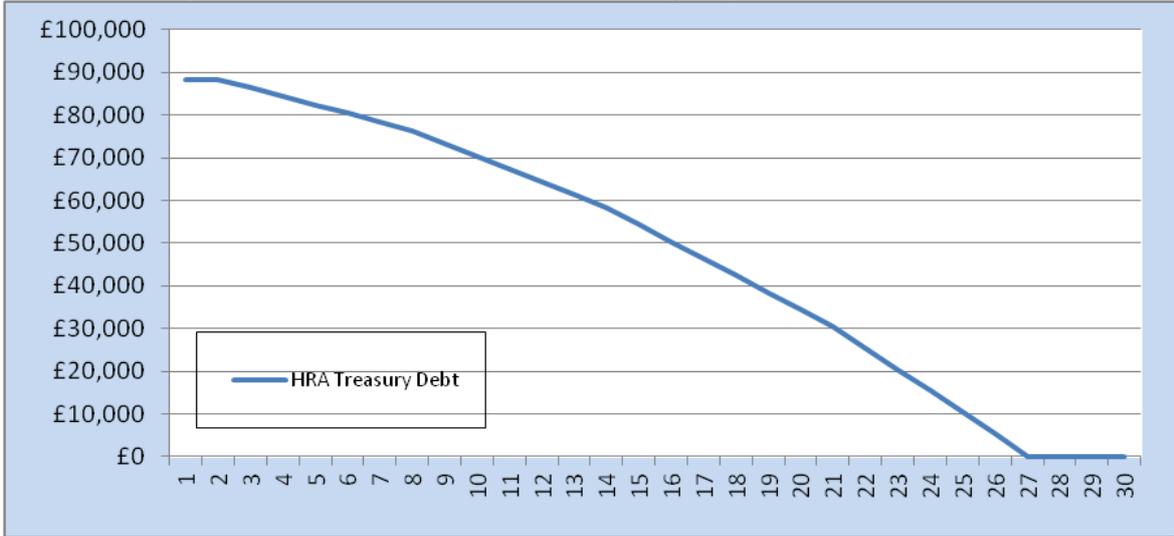
Treasury Management

The loan portfolio that was established to finance the self-financing transactions consists of 25 loans totalling £88.407million. There is no 'internal' borrowing from the Council's General Fund.

The interest on these loans (which vary from 0.7% to 3.5% depending on duration) are charged directly to the HRA, and the vast majority being fixed rates the forecast interest projections will be accurate. Should Internal borrowing be required in the medium to long-term it is estimated that this will be charged at 5%.

The graph below shows the current financing position of the HRA before applying any future income and cost projections:

HRA Financing Position £'000 – Prior to Forecasting Adjustments



The graph shows the actual HRA loan portfolio starting at £88.407million and reducing gradually over 27 years until all loans are repaid. Prior to any adjustments no additional borrowing would be required during this period.

Sensitivities

The plan is viable and resilient to changes in key assumptions. The three key variable factors are interest rates, inflation and right to buy sales.

If interest rates increase above expected levels assumed in the business plan this would reduce the revenue headroom over 30 years.

Income will not increase by more than the rate of inflation over the next 4 years, following the government's announcement to reduce rents, so an increase in inflation could impact the viability of the plan.

If right to buy sales exceed the assumed levels then available income would reduce and could potentially affect the viability of the plan. The mitigation is to ensure that monies are invested to ensure that void levels in existing stock are minimised and to ensure that new build is delivered to replace dwellings lost through RTB.

New Build

Demand for social housing remains high and therefore the plan sets out the Council's aspiration to build new council housing of the types required.

The model includes 4 current new build schemes and provisional schemes which cover years 2 to 5 for unidentified sites. The current schemes will deliver 21 homes from 2015/16 and the provisional schemes 16. All the expenditure for this is included within the budget capital costs.

The plan also provides for future new build beyond year 5 at an average of 5 units per year.

Right to Buy Receipts

With the reinvigoration of the right to buy policy the council has seen sales in the past three years exceed those in the immediate prior years (and those assumed within the self-financing settlement).

The result of the increased volume of sales affects the business plan model not only with loss of income but also introduces the ability to retain the balance of the receipts (after some initial deductions) known as '1-4-1' receipts.

