



Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Dawn French

Housing Board

Date: Tuesday, 07 March 2017

Time: 10:00

Venue: Committee Room

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

Other attendees:- A Hutton (Tenants' Forum representative)

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

- Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2016 5 - 10

- 3 Development update - verbal update

- Draft Health & Wellbeing Plan 2017-2022 11 - 30

- Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy - report 31 - 38

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- Draft Home Repairs Assistance Policy - report 59 - 66

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Trailblazer Homelessness Reduction Bill

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8 Date of next meeting

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

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HOUSING BOARD held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 10am on 8 DECEMBER 2016

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

Also present: Mrs Angela Hutton Mr Peter Stuart-Robinson (Tenant Forum Representatives)

Officers in attendance: D Malins (Housing Development Manager), R Millership (Assistant Director Housing and Environmental Services), C Cardross Grant (Housing Renewals and Improvement Officer), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), J O'Boyle (District Environmental Health Officer), J Snares (Housing and Communities Manager) and S Wood (Planning and Housing Policy Manager).

HB21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Asker.

HB22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2016 were received and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the correction of minute HB13 (iv) to read Sheds Lane, Saffron Walden.

HB23 PROPOSED RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES 2017-18

Members received a report, which set out details of the 2017/18 Housing Revenue Account (HRA), proposed changes in dwelling rent, garage rents and housing related support charges and service charges. The recommendations in the report had been approved by the tenants' forum and would be considered by Scrutiny and Cabinet before final approval by Full Council on 23 February 2017.

The Assistant Director Housing highlighted the key areas in the report. In terms of rent charges, 2017/18 was the second year of the Government's 4-year plan to reduce social rents by 1%. In addition the Government had confirmed that supported accommodation rents would also be reduced by 1% for 4 years from 2017/18. This would have a significant effect on the funds available in the HRA but was outside the council's control.

There were areas where the council did have a degree of control, including the setting of garage rents, the Lifeline service and charges for the council's sheltered housing management service. It was proposed to increase these

charges by RPI of 2%. It was also proposed that other service charges were increased in line with actual costs.

The other major change for 2017/18 was in relation to the Housing Related Support Grant (HRS) received from ECC. Last year the grant had been reduced, with the expectation of further reductions over the coming years. However, rather than continuing to taper the reduction, ECC has announced that all HRS funding would cease from April 2017.

It was estimated that around 250 sheltered tenants, who were currently on benefits, will be affected by these changes and would be required to contribute £40 - £50 a month to recover the full cost of the support charge. Officers had concerns about the effect on vulnerable tenants and intended to spend the next few months ensuring that the tenants had access to the relevant benefits and that the necessary support was in place.

Members asked whether UDC could replace the grant from the General Fund. The Assistant Director said that ECC had cut the grant as it believed that the affected tenants should be able to claim appropriate benefits to pay for the service themselves. Officers, with the assistance of the CAB, would visit tenants to ensure that they were accessing the necessary benefits to pay for this service. However, there was always a danger that some tenants might fall through the net and she suggested that the Board review the situation a few months into the new financial year.

Members questioned the rationale behind the Government imposed 1% rent reduction. There was concern that it would affect the ability of the HRA to deliver its building and improvement programme, and therefore fail to benefit tenants in the long run. Cllr Farthing thought the council should maintain its rents at the current level and asked about the consequence of not imposing the reduction.

The Assistant Director said it was likely that the Council would be penalised in another way if it decided to go against the Government's proposal. Also the tenants now had an expectation of a 1% reduction in rent.

Cllr Redfern said the council would continue to lobby the Government about the rent reduction. She also suggested arranging a member/officer meeting on the future of the HRA loan, to consider amongst other things how to sustain the reduction in rent, the effect of the right to buy provision and to consider options for better management, including possible restructuring of the loan.

It was AGREED

- 1 To recommend to Cabinet for approval a decrease in the HRA dwelling rents as detailed below:
 - General needs accommodation - a 1% reduction in rent as per central government legislation

- Supported accommodation - a 1% reduction in rent as per central government legislation
 - All dwelling rents to be revised to the formula rent level when the property is re-let
- 2 To continue to lobby Government to express disappointment at the imposition of the 1% reduction in dwelling rents.
 - 3 To recommend to Cabinet the approval of the increases in garage rent, support and service charges as detailed below:
 - Garage rents are increased by RPI of 2%
 - Housing related support charges are increased by RPI of 2%
 - Protection for tenants at 31st March 2003 who are ineligible for supporting people grant assistance to cease as no tenants will be receiving supporting people (HRS) grant funding from April 2017
 - Lifeline charges are increased by RPI of 2%
 - Heating, Service and Sewerage charges are increased in line with actual costs
 - Service charges for common services in sheltered schemes continue to be subsidised for tenants at 31st March 2012 who are not in receipt of housing benefit. Subsidy reducing by 25% annually
 - 4 To note Members' regret at ECC's decision to cut Supporting People (HRS) Grant and to ask officers to monitor the effects on those tenants who would be picking up the full cost of the service from April 2017 and report back to a future meeting.

HB24

HRA BUSINESS PLAN – ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Members received an update on the HRA Business Plan priorities for action 2016-2021.

Under the heading 'regenerate the stock/estates', Cllr Dean asked about the Mountfitchet Estate Stansted and whether there was an opportunity to redesign site splays/green verges/laybys and to sort out the problems with parking. Officers said this was a long standing issue but it could be raised again with ECC highways.

In answer to a question regarding possible redevelopment of Parkside/Walden Place Saffron Walden, Members were informed that work had been delayed due to the present lack of funds, but it would be considered for the future.

The Action Plan was noted.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Housing Development Manager gave a verbal update on the progress of developments on council owned sites.

(i) **Mead Court Stansted**

There had been further delays with this project, but there was now an assurance that the scheme would be finally completed by 16 December 2016.

(ii) **Reynolds Court – Newport**

The scheme was progressing well. The first phase was expected to be completed in June 2017.

(iii) **Hatherley Court - Saffron Walden**

A contractor had been appointed and the scheme was expected to commence in early spring.

(iv) **Sheds Lane, Saffron Walden**

Planning permission had been granted and the tender document was prepared and ready to be sent out. The predicted start date was March 2017.

(v) **Newton Grove, Great Dunmow**

There had been an offer of additional land, which could increase the scheme from 3 to 4 units and allow for additional parking on the site.

(vi) **The Mores little Dunmow**

This site, comprising 12 bungalows had been subject to subsidence. Officers had started to draw up a scheme for the site and the adjacent garage area.

(vii) **St Johns Close, Saffron Walden**

Members were informed that the valuation for bringing the property back into use had been lower than expected and it would be economically viable to bring the property back into use for rent.

Cllr Mills had been looking at possible development schemes. He would discuss with these officers, although this option might be more appropriate in the future, if and when further units became vacant.

It was AGREED to undertake the necessary work to bring the property back into use as temporary accommodation.

HB26 **HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN - UPDATE**

The Housing and Planning Policy Manager presented the 6 monthly update report on the Housing Strategy priorities for action 2016-2021.

It was noted that in relation to affordable housing, 120 units had already been delivered, when the target for the year was 100 units. There was also positive news in relation to funding of the learning disability scheme and the Cornell Court extra care scheme was due to be completed in 2018.

Mrs Hutton asked about the future provision for dementia care in the district. The Board was advised that there was some provision allocated within the extra care schemes. A specialist company was currently looking to find a suitable site to provide a dedicated centre within the district.

Members felt that there should be clearer links between the HRA and Housing Strategy action plans and it was agreed that the documents would be numbered accordingly.

HB27 **TENANCY SUSTAINMENT STRATEGY 2016**

Further to consideration at the last meeting, the Board received the final version of the strategy, which now included the action plan. No further comments had been received from Members.

It was AGREED that the Housing Board approves the final Tenancy Sustainability Strategy.

HB28 **CPO THAXTED**

The Housing Board considered a proposal to bring a long term empty property back into use.

It was AGREED that the Housing Board note the report and recommend to Cabinet that authority be given to proceed with the CPO.

HB29 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on 7 March 2017.

The meeting ended at 11.40am.

ACTION POINTS

Minute HB23 Proposed rent and service charges 2017/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To arrange an officer/member meeting to discuss the HRA loan.• To make representations to the Government regarding the requirement for the 1% reduction in dwelling rents• To monitor implications following cuts to HRS grant and report back to a future meeting
Minute HB24 Housing Strategy Action Plan	To provide consistent numbering for the HRA and Housing Strategies

Uttlesford

Health & Wellbeing Plan 2017-2022



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All children, young people and adults live
healthy, fulfilling and long lives

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Uttlesford
District Council

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“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”

World Health Organisation, 1948

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Foreword



I have pleasure in presenting Uttlesford District Council's first Health and Wellbeing Plan.

In Uttlesford, we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities by working collaboratively with partners and local organisations and ensuring people feel empowered to achieve and maintain good health.

This new Health and Wellbeing Plan for Uttlesford will be instrumental in initiating a clear direction for the Council and its partners to address a number of key health and wellbeing priorities for the district.

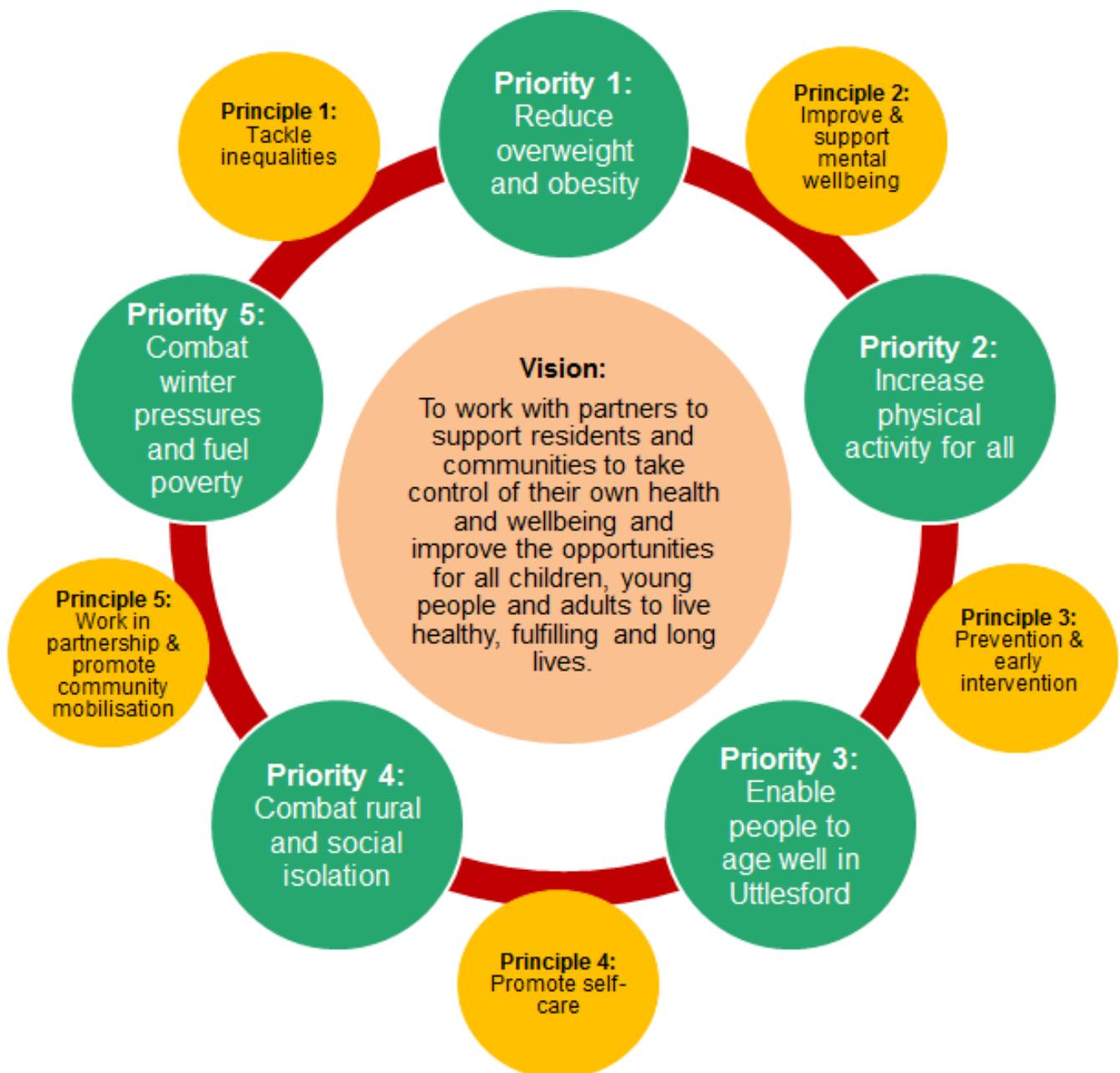
In Uttlesford, we are proud that the majority of our residents lead healthy, active and fulfilling lives, but as this Plan demonstrates, this good health is not geographically shared across the entire district.