After all eligible deductions the council currently has £1.219million in balances at the end of June 2015. Regulations state that this can be used for up to 30% of new build or acquisitions within 36 months of the receipt arising. These receipts can be reclaimed by DCLG if they are not utilised within 36 months with compounded interest. Therefore £4.065million needs to be spent on total in providing new affordable homes.

Up to and including 2014/15 £2.202 million has been spent and a further £1.112 million in 2015/16 and £0.586million (projected) in 2016/17 as part of the '1-4-1' scheme. This totals £3.9 million, which virtually meets the spend requirements.

Given that right to buy levels are expected to continue at current levels '1-4-1' receipts will continue to accrue and the model has assumed that new build levels are maintained at rate that utilises these receipts with the HRA providing the 70% match funding through a mix of borrowing and future surpluses. With the projected levels of right to buys within the plan it is estimated that receipts will cease to accrue from year 6 (2020/21).

Extension of RTB to Housing Associations

The recent Queens Speech highlighted the Government's wish to expand the eligibility of right to buy to HA properties. In order to fund this there are proposals that Councils should sell a percentage of their high value stock when they become void. Regional figures on which to identify which stock could be at risk have been published

The sale of Council stock on the open market will fund the compensation to HAs for the difference between the receipt they will receive from each sale and the value of their home. At the same time the money from the sale of the Council home will also

have to support a new fund for building on brownfield sites. It is not clear as yet, whether it will also support the building of a much needed replacement home for the Council.

Modelling, based on the proposed regional values, show that the council would be expected to have to sell around 45% of all voids.

The proposal to force the council to sell such a large number of our 'high value' stock will undermine the 30 year 'business plan' which was based on an assessment of the level of RTB sales which obviously did not include this proposal.

The introduction of 'self-financing' in 2012 included a 'debt settlement' which was based on a revenue stream which will now be less than expected if the current Bill is passed by the House of Commons. This will undermine the financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account.

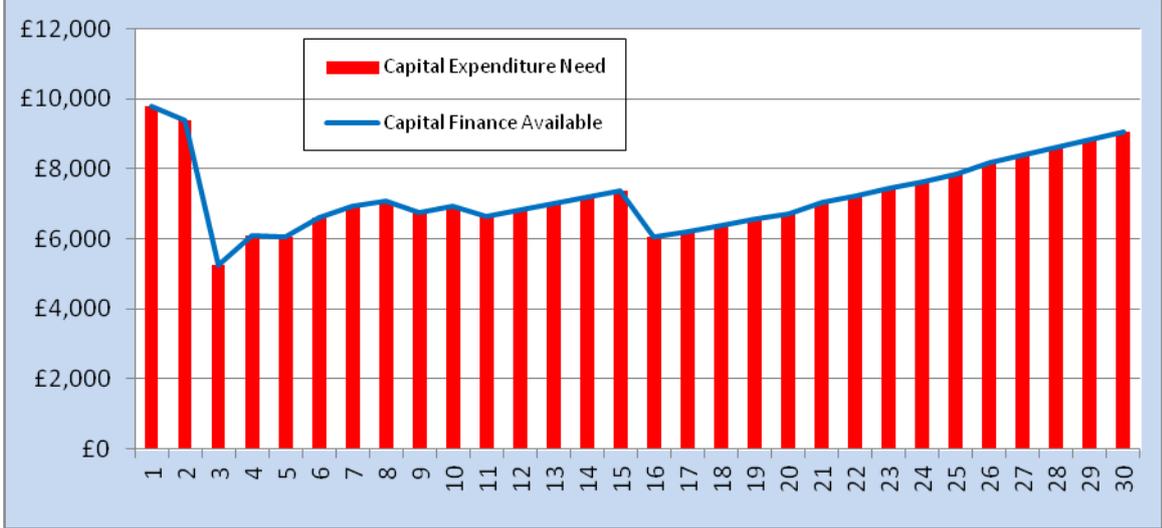
The business plan model has not factored in any potential impact of this policy until further details are known and will be revisited as part of the consultation response.

Funding the Capital Projections

Projections have been amended to reflect the change in rent policy and include the affordable levels of new build.