Uttlesford has a range of isolated health problems, and contains pockets of deprivation that are detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the whole community. Rising levels of obesity are increasing pressures on local clinical and frontline services. In addition, according to our most recent Public Health Profile (2016), we are predicted to see a 32% rise in over 65s by 2025, which in itself will mean a greater need for social and clinical service provision.

Never has it been more pertinent for the promotion of prevention, self-care and personal responsibility in regards to caring for our own health and wellbeing. Furthermore, more than ever before there is a need to focus our efforts to work in a more streamlined and joined-up manner, to strengthen our communities and address our local population's health and wellbeing needs.

Cllr Lesley Wells
Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing

Summary



1 Background

Numerous factors can affect our health and wellbeing; issues such as unemployment, poor housing and feeling unsafe can impact upon our physical and mental health. Furthermore, our social networks, local economy and natural environments also play a key role. These are collectively known as the wider determinants of health, as depicted in figure 1.

Our lifestyles influence the way our health develops over our lifetime. Research indicates that people who practice four key 'healthy' behaviours – not smoking, taking regular exercise, eating five fruit and vegetables a day and drinking alcohol within recommended limits, stay healthy for longer and live on average 14 years more than people with none of these behaviours¹.

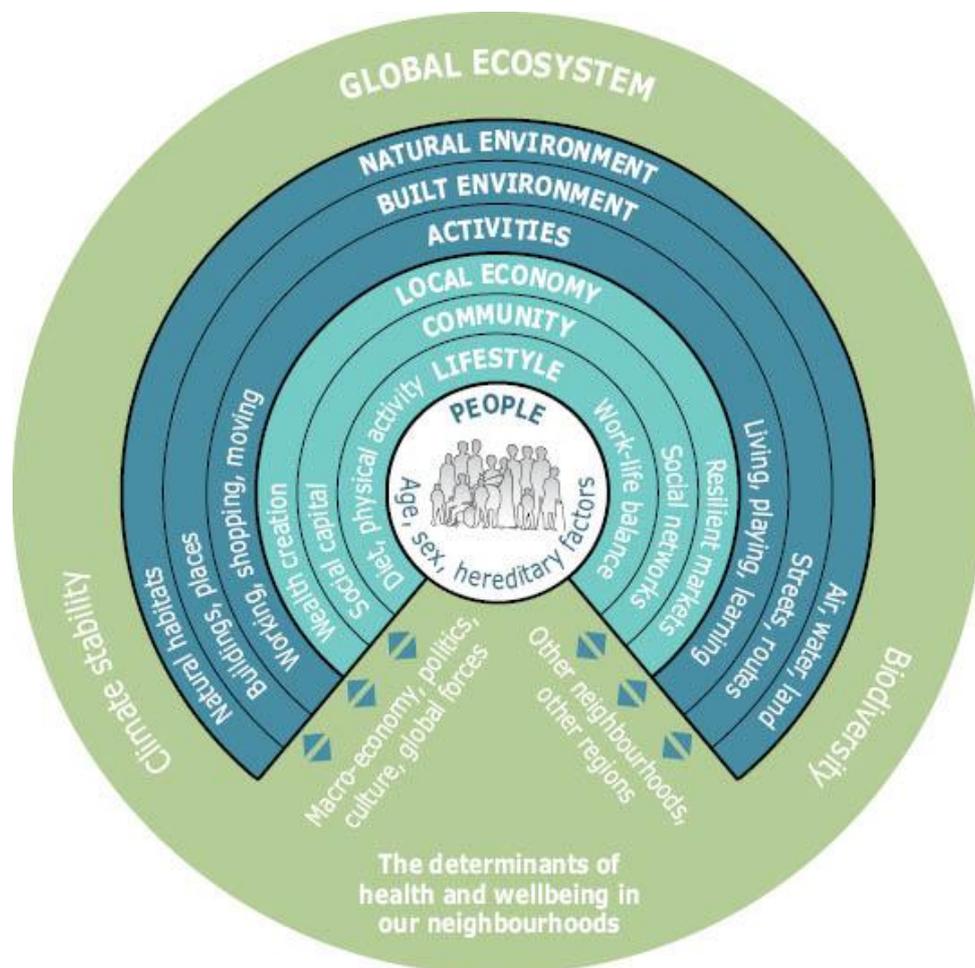


Figure 1: A health map of the local human habitat, Barton & Grant (2006)

¹ Khaw et al. (2008). Combined Impact of Health Behaviours and Mortality in Men and Women: The EPIC-Norfolk Prospective Population Study. *PLoS Medicine* 5 (1)

Health and Wellbeing in Uttlesford

Uttlesford is a relatively healthy and affluent area. However, with numerous large new housing developments – already built and planned for the near future – our population is predicted to increase significantly over the next ten years, with an estimated almost 12,000 more people between now and 2025 (Public Health Portrait, 2016). It is important to recognise the significance and long-term effects of new development design in shaping healthy communities, now and in the future.

Whilst currently, many Uttlesford residents do lead healthy, active and prosperous lives, the district has a number of isolated health and social problems, including:

- Increasing excess weight and obesity amongst children and adults.
- Low levels of physical activity – only 22% of adults are doing enough physical activity to benefit their health (i.e. exercising three or more times per week).
- Increasing issues related to an ageing demographic, including high levels of hip fractures in the over 65s as a result of falls and increasing levels of people living with dementia.
- Elevated levels of rural and social isolation.
- High levels of winter deaths, exacerbated by winter pressures and fuel poverty.

Our aim is to mitigate such factors, as well as encourage and empower people to take a more active role in their own and others' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We will do this by collaborating and working with partners to deliver targeted interventions within areas of need, as well as supporting people to find local, existing services that are appropriate and helpful, including those associated with reducing fuel bills, and services designed to help individuals lead healthier lifestyles. Furthermore, we will work closely with Essex County Council's Public Health team, Planning teams and further partners to assist with planning for healthy new communities.

The **Uttlesford District Health and Wellbeing Group**, which forms part of Uttlesford's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – "Uttlesford Futures" – will be the strategic partnership for the coordination, communication and commissioning of health improvement and wellbeing services for the local population. We will monitor the work that is being delivered to address our key health and wellbeing priorities. This will include working collaboratively with other member organisations of the Uttlesford LSP and partners across West and wider Essex. These partnerships will regularly review our approach to ensure evidence-based best practice is achieved.

2 Our Vision and Ambitions

Vision

Our vision is to work with partners to support communities and residents to take control of their own health and wellbeing and improve the opportunities for **all children, young people and adults to live healthy, fulfilling and long lives.**

This vision links in with the Council's corporate vision: "Working together for the wellbeing of our community and to protect and enhance the unique character of the District".

Overarching Principles

In order to achieve our vision, we have identified **5 overarching principles.** These principles will be central to the work we undertake to address the key health and wellbeing priorities that have been identified for the district.

1. Tackling inequalities

Ensure key services are provided for all residents, but that resources and interventions are targeting those most in need.

2. Improving mental wellbeing

Ensure that mental health and wellbeing is regarded across all streams of work.

3. Prevention and early intervention

Prevent and tackle the wider causes of ill health, poor lifestyle choices and health conditions.

4. Promoting self-care

Encourage and empower individuals to take more responsibility for changing their own health related behaviours.

5. Working in partnership & promoting community mobilisation

Work in partnership to address similar aims, and enable and support communities to improve health and wellbeing within the district.

3 Key Health & Wellbeing Priorities in Uttlesford

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear direction for the Council and its partners to address a number of key health and wellbeing priorities for the district.

Five key priorities have been identified using the data and information captured within the local Public Health Portrait (2016), which forms part of the Essex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2016), and Public Health England's Public Health Profile (2016) for the district. These priorities have also been established following consultation with local partners in

order to gain an understanding of local issues as well as a sense of particular areas of need within the district.

With a focus on prevention, the accompanying action plans provided within the Appendix address how we will deliver these priorities, outlining the timeframe for progressing this work. However, we recognise that new issues will arise and national policies may change during the lifetime of the Plan and there may be a need to renew the action plans as and when deemed necessary to ensure they remain relevant.

Five key health and wellbeing priorities identified for Uttlesford District include:

1. Reducing overweight and obesity in children and adults
2. Increasing physical activity for all
3. Enable people to age well in Uttlesford
4. Combating rural and social isolation
5. Combating winter pressures and fuel poverty



Priority 1: Reducing & Preventing Overweight and Obese Children and Adults

The number of overweight and obese people in England has been rising sharply for the best part of 20 years.

According to the Health Survey of England, one in four adults is obese, compared to less than 15 per cent in 1993.

Childhood obesity is a key concern now being measured on a regular basis in primary school-aged children as part of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). The Government's strategy, Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action (2016), indicates that a third of children aged 2 to 15 are overweight or obese, highlighting the need to significantly reduce this increasing trend.

Whilst slightly lower than national and regional figures, more than 60 per cent of adults living in Uttlesford are overweight, with levels of childhood obesity reaching similar levels to the rest of the region (see figure 2).

By combining overweight and obese measures, recent NCMP figures indicate that 26% of Uttlesford children in Reception classes and 42% of those in Year 6 were classified as either overweight or obese in 2013/14. This has major long term implications for health and could mean that today's children will have a lower life expectancy than their parents.

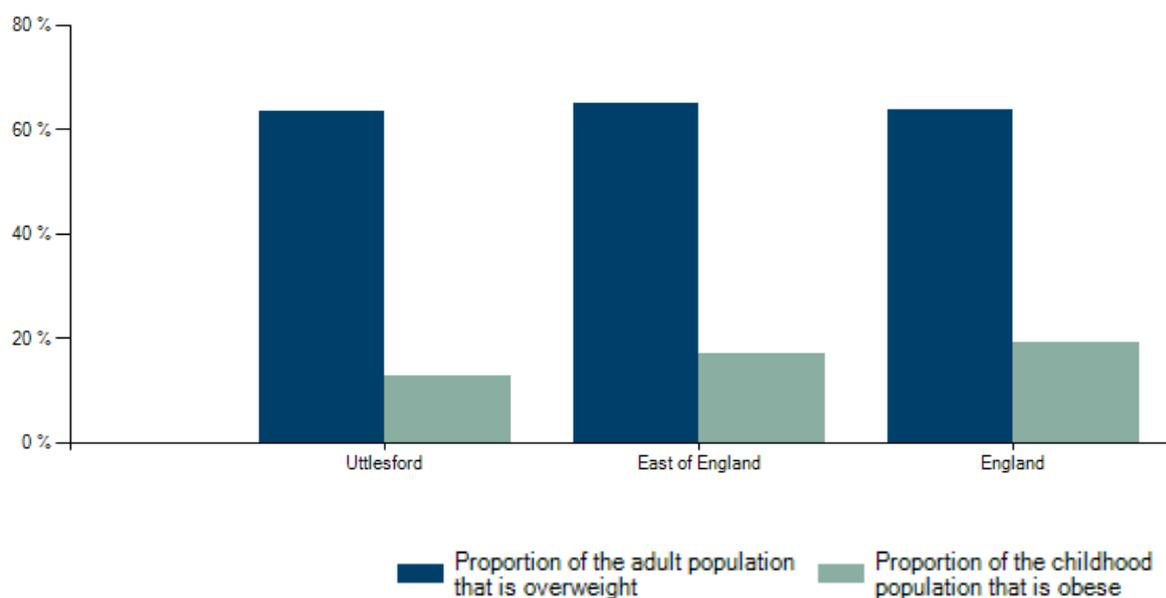


Figure 2: Levels of overweight adults and obese children (Uttlesford, East of England and England), Department of Health (2013/14)

Risk factors associated with excess weight

Being obese can increase the risk of developing a range of diseases and health problems. The physical changes caused by increased fat cause musculoskeletal problems, from wear and tear on the joints to back pain; this in turn can lead to or exacerbate mental health issues, including depression and anxiety.

Other effects are linked to invisible changes, such as increased fat in the blood and an altered response to insulin, increasing the risk to type 2 diabetes. Whilst significantly lower than national levels, recorded rates of diabetes in Uttlesford are increasing year-on-year (see figure 3), supporting

the requirement to work together with our partners to address one of the biggest risk factors – excess weight.

Obesity is a complex problem with many drivers, including our behaviour, environment, genetics and culture. However, at its root, obesity is caused by an energy imbalance: taking in more energy through food than we use through activity.

Prevention is fundamental. Long-term, sustainable change will only be achieved through the active engagement of schools, communities, families and individuals.

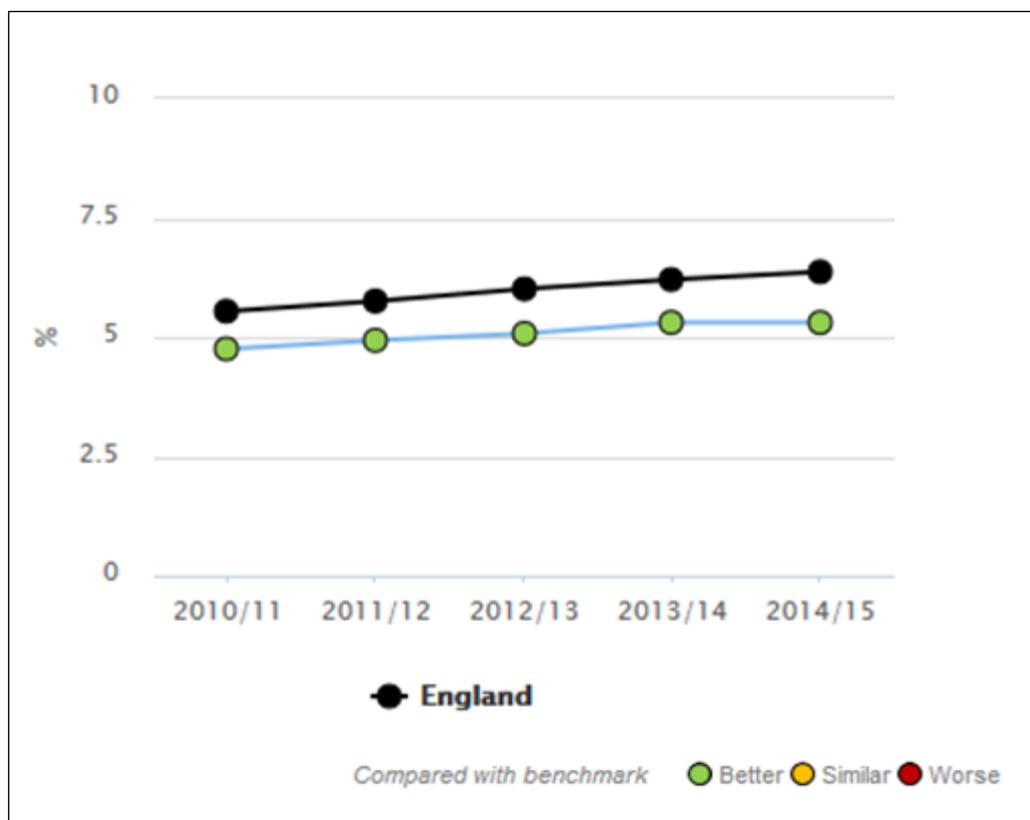


Figure 3: Recorded diabetes (Uttlesford and England), Public Health England (2016)

Priority 2: Increasing Physical Activity for All

An active lifestyle is crucial for improving and maintaining both physical and mental health and wellbeing. There is strong evidence to support the benefits of daily activity, including reducing the risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer by up to 50% (NHS, 2016).

According to a report by Sport England (2016), approximately 23% of adults (16+) in Uttlesford are inactive, compared to the national average of 28%. The estimated health costs associated with inactivity in the district is £1.4 million.

A Residents Survey published in 2015 indicated that 49% of Uttlesford residents are most likely to cite lack of time as the main reason for not taking more exercise. Other reasons cited included lack of motivation, transport/access and/or lack of childcare. This highlights the importance of raising awareness of the types of activities that can be undertaken as part of busy modern lifestyles, as well as the need to work with local employers to encourage workplace wellbeing, including providing opportunities to be active during work time.

Encouraging activities that are feasible with current infrastructure will be central to our work within this Plan. It is important to ensure that people have access to provisions that are right for them in order to reduce the barriers associated with being active. This may include providing the right opportunities that build confidence, motivate and encourage people to try new activities, such as clubs for both parents and children to enjoy together and by providing activities appropriate for varying abilities.

The recent Sports Development Strategy, adopted by Uttlesford District Council in 2016, provides further details on the potential future needs of sports facilities within the area, and aims to provide context for future funding applications for new facilities and inform Planning teams on facility requirements in new developments.

We will work in partnership with Active Essex, a funded organisation hosted by Essex County Council, to form our own network of partners – **Active Uttlesford** – who are interested in increasing physical activity, and in particular, getting the inactive more active, within the district.

Priority 3: Enable People to Age Well in Uttlesford

According to the most recent Public Health Portrait (2016), Uttlesford is expected to see a 32% increase in over 65s between 2015 and 2025, which equates to 5,200 more people. Our ageing population will put greater demand on health, social care services and housing needs. It is therefore

important for us to help people to age well and remain independent for as long as possible. Some areas of work that can help with this might include working together to enable people to live well with dementia and help to prevent falls among those at risk.

Enabling people to live well with dementia

Dementia is an umbrella term that is used to describe a group of progressive symptoms such as memory loss, changes in personality and difficulties in day-to-day living.

Dementia can have a significant impact on an individual's health and quality of life. It can result in a range of health and social problems which can be challenging for the person with dementia, their carers, and health and social care professionals. Research shows that large proportions of people with dementia feel unsupported and do not feel part of their community. They often experience anxiety and depression and three quarters do not feel society is geared up to deal with dementia (Alzheimer's Society, 2012).

Whilst dementia is a terminal condition, people can live with it for 7–12 years after diagnosis, so it is important that people are able to live well with dementia for as long as possible.

Recent data from Public Health England (2016) indicates that 1,070 people living in Uttlesford aged over 65 are thought to have dementia, and this

figure is expected to rise by 79% to 1,920 by 2030. Increasing numbers of people with dementia will have an impact on health services.

In the current health and social care climate there is much emphasis on sustainability through better community care, keeping people out of hospital and enabling people to live independently within their own homes for as long as possible. This focus is particularly salient when applied to the needs of people with dementia.

'Persons living with dementia are usually capable of more than we can imagine'

Bob DeMarco,
Alzheimer's caregiver

We will strive to work collectively with partners to enable people to live well with dementia in Uttlesford. We will work to raise public and professional awareness of dementia in order to increase public understanding of how our ageing population is affected by it and the impact it has on daily lives.

Working together to prevent and reduce falls

Falls among older people are a major and growing concern. A fall is a symptom, not a diagnosis. It can be a marker for the onset of frailty, the first indication of a new or worsening health problem and/or can represent a tipping point in a person's life, triggering a downward decline in independence and confidence; the effects of which can be isolating and give way to fear of the outdoors.

In 2014/15, there were 508 hospital admissions for hip fractures in those living in Uttlesford and aged 65 years and older. This is similar to the

national figure of 571 per 100,000 population (Public Health Profile, 2016).

Many falls and fractures can be prevented by well organised services, including those within the community, and organisations working in partnership. As part of these support services, care is not only extended to the person suffering from falls but to their carer should they have one. The consequences of falls therefore, cut across all agencies working with older people, and all agencies can be part of the solution.

Priority 4: Combating Rural and Social Isolation

Uttlesford is a large, yet sparsely populated district. Its rural nature is an additional factor which can determine that people live in pockets rather than whole communities. This can contribute to loneliness and/or social isolation, especially if you are a younger or older person with limited access to transport.

The Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Group has prioritised social isolation because it recognises that it is a serious problem for many Uttlesford residents and it can have far reaching consequences for individuals as well as wider communities.

Anyone can be socially isolated, but some people are at greater risk than others. A change in individual circumstances such as deterioration in physical health, death of a partner, becoming a carer and loss of income can all contribute to a person becoming more socially isolated.

At present, there is limited data available that robustly measures social isolation. However, according to a recent report conducted by the Council for Voluntary Service Uttlesford

(CVSU) on 'Rural and Social Isolation in Uttlesford' (April 2016), there appears to be a high proportion of women over 75 years living with limiting sight conditions (Macular Degeneration, retinal damage from diabetes, untreated cataracts and glaucoma) within the district. The key issues they face in regards to social isolation are loss of hobbies, inability to manage practically at home, fear of moving outdoors and loss of control over their circumstances and private affairs (i.e. banking etc.), which in turn can contribute to mental health issues, including depression.

To help alleviate social isolation there are numerous befriending services that already exist in Uttlesford. We aim to work together with these services to ensure that there is greater awareness of what is already available. We also plan to determine where people may be at risk of being socially isolated and reduce the barriers that prevent individuals from accessing social activities across our district, providing further opportunities for people where appropriate, and communicating effectively in order to reduce any duplicated efforts.

Priority 5: Winter Pressures and Fuel Poverty

The relationship between housing and health is a recognised association but a complex one. A number of elements in and around the home can impact on health and wellbeing and will be influenced by other determinants. Specific housing related issues affecting health are indoor pollutants, cold and damp, housing design, overcrowding, accessibility, neighbourhood safety, social cohesion and housing availability.

Uttlesford's housing market is made up of private, private rented and social sectors. There are around 31,316 (2011 census data) dwellings in Uttlesford. Of these 74% of homes are owner occupied, which equates to 22,746 dwellings, 12% or 3961 dwellings are listed as social housing and 14%, namely 4609 dwellings are rented from a private landlord. For all stock, Uttlesford performs better than the English Housing Survey (EHS 2011) average for various indicators such as disrepair and low income households. However, it performs slightly worse for falls and fuel poverty, and levels of excess cold are considerably higher in Uttlesford compared to the EHS average.

A cold home can have a significant impact on an individual's health and wellbeing; it can reduce sleep and cause stress and worry. It can also increase the risk of pneumonia and exacerbate existing conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

A fuel poor household is defined as one which needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use and to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth. In England, this is

defined as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in other occupied rooms.

According to a recent Health Impact Assessment on housing interventions in Uttlesford (2015), 21% of all households in Uttlesford are considered to be on low incomes and 9.4% of the district's 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%). To add to this, there were 54 excess winter deaths in Uttlesford between 2011 and 2012. This is around 30% additional deaths, and this figure is higher than the national average of 16%.

The highest concentrations of fuel poverty in the private sector are found in the wards of The Sampfords, Littlebury and Wendens Lofts. For excess cold, the highest concentrations are in the wards of The Sampfords, Wendens Lofts and The Rodings.

With limited grant funding available to support the vulnerable, the council aims to prioritise vulnerable households for assistance and will change the current policy to include a range of grants, offers and loans to encourage uptake and assist those in greatest need, as specified within its Private Sector Housing Strategy (2016-2021).

We will ensure that work is coordinated across departments at the Council, and in conjunction with partners to address this key priority area.