The graph below demonstrates the capital expenditure (in the thick red vertical bars) for each year including inflation. The available resources are shown (using the thin blue horizontal line).

Capital Expenditure vs Resources £'000

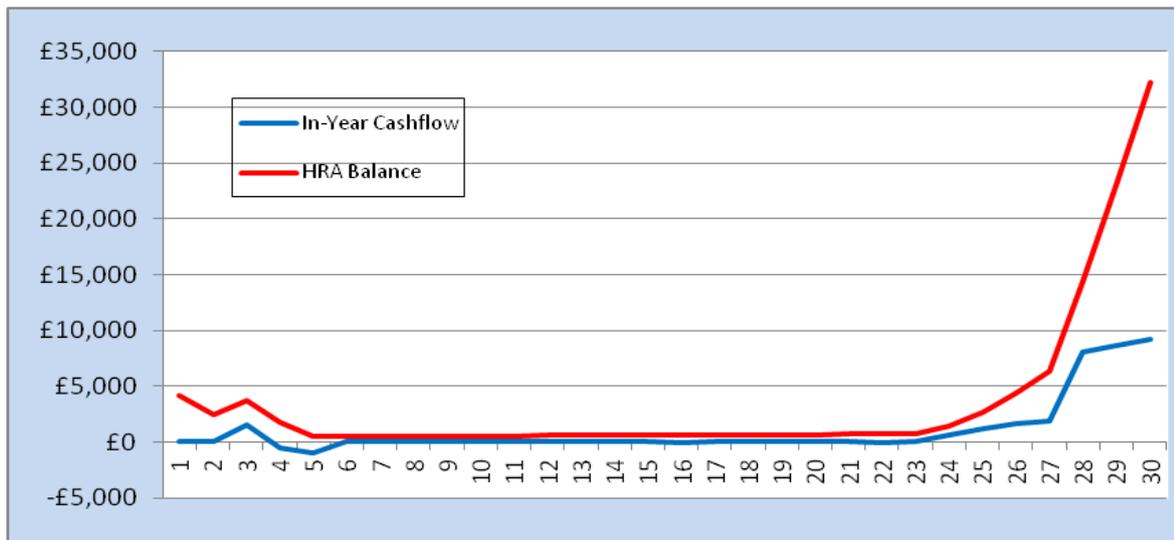


The plan demonstrates that the new build programme and provision for future investment works is affordable.

HRA Revenue Balance Projections

The projected balances for the HRA are as follows:

Projected HRA Balances £'000



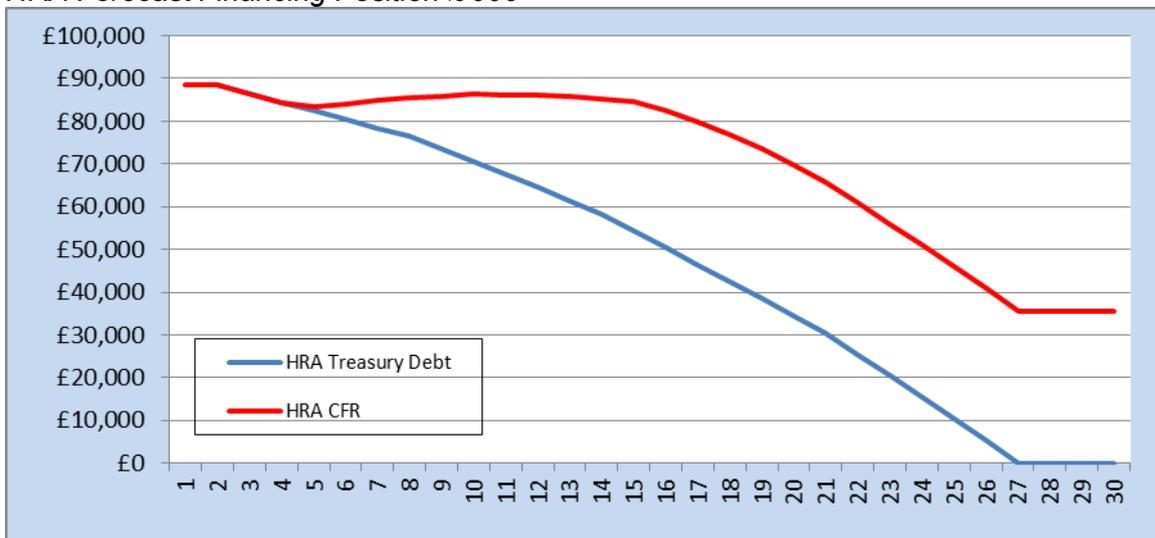
The HRA is set not to let balances to go below £0.5million (plus inflation) and is set to attempt loan repayments where possible according to the treasury loan repayment strategy. The balances held in other reserves with are fully utilised by year 4.