4 Strategic Themes

Working in partnership is central to this Plan in order to drive local delivery and identify local needs. It is important to recognise wider support and add value to the health improvement work across the West Essex area, which covers Uttlesford, Epping Forest and Harlow. In addition, it is important with much wider partners such as the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, the West Essex Children and Young People's Board and the West Essex Public Health Partnership as well Essex County Council in which their Public Health Strategic Approach document (2017) offers guidance on what we aim to achieve.

It is essential to understand the degrees of influence in order to tailor

appropriate initiatives to specific audiences when focusing on our five key priority areas. With obesity, for example, children are largely influenced by their family as well as their school, and thus initiatives and interventions must take this into consideration.

Given that our lives, and subsequent health, can be influenced by numerous factors throughout our life course (see figure 4), a life-course approach has been fostered by numerous partners across West Essex, categorising health promotional work under three key themes: Start Well, Be Well & Work Well, and Age Well.

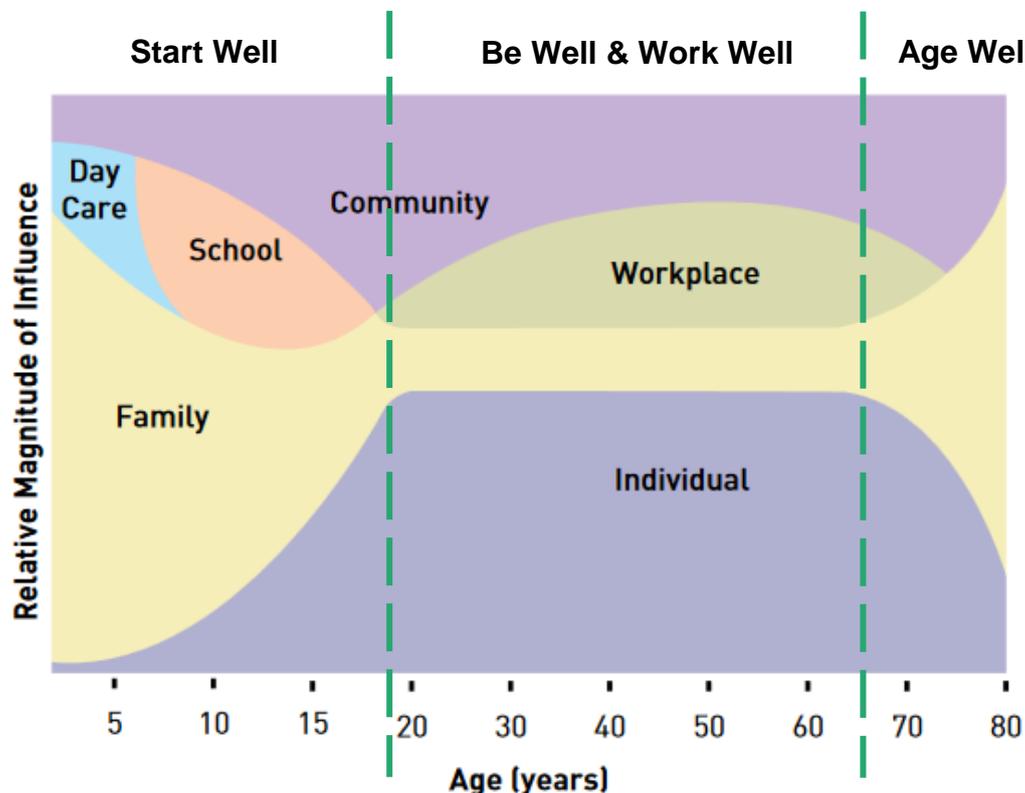


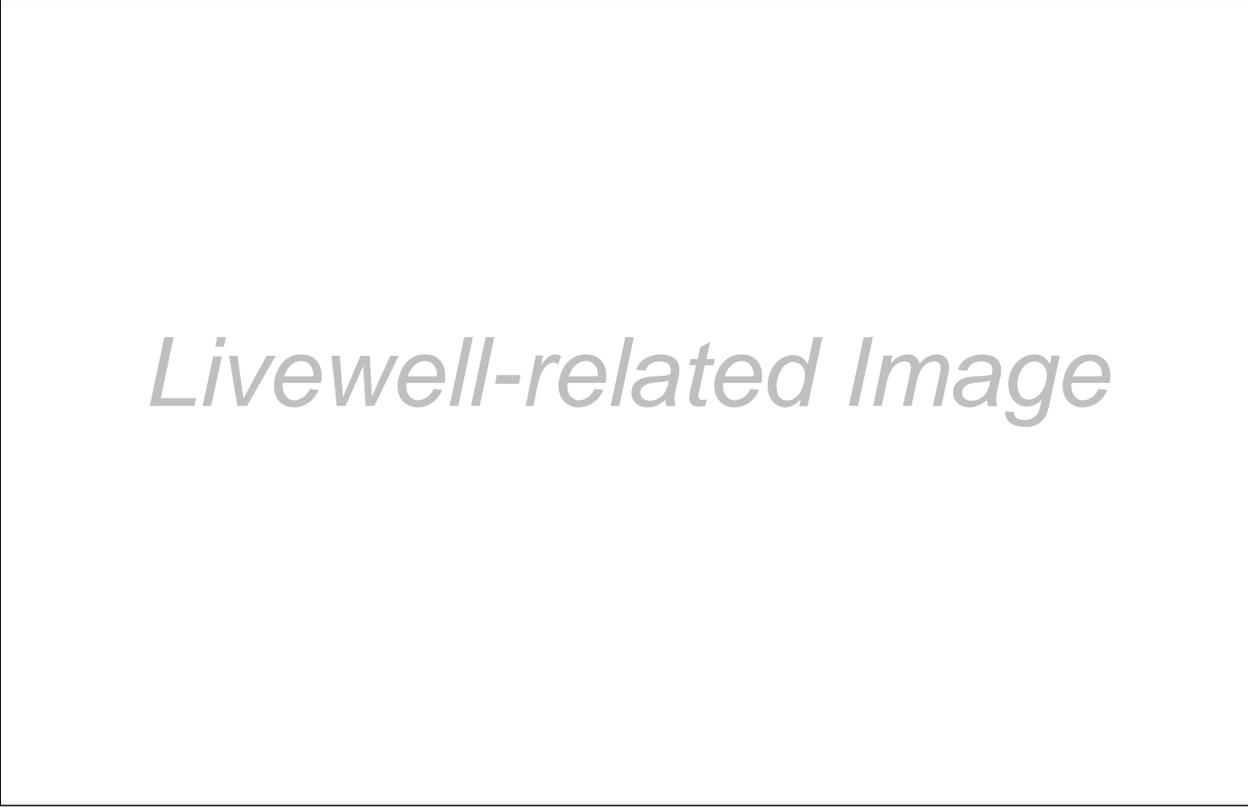
Figure 4: Influence of health status across the life course, incorporating strategic themes. Adapted from Nordio S. 1978. Needs in Child and Maternal Care

5 Livewell in Uttlesford

To give gravitas and enable consistency across Essex in regards to promoting health and wellbeing activities, initiatives, campaigns and marketing, we have adopted “Livewell” as part of a joined-up approach and shared platform in which to communicate similar health and wellbeing interests which are shared

by other Districts, Boroughs and Cities across the County.

The “Livewell” brand contains strong themes that enable the promotion of healthy messages and behaviours via social marketing. Through this we will develop “Livewell in Uttlesford” and use this as our outward facing communications tool.



Livewell-related Image

6 Taking Health & Wellbeing Forward in Uttlesford

We aim to ensure that the outcomes of health and wellbeing efforts will be effectively evaluated. Success will be measured by key performance indicators and the delivery of targets for each of the priorities as set out within the individual action plans. We will use a robust evidence base in order to enable successful projects to continue and use the Public Health

Outcomes Framework as guidance for this. Furthermore, through close partnership work, and the collaboration of ideas within our local Health and Wellbeing Group, we will continue to explore opportunities in order to implement new and innovative schemes that effectively promote good health and well.



Appendix: Health & Wellbeing Action Plan

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 7th March 2017

5

Title: Private Sector Housing Strategy

Author: Marcus Watts, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Ext 595

Item for information only

Summary

1. This report summarises the findings of the Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy (PSHS) consultation with key stakeholders and provides the Housing Board with a final version of the PSHS for approval.
2. The strategy outlines the council's plans to meet peoples housing needs by maintaining and improving the existing private housing stock in the district.

Recommendations

3. That the Housing Board notes the amendments to the draft Private Sector Housing Strategy following consultation with key stakeholders and recommends the adoption of the strategy to Cabinet

Financial Implications

4. None currently. However, the needs and objectives identified in the PSHS and Action Plan will need to take account of existing resources currently made available by the Council and Essex County Council.

Background Papers

5. 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:
 - UDC's Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016
 - UDC's Housing Strategy 2016
 - Uttlesford District Council Housing Assistance Repairs Policy
 - BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Uttlesford District Council – 2015

- BRE A Quantitative Health Impact Assessment: The cost of private sector housing and prospective housing interventions in Uttlesford District Council - 2015

Impact

6.

Communication/Consultation	Consultation has taken place with relevant stakeholders
Community Safety	There will be a benefit to Community Safety through housing improvements
Equalities	Equality Impact Assessment has been made
Health and Safety	No impact on employee health and safety
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	The proposal will aim to target those in greatest need, maintain the private sector housing stock & improve energy efficiency.
Ward-specific impacts	No specific impact
Workforce/Workplace	Environmental Health – within existing resources

Situation

7. The draft PSHS was prepared in response to recent housing stock profiling carried out and a need for a strategy that sought to complement the wider strategic housing functions of the Council.
8. In October 2016, Officers reported on the draft PSHS to the Housing Board and welcomed any views and comments from members of the board. Following the meeting Environmental Health Service sought opinions on the draft PSHS from relevant stakeholders.
9. The PSHS takes into consideration key findings on the condition of the district's Private Sector Housing stock, key objectives of the Council's Housing Strategy adopted by the Council in 2016 and the Council's Health and Wellbeing agenda to identify service priorities for the next 5 years.
10. The draft PSHS was open for consultation from 16th December 2016. The document has been circulated to a range of partners and interested stakeholders. A list of the consultees and summary of comments provided are set out within Appendix A.
11. Where appropriate the draft PSHS has been amended and is included within Appendix B to this report.
12. Commentary on the progress of the action plan given within the strategy will be presented to the Housing Board on an annual basis.

Risk Analysis

1.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
There are no risks associated with this report			

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 A

Private Sector Housing Strategy Consultation Summary Report

Stakeholder consultation list

1	UDC Housing Services
2	Citizens Advice
3	Essex County Council Adult Social Care
4	Essex Fire and Rescue
5	The Papworth Trust
6	Community Agents (Essex)
7	Sustainable Energy Team (Braintree)
8	UDC's Health & Wellbeing Team
9	Elected members

Private Sector Housing Strategy Consultation Comments

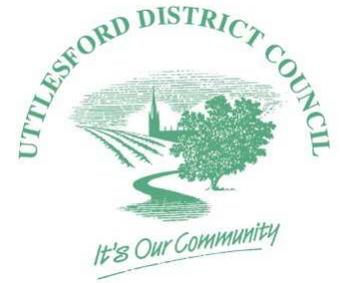
Source	Outline of Comments	Amendment
Cllr Redfern	Minor phrasing request	Phrase amended
Ms Carole Mandy (Vice Chair - Tennant's Forum)	Endorsed and complemented on the strategy	No action required
Ms Daphne Cornell	General request to avoid the use of initialisms. Endorsed and complement on the strategy	Amendment made to outline what each initialisms means in the report

Faye Butler (Snr Health Improvement Officer)	Requested reference and amendment to link with UDCs Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	Para 1.6 amended
Kate Robson (CAB)	<p>Recommendations to include more detailed advice for tenants (Key Priority 1)</p> <p>Comment made to assist in promotion of Disabled facilities grants and provide benefit entitlement checks. (Key Priority 3)</p> <p>Request made for an action to ensure that clients' wider social needs, eg, money and benefit advice, befriending, are identified by UDC and appropriate referrals or signposting is made to local services (Key Point 5).</p> <p>General comment that the CAB wished to support the work of the strategy</p>	<p>Key priority 1 amended</p> <p>No changes considered necessary, however discussions to be held with CAB on DFG process to facilitate advice</p> <p>Agreed. UDC to work with CAB on delivery model. Action included within Strategy</p>
Mark Wilson	<p>Minor amendments to text and phrasing</p> <p>Recommended text concerning the Councils separate agenda around the subject of climate changes and energy efficiency and the intervene work that takes place.</p>	<p>Amendments made</p> <p>Paragraphs inserted into body of strategy as recommended</p>
Cllr Dean	Questioned why census figures were quoted when UDC has more up to date data	<p>It is reported that Hometrack (Housing intelligence web based analysis tool) and Neighbourhood Statistics provide no further detailed information. References to census data are quoted as they link with the outcomes of the modelling data.</p>
Angela Hutton (Hsing Board Chair)	Comments concerning re-evaluation of the allocation procedure and methods of communication via the tenancy forum.	Strategy does not apply to Council housing provision. Comments passed to Housing Services.

	<p>A request made for a Landlord Letting Standard and an approach to inform tenants of changes in legislation. A further request for UDC to utilise its powers against poor landlords. (Key Priority 2)</p> <p>A request was made for greater partnership working to identify and aid assistance to vulnerable persons. (<u>Key Priority 3</u>)</p> <p>Comments concerning UDCs ability to contact isolated persons, particularly isolated older persons and make them aware of available services.</p>	<p>Action to develop & implement a coms strategy to inform tenants of their rights & responsibilities has been included within the Strategy. A further action has also been provided revise the enforcement policy and respond to poor landlords in a robust manner</p> <p>Action identified to revise assistance policy and integrate DFG services within the Environmental Health Service. The primary aim to build closer links with partner agencies to address the need of vulnerable individuals and reducing waiting times</p> <p>Action added to work closely with the Health and Wellbeing Team and other stakeholders concerning initiatives to forge links with community groups and identify isolated vulnerable persons</p>
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Appendix B Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy

(See attached Document)



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY 2017 – 2022

CONTENTS		Page
1	Introduction	3
2	Key priority 1. Raising standards in the private sector	6
3	Key priority 2. Encourage, support and regulate private landlords	7
4	Key priority 3. Helping older and vulnerable people remain in their own homes.	8
5	Key priority 4. Maximise use of the existing private sector housing stock	10
6	Key priority 5. Enable more sustainable homes by increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.	10
7	How will we deliver – Objectives & Outcomes	12
	Appendix A – Action Plan	14

Foreword by lead portfolio holder

Suggested text (for approval by Julie Redfern):

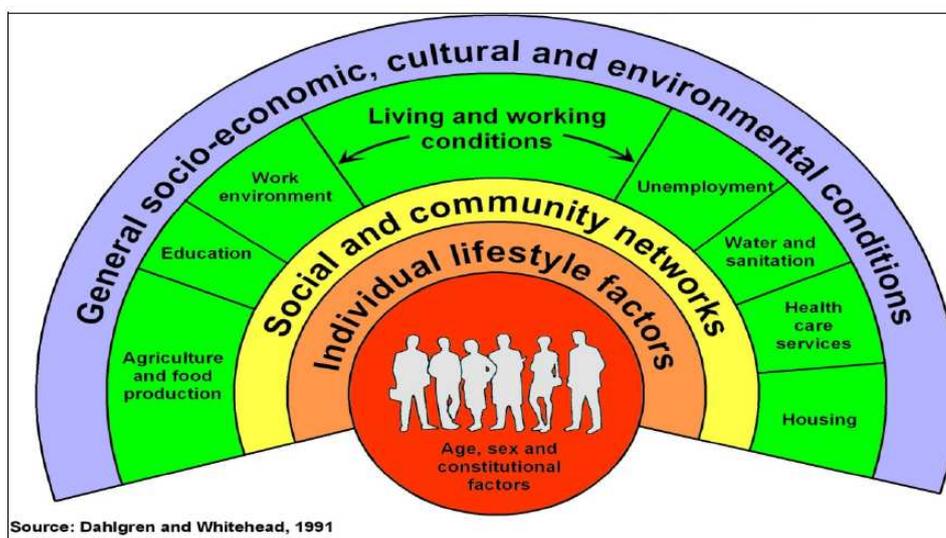
Uttlesford District Council is passionate about looking after its residents and has a duty to help those most vulnerable in society. The built environment is of great importance to us all and the links to the wider determinants of health are well established. With the introduction of the Care Act we are looking to work closely with our partners and residents to embrace changes to the public health regime and ultimately improve health and wellbeing.

In general, the standard of housing in Uttlesford is good. There are relatively low numbers of homes with Category 1 hazards. There is little overcrowding and we work hard to reduce the number of empty homes. However, there are significant problems with cold homes and problems of poor housing do exist.

There is a lot the Council can do to address these problems. This strategy will underpin the Council's work with the private sector for the next five years. Linking in with the health & wellbeing priorities of the Council, the task is to improve poor housing with a particular emphasis on protecting the vulnerable.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a strategy to deal with housing issues in the private sector, both for homeowners and the private rented sector. Its primary focus is to ensure that UDC homes are healthy and supports Uttlesford District Council's health and wellbeing agenda. It has been developed by the Council in order to set service priorities for the next five years.
- 1.2 The strategy builds on the stock modelling data delivered in 2015 by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). This data identified and highlighted the extent of the poor housing, in particular category 1 hazards found in homes in UDC. It also highlighted the health impacts of poor housing and the likely costs they present to the NHS and to society.
- 1.3 A category 1 hazard is one that presents a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety. The most numerous category one hazards in UDC are falls and excess cold.
- 1.4 The link between housing and health is well defined. The quality of a home can have a significant impact on our lives, impacting on both physical and mental health. Poor housing conditions have an adverse effect on public health and wellbeing and contribute to health inequalities. Making modifications to improve a home can lead to enhanced health and wellbeing that can bring benefits not only to individuals but also wider social economic benefits.



- 1.5 Investment in our homes and ensuring standards are maintained delivers a wide range of positive outcomes
- Fewer homes that pose a risk to health and wellbeing
 - Improved outcomes for families and young people
 - More independence for older or vulnerable households
 - Lower carbon emissions improved energy efficiency and reduced fuel poverty

- Less anti-social behaviour relating to derelict or nuisance properties
- Communities that are more attractive and economically vibrant

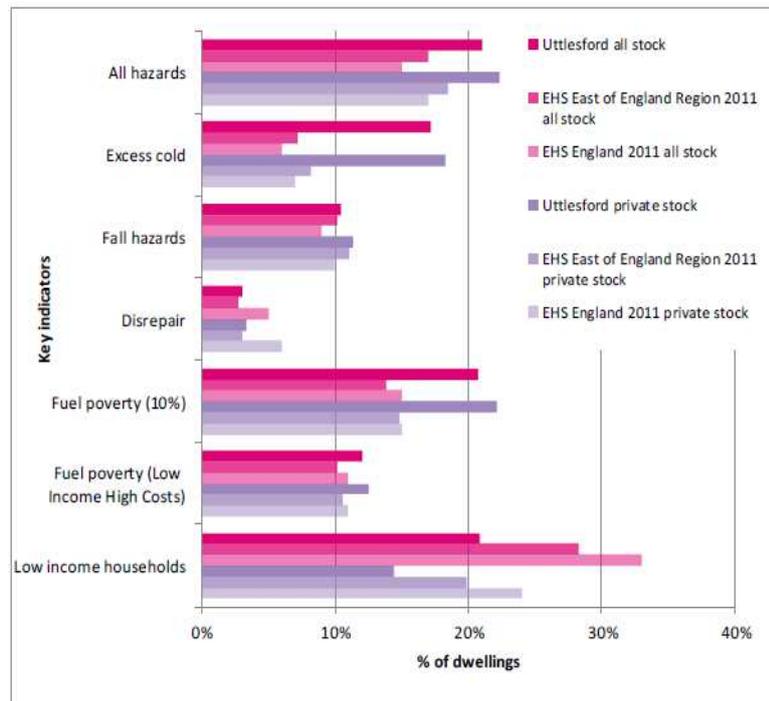
1.6 This strategy does not stand alone. It has been developed in line with the key objectives listed within UDC's Housing Strategy published in 2016 and it will also compliment the Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan, which will be published later this year. It sets out what the Council will do to support good standards within the private sector. It sets out the challenges we know exist and our proposed actions to deal with them.

1.7 UDC's housing market is made up of a private, private rented and a social sector. There are around 31,316 (2011 census data) dwellings in UDC. Of these 74% of homes are owner occupiers, which equates to 22,746 dwellings, 12% or 3961 dwellings are listed as social housing and 14%, namely 4609 dwellings are rented from a private landlord. For all stock Uttlesford performs better than the English Housing Survey (EHS 2011) average for various indicators such as disrepair, low income households, but performs slightly worse for falls and fuel poverty. Levels of excess cold are considerably higher in Uttlesford compared to EHS average.

1.8 The table to the right provides estimates of the percentage of dwellings meeting the key indicator criteria assessed by the housing stock models for all stock and private sector stock.

It compared Uttlesford property stock with the East of England and England (EHS 2011).

It is clear that there are some significant challenges with some homes clearly below standard.



1.9 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 provides local housing authorities with a general permissive power to provide assistance to occupiers for the purpose of improving living conditions. It is government's view that the responsibility to maintain privately owned homes rest first and foremost with their owners, however the legislation is intended to enable the Council to provide assistance and resources for the most vulnerable should it wish to do so.

1.10 In order to exercise this power a local authority must first adopt a policy for the provision of assistance. The current policy on homes repairs assistance was agreed by the Council in 2003 and does not reflect current knowledge. We will look to amend

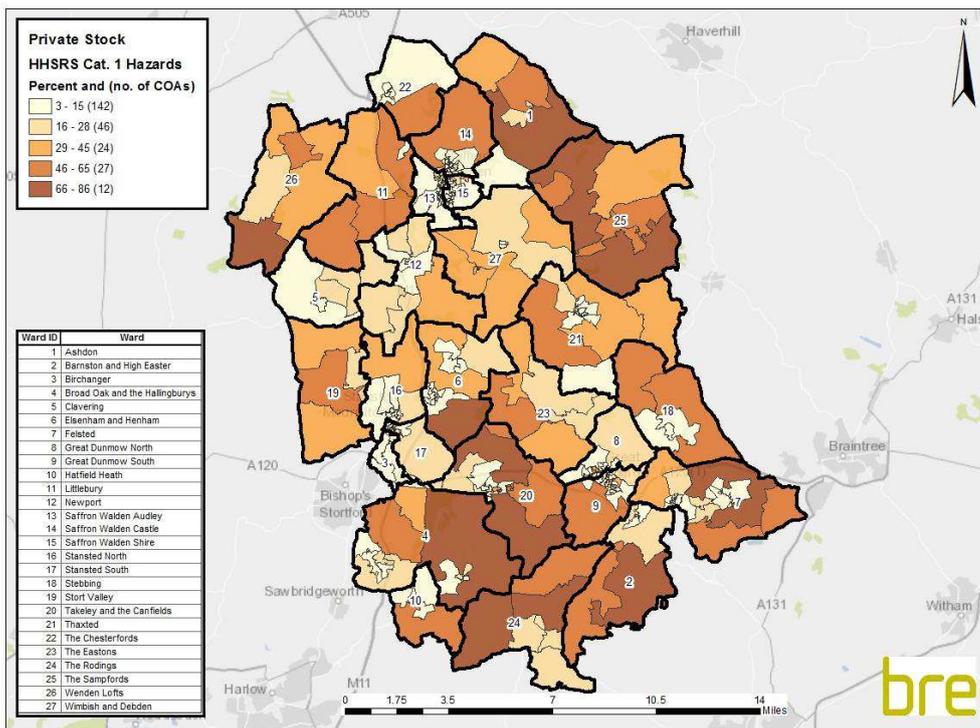
this policy alongside the strategy to target known problems and link works to improvements in health outcomes.