Only after year 24 do balances start to accrue in the HRA above the minimum balance due to the loan repayments. The balances are then projected to increase to a forecast £32.2million in year 30.

HRA Debt Projections

The chart below shows the revised borrowing position for the Council.

HRA Forecast Financing Position £'000



The above graph shows that additional borrowing is in fact required with the gap between the HRA CFR and Treasury debt increasing. The HRA CFR is set to reduce in line with the Treasury debt but is unable to during years 5 to 22. The gap is financed within the model as 'internal borrowing' at an interest rate which peaks at 5%, but can be replaced with assumed treasury loans.

As the 'internal borrowing' is without a specified repayment, the projected HRA CFR is £35.597million in year 30. This could be virtually repaid through the balance projected within the HRA.

If the council wished to see an earlier debt repayment then the programme for new build at any stage of the plan could simply be reduced to accommodate this.

Review of the Business Plan

The Business Plan will be monitored on an annual basis to identify emerging risks and developing issues which may impact on the delivery of the planned actions or long term viability of the plan. If required, the plan will be formally reviewed before 2020, to ensure that resources available remain capable of delivering the planned actions and that the actions can be amended accordingly.

Summary

This review of the HRA Business Plan demonstrates that it remains viable over the 30 years even with the latest rent policy modelled. Viability is judged in that the capital expenditure can be maintained, the HRA does not fall into deficit and that the debt cap is not breached. For the council all of the above apply although the debt cannot be fully repaid without adjustments to the assumed new build programme throughout the thirty years.

The plan assumes for a modest development programme of 5 units a year. If RTB sales continue to escalate beyond those estimated additional finances will be required to ensure the 1 for 1 replacement programme can be achieved. No allowance has been made in the business plan for larger building or re-furbishing projects beyond year 5 (2017/2018). If members wish to see a continuation of the 1 for 1 replacement programme and progression of re-development projects, for example proposals for Walden Place, options to re-finance the loans will need to be explored.

The Council will need to manage the HRA Business Plan robustly and proactively. Income will need to be maximised and costs kept under close review. Provided this is achieved, this Business Plan enables the council to make a genuine step change improvement in the quality and delivery of social housing in Uttlesford.

APPENDICES

Our ref: SH/HRS

Date: 05/08/15

Dear Provider,

Re: Housing Related Support – Older People Services – 2016/17

I am writing to inform you of about our intentions to change funding levels for Older Peoples' services next year. As you will know, the current financial system means that we must ensure we obtain best value for the public money. As part of this process we considering the future funding levels for Older Peoples' HRS services Although ECC has successfully delivered substantial savings already, we need to seek more. In particular, we have to look to services which are 'discretionary', i.e. where we do not have a statutory duty to provide. Housing Related Support falls into this category.

Background to proposals

We have considered a range of proposals to deliver the savings requirements. As part of this consideration, we have involved members of the Housing, Health & Social Care Partnership Board. We have already delivered savings against the HRS-funded Mental Health and Learning Disabilities services and are now looking at Older Peoples' services – sheltered schemes and community alarms.

The current term of the contract for these services ends on 31st March 2016. There is scope to extend the contracts for a further 12 months and we will do this where we can agree new funding levels.

At this time, the proposals are under consultation and are subject to change. The final decision will be taken by elected members in September 2015 and confirmed when the Council sets its budget in the New Year. However, we wanted to inform you of the likely impact on your services so that you can engage with us, and plan for the potential impacts and consult as necessary with tenants who may be affected.

What is proposed?

(You may wish to use the following in communications you wish to share with staff, service users or other interested parties).

There are three proposals which it is intended will be implemented from the start of 2016-17.

1. Reduce the HRS payments to sheltered housing by £2/person/week
2. Cap the HRS payment to Community Alarms in sheltered housing at £2/unit/week (or less if sub-contracted at a lower rate)
3. Cease funding 'dispersed' Community Alarms

What is the Rationale?

1. We believe it is reasonable that individuals should contribute to the costs of their support, as would be the case in statutory support services for adults
2. There are significant variations in payment levels across providers for these services.
3. Different models of support are emerging and what the market can offer is changing. For example, Community Alarm services can often be obtained at lower rates on the open market.
4. The HRS funding of dispersed alarms is neither consistent with the ECC Social Care offer nor across the districts
5. Other areas of HRS spend are currently delivering savings, e.g. Learning Disabilities (£1.1M in current year) and Mental Health
6. Other Authorities have reduced or removed this funding.

What will be the Impact on Tenants?

The ECC contract is with providers and is usually only one element of total funding. We cannot and would not want to dictate how these changes might impact on tenants. However, we strongly encourage you to consult with your tenants or their representative groups, e.g. Tenants and Residents Association, about implementation.

As a result of these changes, a number of things could happen:

- Tenants may be willing to make up the shortfall
- Tenants may be willing to contribute a smaller amount for a reduced service
- Tenants do not contribute and the service is reduced
- The provider may choose to absorb some or all of the additional cost
- Other funding sources (such as Housing Benefit) could be explored

We would particularly encourage providers to explore the final point. Support charges cannot simply be transferred to Housing Benefit, but it is legitimate to review the service you are providing and consider what elements could be eligible for housing benefit. We know that this has been done with some success in Essex already.

Are these new proposals?

These proposals were originally discussed with the Housing, Health and Social Care Partnership Group last year, but were not progressed at that time. The group includes representatives of all the districts as well as provider representatives and other commissioners. We appreciate, however that the proposals will be new to some people.

When will these changes be implemented?

Subject to elected Members approval at Cabinet in September 2015, the changes will be effective from April 2016. The decision will be formally finalised when the Council sets its budget at Full Council early in the New Year.

Small Providers

We are also considering our approach to funding smaller providers. In some cases the transaction costs of paying the HRS funding is greater than the funding itself. We know that:

- There are 53 providers receiving HRS payments for Older Peoples' services. Of these:
 - 33 receive less than £10,000 a year
 - 29 receive less than £5,000 a year
 - 13 receive less than £1,000 a year
- The average contract value for the 33 smallest providers is less than £1,800

We need to consider whether this is sustainable going forward and would be interested in the views of smaller providers.

How can I give my views on the current proposals?

As part of our consultation process we are now writing to invite providers to respond to these proposals. For ease of use we suggest that you use the appended template.

The feedback we have had already from providers is that they would prefer to have an early clear decision on which they can base their budgets, rather than an extended consultation period. **For this reason, can I ask that you return any submissions by 21st August 2015.**

Please send responses to us using this online survey:

<http://surveys.essexinsight.org.uk/TakeSurvey.aspx?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=723L5o2&Preview=true>

Future Engagement

We are consulting now on the arrangements for 2016-17. However, we also need to consider the approach for subsequent years, not least because the contracts that are currently in place cannot be extended beyond March 2017. This will be taken forward via the Housing, Health and Social Care Partnership Group and we intend to run provider events as well as other consultation activity. If you have views on how this should be done, please respond as part of this consultation.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Harniess', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon Harniess
Head of Commissioning
(Vulnerable People)
Essex County Council
E1, County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex, CM1 1YS

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 23rd April, 2015

8

**Title: Development Programme Update
(2014/2015)**

**Author: Stephanie Baxter – Housing Enabling
Officer**

Item for Information

Summary

This report sets out the following.

- The number of affordable homes delivered under the 2014/2015 affordable housing programme by size and tenure.

Recommendations

- To accept the update as a true record of the number of affordable homes delivered as part of the 2014/2015 programme.

Financial Implications

None

Background Papers

None.

Impact

1.