- 1.11 It is estimated that there are 6,314 dwellings in the private sector with a category 1 hazard, which equates to 22% of all private properties, compared with 19% regionally and 17% nationally. 1,186 dwellings in the private rented sector have category 1 hazards. This equates to 27% of properties in the private rented sector.
- 1.12 Collectively, it is estimated that poor housing conditions within the private sector are responsible for over 286 harmful events requiring medical intervention each year. These range from respiratory diseases like Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) associated with cold homes, to fractures and injuries associated with homes containing fall hazards. It would cost £27.7million to mitigate all of these serious housing hazards, but would return savings to the NHS of £1.6 million per year, with further savings to wider society of £3.8 million per year.
- 1.13 The Climate Change Act 2008 legislated for a reduction in our carbon emissions, compared to 1990, of 34% by 2020 and on our way to 80% by 2050. It set legally binding carbon budgets for our country for the next 12 years across all sectors of the UK economy - including our homes and communities, and our workplaces. Reducing demand for energy through eliminating waste cost-effectively is one of the best ways to reduce emissions. Three quarters of the energy we use in our homes is for heating our rooms and water, most of which comes from gas-fired boilers. Together this accounts for 13% of the UK's CO2 emissions.
- 1.14 To do this we need to make our homes more energy efficient, and heat and power them from low carbon sources. The Council and its partners are well placed to provide advice and energy company funded grants to improve the energy efficiency of the owner occupier and private rented sector.
- 1.15 Clearly, it is not the Council's position nor does it have the resources to introduce an intervention programme to resolve these problems. However, there are areas where targeted intervention would help those most in need and where the costs associated with the intervention would demonstrate positive outcomes with relatively low payback periods.
- 1.16 With the introduction of the Care Act, there is now a legislative obligation as well as a moral argument to improve the health and wellbeing of those most vulnerable in society. It is recognised that improvements to living conditions will fulfil some of these responsibilities. We will therefore look at innovative cost effective solutions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in society. Alongside this work, we will work proactively with our landlords, promoting better standards and raise awareness. We shall also take decisive enforcement action against landlords who capitalise on the vulnerable.
- 1.17 The purpose of this document is to provide a clear direction for the Council and its private sector housing service to address the following five 5 key priorities:
 1. **Raise standards in the private sector by encouragement and support to owner occupiers to maintain safe homes, free from category 1 hazards.**

2. **Encourage, support and regulate private landlords and agents to provide safe and well managed properties, free from category 1 hazards.**
3. **Help older and vulnerable people remain in their own homes.**
4. **Maximise use of the existing private sector housing stock.**
5. **Enable more sustainable homes by increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.**

1.18 The accompanying action plan provided in Appendix A addresses how we will deliver these priorities and the timeframe for progressing this work. However, we recognise that new issues will arise and national policies may change during the lifetime of the strategy and there may be a need to renew the action plan as and when deemed necessary to ensure it remains relevant.

2. Key priority 1 - Raise standards in the private sector by encouragement and support to owner occupiers to maintain safe homes, free from category 1 hazards



Percentage of private sector dwellings in Uttlesford with the presence of a HHSRS category 1 hazard

2.1 There are an estimated 22,746 owner occupied homes in UDC. Approximately 5128 dwellings have category 1 hazards. The main hazards are excess cold (4190) and falls (2581). The estimated costs of mitigating these hazards are £23m for excess cold and £3m for falls.

- 2.2 The highest concentrations of fuel poverty in the private sector are found in the wards of The Sampfords, Littlebury and Wendens Lofts. For excess cold, the highest concentrations are in the wards of The Sampfords, Wendens Lofts and The Rodings. The highest concentrations of all hazards linked with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) are found in the wards of The Sampfords, Wendens Lofts and The Rodings.
- 2.3 The key challenge is to encourage those owner occupiers who may be on low income or limited means to invest in their homes and remove category 1 hazards. Some of the main obstacles are likely to be the costs involved in carrying out the works, confidence and trust in the services and builders they use and willingness to engage.
- 2.4 In UDC 21% of all households are considered to be on low incomes. With limited grant funding available to support the vulnerable, the Council will prioritise vulnerable households for assistance and will change the current policy to include a range of grants, offers and loans to encourage uptake and assist those in greatest need.

Proposed Actions

- Develop a comprehensive range of offers and grants with the limited resources available that that will reduce hazards in the home.
 - Devise and implement a campaign to target promotional measures to those in greatest need.
 - Increase public awareness of the range of services available to encourage and support owner occupiers.
 - Work with partner agencies to seek appropriate advice on benefits and rights as a tenant.
 - Report on the improvements made using the Housing Health Cost Calculator to demonstrate the savings to the NHS and wider society.
- 3.0 **Key priority 2 - Encourage, support and regulate private landlords and agents to provide safe and well managed properties, free from category 1 hazards.**
- 3.1 In UDC, the private rented sector accounts for 14% of all households (4609 dwellings). There has been significant growth in the private rented sector in recent years and new measures are being developed to deal with poor landlords. Such measures encourage local authorities to make full use of enforcement powers to tackle dangerous and poorly maintained dwellings. With fewer houses being built, high property values and limited social rented homes, the sector looks set to grow and will continue to remain an important source of housing.
- 3.3 In the majority of cases the rented sector provides high quality housing opportunities, but there are some challenges. The private rented stock is generally worse than the owner occupied stock for indicators relating to hazards; disrepair, fuel poverty and energy efficiency. It is also worse than the owner occupier stock for low income

households and for the low income high cost definition of fuel poverty. 27% of the private rented stock is thought to have one or more category 1 hazards.

- 3.4 The Council has a statutory duty and a range of powers to address sub-standard conditions such as category 1 hazards. It can also intervene in cases of illegal eviction and harassment. Last year we received 47 reports from tenants regarding poor conditions. Demand for action is largely initiated by the tenant and is therefore reliant on high levels of public awareness. Over the course of the strategy we will aim to improve public awareness of tenants' rights and responsibilities and the services we provide. We will also update our enforcement policy to ensure that it reflects current legislative and government thinking.
- 3.5 We also acknowledge that the majority of landlords are not career landlords and own one or two properties. We proposed to engage with our landlords further and keep them updated on legislative changes and good practice. The landlord forum is one attempt to do this, however, we will look to do more whilst still operating a robust enforcement regime.
- 3.6 The Council does not have many mandatory licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) within the District. However, during the lifetime of the strategy, we anticipate that the government will change the current definition of mandatory HMOs. If this occurs, we will look at ways of identifying HMOs and engage with landlords to improve conditions and reduce the health and safety risks to tenants.
- 3.7 In recent years the Government also announced a range of measures aimed at improving standards in the sector, including the requirement to install Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms, the requirement for letting agents to publicise their fees, the redress scheme and measures to prevent retaliatory eviction. The service will look at adopting good practice methods to implement and enforce these changes.

Proposed Actions

- Encourage and support landlords and agents to reduce number of category 1 hazards in private rented homes with a particular focus on HMOs and poorest performing areas
- Respond to changes to government policy on HMOs
- Improve the sector by ensuring that all landlords and agents have access to up to date information
- Regulate robustly and take action against the worst landlords and agents
- Increased awareness of tenants' rights, responsibilities and support available.

4. Key priority 3 – Helping older and vulnerable people remain in their own homes

- 4.1 UDC has a growing number of older households, people with disabilities and complex needs. Much of the existing housing stock is not designed with the needs of these groups in mind.

- 4.2 With people expected to live longer, the need for home adaptations to support independence is set to increase. The main types of adaptations needed include adapted bathrooms and toilets, lifts and level or ramped access. The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide Disabled Facilities Grants. The grants are available up to a maximum of £30,000 and are means tested. Grant funding is sourced from the Better Care Fund managed by Essex CC. However, often this is not enough and each year the Council supports the service by meeting the shortfall in expenditure. In 2015/16 £227,500 was spent on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). UDCs contribution was £124,500 to this service.
- 4.3 It is becoming increasingly clear that the benefits of DFG adaptations are far wider than the provision of assistance to disabled people at home. They allow the individual to maintain a level of dignity and prevent falls and other complications. Without these measures an individual would be put at greater risk of accident or illness. Recent research (Foundations - Local Government Ombudsman Report) indicates that the cost of residential care is around £29,000 per year, whereas the average cost of providing adaptations is less than £7,000. Therefore, effective adaptations can result in clear savings to local government.
- 4.4 There is increasing recognition that the current delivery model is outdated and needs to be streamlined to reduce delays that can place additional health related complications onto the customer.
- 4.5 We will explore new innovative ways to deliver DFGs with the main aim to improve delivery times and provide a comprehensive service for all. We will also investigate whether it is possible to increase the scope of the service to assist with earlier hospital discharge and /or to move people out of residential care and back into their homes.
- 4.6 We will also take a wider look at the homes of disabled persons to see if there is a need for low level intervention and practical help to remove hazards and improve health and safety. We will work with partner agencies with existing support schemes on the best ways to deliver this service across UDC.

Proposed Actions

- Improve the DFG service delivery to reduce complications, increase the speed of adaptations and reduce costs
- Ensure that those who need adaptations get help to remain in or return to their accommodation and receive the appropriate level of advice, support and assistance
- Improve customer relations throughout the DFG process
- Reduce number of category 1 hazards relating to falls in households with older people/children to prevent early and/or unnecessary admissions of residents to hospital, nursing care and or residential care
- To work closely with UDC's Health & Wellbeing service and other stakeholders to develop initiatives that will engage with community groups to identify isolated and vulnerable persons

5. Key priority 4. Maximise use of the existing private sector housing stock

- 5.1 Homes which are left empty for prolonged periods can have an impact on the appearance and the vibrancy of the area, as well as taking housing out of use when there are more and more people in need of accommodation. Dwellings suffering long-term neglect can blight a neighbourhood, increase prevalence of nuisance, pests and ASB. They can even present a danger to the public.
- 5.2 In recent years the Council has stepped up pressure on owners who keep their properties empty for long periods. Much of this has involved effective dialogue and persuasion with owners. However, the threat of enforcement such as compulsory purchase continues to be a useful tool in the armoury against empty homes. The Council has been rewarded for this work through the New Homes Bonus Scheme and additional Council Tax receipts. Although the government has announced changes to the NHB scheme, the Council's work in bringing empty homes continues to be a key outcome in delivering the Council's Housing Strategy.
- 5.3 In recent years the numbers of empty dwellings within UDC as a direct result of officer intervention has reduced significantly. UDC has some of the lowest levels of Empty Dwellings in Essex with 168 empty dwellings recorded in 2015 compared with an Essex average of 305.
- 5.4 UDC is part of the PLACE scheme (Private Lease Agreements Converting Empties). The scheme allows UDC to provide grants of up to £50,000 to carry out repairs in exchange for a lease agreement. Under the scheme the property would be leased and managed as an affordable home for a period of three years before being returned to the owner in sound condition. ~~Other grants and loans are also available.~~
- 5.5 Throughout the lifetime of this strategy we will raise awareness of the PLACE scheme and where appropriate take enforcement action.