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	Yes. Affordable housing supports the long term sustainability of Uttlesford.
Ward-specific impacts	Yes. Delivers much needed affordable homes to residents unable to meet their need through the market within the District.
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

Risk Analysis

2. The number of affordable homes delivered between 1st April, 2014 and 31st March, 2015 amounted to 80. 47 of these units were for affordable rent and 33 were for shared ownership. This includes a mixture of 1 & 2 bed bungalows and flats as well as 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses for both tenures.
3. The Council's target is 100 affordable homes per annum. For 2013/14, 76 units were delivered compared to 80 for 2014/15. 173 units are projected to be completed as part of the 2015-16 affordable housing programme.
4. Planning permission during 2014/15 was given for 567 affordable homes which will be delivered as 414 affordable rent and 153 shared ownership. These will include a mixture of 1 & 2 bed bungalows and flats as well as 2, 3 & 4 bed houses for local people.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Not enough affordable homes delivered to meet high demand across the District.	2. Some risk due to external delays	2. Increase in the numbers of households on UDC housing waiting list	Will continue to work closely with developers and Parish Councils to ensure we meet our target of 100 affordable homes per annum.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendix 1

Affordable Housing Development Programme, 2014-2015

Schemes delivered in 2014-2015

Scheme Name	Area	Affordable Units	% whole scheme	PP ref no.	Type/lead
Hampit Road	Arksden	4	100	UTT/2427/11/FUL	Rural Exception Site
Brick Kiln Farm	Great Dunmow	26	40	UTT/14/0265/DFO	S106
Broomfields	Hatfield Heath	14	100	UTT/12/5349/FUL	Rural Exception Site
Ashdon Rd PHASE 2 linked to Little Walden Rd	Saffron Walden	25	100	UTT/0400/09/op	s106
Waldeck Court	Saffron Walden	1	100	UTT/13/2152/FUL	S106
Rochford Nurseries p6/Forest Hall Park	Stansted Mountfitchet	10	100	UTT/0076/10/FUL	s106
Totals		80			

*Scheme linked to two sites, Ashdon Rd and Little Walden Rd, Saffron Walden.

**Previous RP neighbourhood office converted to 1 bed bungalow

Schemes expected to be delivered 2015-2016

Scheme Name	Area	End	Affordable Units	% whole scheme	PP ref no.	Type/lead
Site at Warwick RD. Warwick Road	Canfield - Little	Dec-15	1	14	UTT/13/3105/FUL	s106
Stanley Road policy area 2	Chesterford - Great	Dec-15	20	40	UTT/13/3444/DFO	s106
Woodlands park sector 4 Brookfield Farm	Dunmow - Great	Dec-15	50	40	UTT/13/1663/DFO	s106
Land West of Lodge Cottage. Chickney Rd Policy area 2	Henham	Jun-15	6	38	UTT/14/0065/FUL	s106
Catons Lane	Saffron Walden	Dec-15	6	100	UTT/14/2514/FUL	UDC
Mead Court ph1*	Stansted Mountfitchet	May-15	14	100	UTT/13/0749/FUL	UDC
Mead Court ph2	Stansted Mountfitchet	Dec-15	15	100	UTT/13/0749/FUL	UDC
Brewers End (small site) policy area 2	Takeley	Oct-15	16	39	UTT/14/3295/DFO	s106
South of Sampford Rd	Thaxted	Jul-15	23	38	UTT/5754/FUL	s106
Wedow Road policy area 3 land East of Weaverhead Close	Thaxted	May-15	22	40	UTT/13/1170/OP	s106
Totals			173			

*Scheme slipped to due circumstances beyond UDC control

Rural Housing update

Hatfield Broad Oak, Great Sampford, Hempstead and Wendens Ambo site seeking assessments were completed with Officers comments returned. All schemes progressing with ongoing discussions with RP and Parish Councils.

Little Hallingbury will be submitting their planning permission April 2015. Interest in a Rural Exception Scheme is ongoing in Newport. A recent community interest meeting highlighted local demand.

Sewards End and Stebbing have completed Housing Needs Surveys.

Mill Lane, Wimbish is the second passive house scheme in the Parish and 3rd in the District. The scheme has 8 affordable rent and 3 open market homes. Construction has begun and it is expected to be complete within 12 months.

Rural Housing Survey Launch event 1st July – Manuden. This event was received well, with opportunities for discussion around rural housing issues.

Royal Town Planning Institute East conference at Ely, highlighted UDC's rural housing work and the benefits of delivering market housing to pay for rural exception schemes.

Manuden Rural Exception Scheme official opening by HRH Princess Anne. This was an opportunity to show case rural housing at its best.

Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act, 2015 became law in March. This has potential to deliver rural housing for local people in perpetuity.

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 21st September 2015

9

**Title: Carnation Nurseries, Cambridge Road,
Newport**

**Portfolio Holder: Doug Malins – Housing Development
Manager**

Summary

1. This report provides details as to the affordable housing delivery options relating to the Bloor Homes development at Carnation Nurseries, Cambridge Road, Newport.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board recommends to Cabinet
 - a. Whether the Council accepts the offer of gifted affordable units on the terms laid out in this report, and
 - b. Whether the Council should consider future offers of gifted affordable units on developments.

Financial Implications

3. Financial implications are detailed in the report.

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

5.

Communication/Consultation	Parish Council.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	The development will be undertaken with full compliance to Health and Safety Regulations.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The option for the Council to accept gifted units is detailed within the S106, and therefore the legal processes contained therein will need to be complied with.

Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	Newport
Workforce/Workplace	Housing Development and Planning

Situation

6. This development by Bloor Homes consists of a scheme of 21 new homes in total. The scheme has received Planning Permission and has started on site. A 40% affordable housing contribution would constitute 8 units, which are located at plots 8 – 15 on the attached layout plan.
7. During S106 negotiations with the Planning Department, Bloor Homes suggested an option whereby they could gift the Council a number of affordable homes on the site, in lieu transferring the 8 affordable units to a Housing Association in the normal way. Due to the cost implications of gifting units, this would mean the delivery of a smaller number of units on site. It was agreed that the S106 would be written to allow this option to be considered by Members, but if rejected, would revert to the traditional 40 % affordable housing delivery via a Housing Association.
8. Bloor Homes have put forward their offer to the Council with regard to gifted units. This has been calculated on the basis that the land value, build costs, sales values, developers profit do not change from the “normal” delivery process.
9. The developer is proposing to gift UDC 3 affordable housing units, plus make a cash payment of £99,247. The other 5 identified affordable housing plots would then revert to being private sale housing plots for the benefit of Bloor Homes. The gifted plots in question are 13, 14 and 15, which equate to 1, two bedroom house and 2, two bedroom flats and equates to a 15% affordable housing provision.
10. Due to the nature development appraisals, it is impossible to balance precisely the swap of units between affordable and private. Therefore, this is reason for the cash settlement sum which is to be paid to UDC as part of the offer. Bloor did also provide an option for gifting the Council 4 affordable units, but this resulted in UDC making a £122,639 cash settlement to Bloor.
11. The 40% affordable housing scheme would provide accommodation for 26 people through a Housing Association. The proposed gifted unit scheme would only house 9 people.
12. However, the three gifted units would be let on affordable rents and would provide the Council with additional rental income of £22,000 per annum. This extra income could be used to fund the development of new Council homes through the Council’s own development programme.
13. Members should also be aware that there are a number of proposed developments for Newport (yet to receive planning approval) that will provide

affordable housing within the Parish, if approved. Alongside these, there is also the Council development at Reynolds Court that will provide 4,1 high quality sheltered housing apartments for older people.

14. Bloor Homes have also indicated a desire to offer the Council gifted affordable homes on their sites at Walpole Farm, Stansted and Fritch Green, Felsted. The offers for both of these larger sites are likely to be at a similar % level to Carnation Nurseries. Therefore, it would be helpful to have a steer from Members as to whether the principal of such offer is acceptable and worth exploring on a scheme by scheme basis.

Risk Analysis

15.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Not delivering 40% affordable housing on-site	1 Option contained in the S106	4 Fewer families in need of affordable housing are housed	Extra rental income to be invested in future affordable housing development. Investigate different ways of increasing affordable housing investment and delivery

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