Proposed Actions

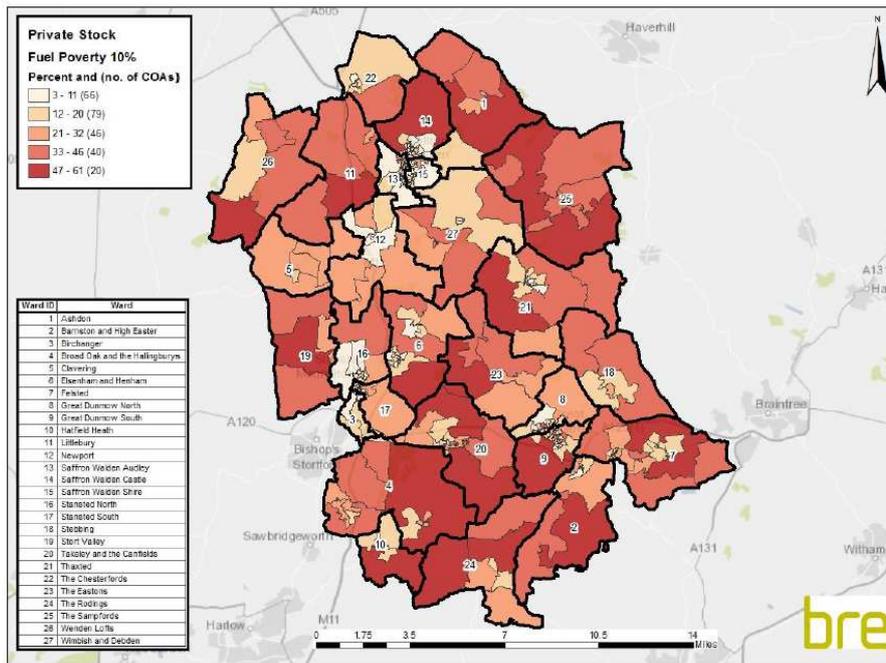
- Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long-term empty properties.
- Encourage owners of privately owned empty homes to bring them back into use using the PLACE scheme.

6. Key priority 5. Enable more sustainable homes by increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.

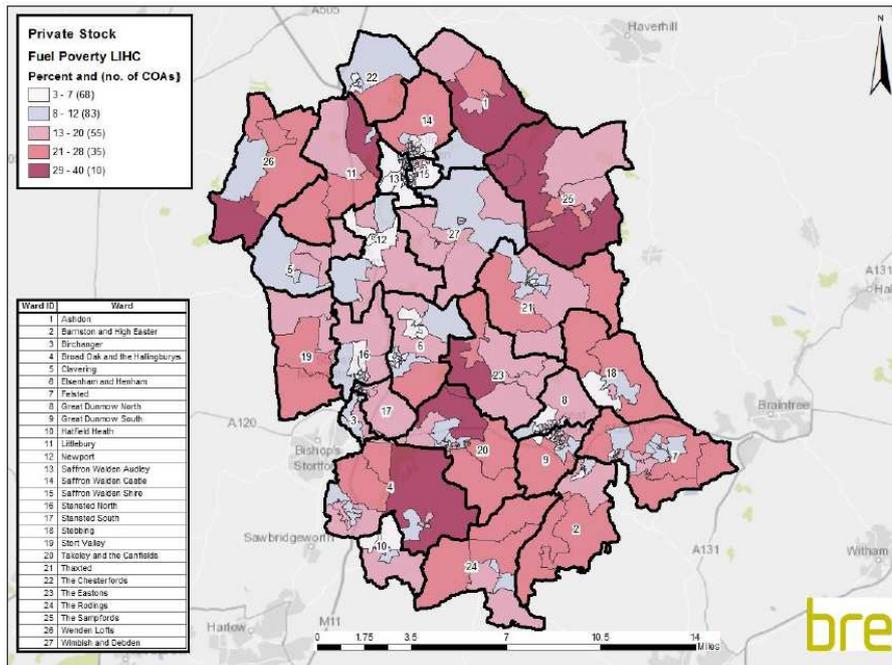
- 6.1 Fuel poverty and excess winter death are issues in Uttlesford. Being able to afford heating bills and ensuring homes are warm and not damp or draughty reduces ill health and demands put on health services.
- 6.2 UDC's private sector housing stock shows lower than average overall levels of energy efficiency when compared to other areas. The estimated average Simple SAP for the private sector stock in Uttlesford is 50 which correspond to an EPC rating of E. The number of private sector dwellings with an EPC rating below band E is estimated to be 6,882 (24.3%). The number of private rented dwellings in Uttlesford with a rating below

band E (i.e. bands F and G), is estimated to be 1,273 (28.8%). By comparison, in 2014, the national average was 61 points (ref English Homes Survey).

- 6.3 A significant amount of work has been done in recent years to improve the energy efficiency of private sector homes in UDC. A number of initiatives have been running that vary according to governmental grants made available. In addition, we are actively promoting oil clubs and working with the CAB on the winter warmth campaign. The Council is rolling out the Government's energy efficiency ECO programme to target energy inefficient properties to reduce carbon emissions, reduce fuel poverty and deliver better health outcomes essential to reduce cold weather related illness and winter mortality.
- 6.5 UDC wide excess cold is the most common category 1 hazard, found in 18% of owner occupied stock and 22% of private rented dwellings. 21% of all housing stock is estimated to be fuel poor, compared to 14% regionally and 15% nationally. 28% of households living in the private rented sector are thought to be living in fuel poverty.
- 6.6 The highest concentrations of fuel poverty in the private sector are found in the wards of The Sampfords, Littlebury and Wendens Lofts. For excess cold, the highest concentrations are in the wards of The Sampfords, Wendens Lofts and The Rodings. We have mapped fuel poverty 'hot spots' around Uttlesford and will use this to target future interventions.



Percentage of private sector dwellings in Uttlesford occupied by households in fuel poverty - 10% definition



Percentage of private sector dwellings in Uttlesford occupied by households in fuel poverty – Low Income High Costs definition

- 6.7 Tackling fuel poverty has a direct impact on residents, enabling them to heat their homes to a standard that maintains their health.
- 6.8 We have already mentioned that we will be reviewing our grants policy to provide a more comprehensive range of grants, loans and offers to create and live in warmer, healthier homes, reduce CO2 emissions and cost of fuel bills.
- 6.9 Throughout the lifetime of the strategy we will continue to work with our partners to reduce incidents of excess winter deaths and fuel poverty. This work will be rolled out in parallel with our approach to tackle the poorest housing within the district, providing an integrated holistic approach to improving the health and wellbeing of vulnerable UDC residents.

Proposed Actions

- Improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions by targeted work and maximise funding opportunities in the worst performing areas and property types.
- Reduced incidence of fuel poverty through targeted work in the poorest performing areas and property types.
- To engage with partners to ensure that wider social needs are identified and referred to local services.

7. **How will we deliver – Objectives & Outcomes**

- 7.1 The action plan contained in Appendix A provides information on the work and targets required to meet the outcomes of the strategy. These will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure delivery.
- 7.2 In addition the strategy will be reviewed in accordance with legislative and central government guidance to ensure that the strategy remains relevant and responsive to emerging needs.
- 7.3 Each year we will present a report to the Housing Board on the work of the service area to ensure a level of scrutiny.
- 7.4 Effective delivery requires the right level of resource and commitment. Partnerships will be key to securing many of the outcomes and we will work to improve and expand our relations with these groups.

Further information

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this strategy, provide comments or ask any questions, please contact the Environmental Health Service at Environmentalhealth@uttlesford.gov.uk Tel 01799 510482.

APPENDIX A

Action Plan

Key Priorities - Action Plan

Key priority 1	Raising standards in the private sector by encouragement and support owner occupiers to maintain safe homes, free from category 1 hazards
Key priority 2	Encourage, support and regulate private landlords and agents to provide safe and well managed properties, free from category 1 hazards
Key priority 3	Helping older and vulnerable people remain in their own homes.
Key priority 4	Maximise use of the existing private sector housing stock
Key priority 5	Enable more sustainable homes by increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.

Key Priority	Action	Reason for action	Timescale for delivery	Outcome/measure	Resources
1	Develop a comprehensive range of offers, grants and loans that that will reduce hazards in the home.	UDCs existing housing assistance policy needs to be amended to deliver a range of services that will improve living conditions for vulnerable people	May 2017	Identified reduction in Cat 1 & 2 hazards following intervention Energy Efficiency improvements	Existing UHRA/DFG capital funding
	Devise and implement a campaign to identify and target those in greatest need.	Eligible persons may not be aware or have access to information that could assist them. A promotional campaign will be necessary to ensure	July 2017	Increase in uptake of available offers	From existing resource

		take up of offers to improve housing conditions.			
	Increase public awareness of the range of services available to encourage and support owner occupiers	Many owner occupiers are unaware of services and advice UDC can provide	December 2017	Delivery of a comprehensive range of leaflets and factsheets + improve website material.	From existing resource
	Work with partner agencies to seek appropriate advice on benefits and rights as a tenant.	To provide a holistic towards addressing wider social needs.	On-going throughout the life of the strategy	Increase ties with partners and measure the number of referrals to other organisations	From existing resource
	Report on the improvements made using the Housing Health Cost Calculator to demonstrate the savings to the NHS and wider society	There is an increasing need to quantify and report on the performance of the service.	On-going throughout the life of the strategy	Improved quantitative performance reporting for the service.	From existing resource
2	Encourage and support landlords and agents to reduce number of category 1 hazards in private rented homes with a particular focus on HMOs and poorest performing areas	The private rented sector is growing and is thought to have some of the worse housing conditions. UDC has few ties with landlords. There is a desire to engage with landlords and improve lines of communication to encourage a high standard of rental accommodation	February 2018	Build up a database of landlords in the district from which to communicate & distribute information	From existing resource
	Respond to changes to housing legislation & government policy on HMOs	The Council licenses few HMOs. The potential change in government policy is likely to lead to a substantial increase in licensable HMOs. The EH service will need to consider and act on these changes	Upon release of statutory guidance	Implement a targeted campaign to licensed more HMOs	Additional resources may be required. It is expected that the costs of additional work will be met in part by the licensing fee

	Regulate robustly and take action against the worst landlords and agents	For those landlords and agents that are not fit for purpose – to robustly act against those flouting the law in accordance with UDCs enforcement policy	December 2017	Review & implement the PSH enforcement policy	From existing resource
	Increase awareness of tenants' rights, responsibilities and support available through website and community based publications	Many tenants are unaware of their rights, and what action is available for them to take.	February 2018	Develop & implement a coms strategy to inform tenants of their rights & responsibilities	From existing resource
3	Improve DFG service delivery to reduce complications, increase the speed of adaptations and reduce costs	Delays to adaptations are known to lead to, uncertainty, stress and increasing physical complications for the applicant	June 2017	To bring service in house	Additional resource has been identified and approved to assist service users
	Ensure that those who need adaptations get help to remain in or return to their accommodation and receive the appropriate level of advice, support and assistance	Improve lines of communication and develop sound working practices with partners to ensure effective delivery of services	June 2017 – Ongoing	Officers to receive & maintain appropriate levels of training to provide excellent levels of service. Document procedures with partner agencies Report on performance & satisfaction ratings	From existing resource
	Improve customer relations throughout the DFG process	There is a need to readily update customers and ensure that they fully engage with the process from applications to the completion of the adaptation	June 2017 - Ongoing	Develop and implement a strategy with UDC coms to inform service users of the DFG process.	From existing resource
	To work closely with UDCs Health & Wellbeing service and other stakeholders to develop initiatives that will engage with community groups to identify isolated and vulnerable persons	To and assist delivery of UDCs wider health and wellbeing priorities.	On-going throughout the life of the strategy	Successfully deliver on joint project goals & initiatives	From existing resource

	Reduce number of category 1 hazards relating to falls in households with older people/children to prevent early and/or unnecessary admissions of residents to hospital, nursing care and or residential care	There is increasing support to broaden DFG service provision to provide other support and assistance that may prevent accidents and reduce care packages	On-going throughout the life of the strategy	To promote other housing assistance offers, grants & loans, encourage referrals to partner agencies and to work with partners to assist in delivery of campaigns	From existing resource
4	Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long-term empty properties and target owners whose empty homes cause a significant detrimental impact to the neighbourhood	UDC has some of the lowest levels of empty properties in Essex. UDC has been rewarded for this through the New Homes Bonus scheme and CT receipts. We will continue to work proactively to ensure empty home levels within UDC remain low.	Ongoing during the lifetime of the strategy	Ensure that we measure the % of private sector dwellings that are been vacant for more than 6 months and returned to occupation through local authority intervention	From existing resource
	Encourage owners of privately owned empty homes to bring them back into use using the PLACE scheme	Owners often face resource issues and are unable to afford the costs of works to bring property back into a good state of repair. We will promote the PLACE scheme that provides grants of up to £50,000	Ongoing during the lifetime of the strategy	Ensure that all owners of empty properties are informed of the PLACE scheme	UDC subscribes to the PLACE Scheme Consortium. No additional funding is required to support existing grant funding
5	Improve energy efficiency by targeting work and maximise funding opportunities in the worst performing areas and property types	The average simple SAP rating is lower in UDC than the national average. We will continue to promote national initiatives, governmental grants and offer loans to the occupiers of 'cold homes'	Ongoing during the lifetime of the strategy	Record the number of properties seeking assistance + the number of hazards removed relating to energy efficiency	From existing resource
	Reduced incidence of fuel poverty through targeted work in the poorest performing areas and property types	Using a range of information sources we are able to target campaign material at those in greatest need	Ongoing	Record the number of properties seeking assistance and the number of hazards removed relating to energy	From existing resource

				efficiency.	
	To engage with partners to ensure that wider social needs are identified and referred to local services	Existing referral arrangements can be improved with greater awareness of the services provided by partner organisations.	Ongoing	Record the number of referrals and level of intervention arising from referrals.	From existing resource

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 7th March 2017

6

Title: Uttlesford Home Repairs Assistance Policy

Author: Marcus Watts, Principal Environmental Health Officer, ext 595

Item for information only

Summary

1. The Council's existing Home Repairs Assistance Policy was first published in 2003 and later amended in 2008 to take into consideration thermal insulation and energy efficiency measures in mobile homes.
2. This policy has been revised to increase the range of offers. It also changes the focus of assistance from grants to loan products.
3. The revised policy will provide the Council with greater flexibility to address poor housing conditions for the most vulnerable in society.

Recommendations

4. That the Housing Board endorses the revised policy and consents to a period of consultation to take account of the views and opinions of interested stakeholders.

Financial Implications

5. None – The policy seeks to maximise the use of existing resources made available through the housing capital programme and does not require additional resource.
6. In addition, the service area will look to measure outcomes of its intervention and apply for additional funding streams to support additional work.

Background Papers

7. 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:
 - Uttlesford District Council Housing Assistance Repairs Policy – 2008
 - BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for Uttlesford District Council – 2015

- BRE A Quantitative Health Impact Assessment: The cost of private sector housing and prospective housing interventions in Uttlesford District Council -2015
- Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016

8. Published Papers

- The District Council Contribution To Public Health: A Time Of Challenge And Opportunity – The Kings Fund – 2015

Impact

9.

Communication/Consultation	No communication/consultation has taken place
Community Safety	A positive impact on community safety will arise from the adoption of the policy
Equalities	Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out
Health and Safety	No impact on employee health and safety
Human Rights/Legal Implications	All intervention work will be carried out in accordance with existing legislative framework
Sustainability	The policy is in keeping with government and Council's strategic aims to improve private sector housing stock
Ward-specific impacts	No specific impact - information is available for all wards.
Workforce/Workplace	Environmental Health – from existing resources

Situation

10. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 ('RRO') introduced a wide discretionary power allowing local authorities to provide financial and other assistance for repair, improvement and adaption of homes. In doing so local authorities can provide assistance, either directly or indirectly in any form, and this can be unconditional or subject to certain conditions that the authority wishes to impose.
11. Before providing assistance, the authority must ensure that the person receiving the assistance has had appropriate advice about any obligation they are undertaking as a condition of receiving financial assistance. In return, the local authority can take a form of security, such as the placing of a legal charge against the property to recover the cost of the assistance when the property is sold.

12. The local authority may not exercise the power unless they have adopted a policy for the provision of assistance and given public notice of the adoption of the policy. The local authority must then exercise the power in accordance with their written policy. The policy must state how much assistance is available, in what form and who is eligible for assistance. The policy must also detail the circumstances in which any assistance must be repaid, together with any advice that is available to help people access such assistance.
13. The existing policy was first published in 2003 and offers discretionary grant assistance to owner occupiers of dwellings to carry out essential repairs. All applicants need to be on a means tested benefit to receive the grant, which is up to £3,000. The policy was amended in 2008 to include thermal insulation and energy efficiency measures in mobile homes, and to increase the maximum grant in circumstances where repair works are also undertaken from £3,000 to £5,000. A summary of the current Uttlesford Housing Renewal Assistance Policy is attached to this report.
14. With the changes brought about by the Care Act 2014 the existing policy does not reflect current thinking. A change in policy will broaden the Council's ability to work with partners and deliver on a variety of schemes and initiatives to improve poor housing that can ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of residents.
15. The Government also makes it clear that it expects home-owners to look after their properties and maintain them, as their properties are likely to be their most valuable asset. However, depending on the priorities of the Council, the legislation enables assistance and resources to be targeted at those most disadvantaged in society through social deprivation, disability, age, vulnerability or infirmity.
16. There is a growing body of evidence detailing the many ways that inadequate housing adversely affects health. The condition of a property has the potential to have both direct and indirect impacts on physical, social and mental health. From indoor dampness and mould, physical injuries from falls, cold homes, overcrowding to household carbon monoxide poisoning, the links between poor housing and health are many and complex.
17. The proposed assistance policy sets out a range of offers to assist private sector home owners in line with the corporate agenda of the Council, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Strategy.
18. Giving priority to low income and vulnerable persons, the policy provides a degree of flexibility to make the most efficient use of available resources and allows the Council to offer a greater range of assistance than under the current policy.

19. In delivering the Policy, the Council aims to work with our partners, utilise stock modelling information and target the most disadvantaged people in society with the poorest housing conditions.
20. It is envisaged that the Policy will continue to be updated regularly to take account of new initiatives, the development of new tools or products, and to reflect changing priorities.
21. Agreement on the proposed policy by the Housing Board will initiate a period of consultation to welcome input from community groups and stakeholders that will serve not only to develop the policy but also serve to promote awareness.

Risk Analysis

22.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Current policy does not reflect changes brought about by the Care Act 2014	3 Policy has not been reviewed since 2008	3 Vulnerable people continue to live in poor housing	Review policy – introduce new deliverable initiatives to improve poor housing

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.

Existing UDC Assistance Policy



Summary of Uttlesford Housing Renewal Assistance Policy

ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES

Assistance is available to owner occupiers of houses, flats, mobile homes, and in exceptional circumstances the owners of long term empty houses (but subject to additional conditions).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All applicants must be over the age of 18 and have an owner's interest in the property, they must be in receipt of a means tested benefit; currently these are Income Support, LCTS, Income Related Job Seeker's Allowance, Income Based Employment Support Allowance, Guaranteed Pension Credit or Universal Credit

ELIGIBLE WORK

There are three categories of work eligible for assistance; Repairs, Adaptations or Improvements

Repairs	Assistance is <u>not</u> available for routine maintenance. It is for the repair of dilapidated parts of the building structure such as rotten windows, defective roofs, rusty and leaking rainwater gutters and pipes, and other similar major defects.
Adaptations	A separate grant is available for Registered Disabled Persons to adapt their homes. However assistance will be given to adapt the home of an elderly and frail owner if it is supported by their Doctor and will enable them to remain living independently in their own home.
Improvements	Assistance will be given to provide for the first time an inside WC or bathroom with hot and cold water, or energy efficiency works in a mobile home.

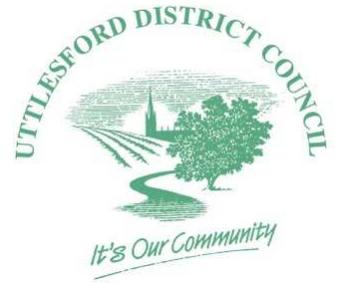
TYPE of ASSISTANCE

Work costing up to £3000 or in the case of a mobile home having both energy efficiency work and repairs carried out £5000	Once the work has been agreed as eligible and the applicant is also eligible, a grant will be given based on the lower of two estimates for the cost of the work plus any agreed agents fees. The work must be carried out by the contractor who submitted the lower estimate, and completed within six months from the approval date. The work must be carried out to the Council's satisfaction before payment will be made
Work costing between £3000 and £10000	The first £3000's worth of work will be a grant as described above but for the additional work over £3000 an interest free loan will be given which will have to be repaid when the property is sold or the applicant no longer lives in the property. This loan will be a Land Charge on the property which in simple terms means the Council will be legally able to recover the cost of the loan from who ever owns the property. The Council will require proof that the applicant owns the property before approval of the assistance and this will mean that the owners of mobile homes who do not own the ground on which their home stands will be unable to apply.
Work costing more than £10000	The first £10000's worth of work will be a combination of a grant and an interest free loan as described above, but for any work costing more than £10000 the Council will refer the applicant to a list of Independent Financial Advisors registered with the Financial Services Authority. The purpose of the referral will be to explore the possibility of releasing equity from the property to fund the cost of the works over the £10000 limit of Council assistance.
Additional Applications	Additional applications will be considered, but if they are made within 5 years of each other the previous assistance will be taken in to account in calculating the cost of the works and grant or loan (if any) available.
Unforeseen Works	If after the approval of an application for assistance additional unforeseen works are required then the Council must agree the extent of the works and their cost before they are carried out.
Appeals	The Council recognises that there may be exceptional cases which fall outside the agreed policy and will give due consideration to any properly made application. Appeals against a refusal will be considered by the Council's Community Committee.

Proposed Assistance Policy (Summary)

Assistance Title	Grant Loan or Assistance	Brief outline of assistance	Max awarded grant/ loan	Availability	Eligibility
Safety & Security & Emergency repair grant	Grant	To make a property, secure and to pay for emergency works. Primarily aimed to address urgent/distressing circumstances.	£500.00	Once every 3 years	Eligible for income related benefits or in receipt of income related benefits.
Home Repairs Loan	Loan	To remedy Category 1 hazards, serious disrepair and/or essential works	£5000.00	Once every 3 years	Eligible for income related benefits or in receipt of income related benefits.
Winter Resilience Assistance Service	Assistance	A series of quick fix measures provided by a handyman service to tackle immediate problems associated with the onset of winter. Measure to combat fuel poverty and/or poor thermally efficient homes.	Works up to the value of £400.00	Once every 3 years	Anyone over 65 yrs in receipt of income related benefit or disabled persons in receipt of a disability living allowance No repayment conditions
Winter Resilience Assistance Loan	Loan	To pay for energy efficiency works such as central heating boilers, radiators, insulation works etc. Intended to remedy fuel poverty. Works may attract external funding.	£5000.00	One off	Constrained to those on means tested benefits or fuel poverty assessment.
Disabled Facilities Grants	Grant/loan	Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will be assessed and paid under the provisions of Chapter 1 of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as amended	£30,000	One each year	The DFG is subject to a test of financial resources. The grant for the adaptation is a maximum of £30,000, less any contribution to reflect that the contribution counts towards the maximum of £30,000. Grant repayment conditions apply, in particular where the grant is for more than £5,000 but only for a maximum charge of £10,000.
Disabled Facilities Grants (Discretionary top up loan)	Loan	Discretionary Loan Assistance to “top up” the DFG. Loan assistance will also be considered for applicants that fall outside the DFG eligibility criteria	£10,000	One off	Available for owner occupiers only. Cases assessed on individual basis with input from Adult social care
Park Homes Energy Efficiency grant	Grant	To address cat 1 disrepair and/or energy efficiency measures	£4000	One off	Anyone over 65 yrs in receipt of income related benefit or disabled persons in receipt of a disability living allowance No repayment conditions
PLACE Scheme	Lease agreement (Grant) &/or Loan	Grant available to bring the dwelling up to the government's Decent Homes Standard in return for a lease arrangement. Loan to allow a dwelling to be renovated for sale, whereupon the loan is repaid, or made available for letting, repaying the loan through rental income.	Up to £50,000	One off	Any home owner in possession of a property vacant for a period greater than 6mths. PLACE terms and conditions apply

		The owner has full control over future occupation of the dwelling			
Relocation Assistance	Loan	<p>A loan of up to £4,000 for costs of relocating to a more suitable property. Usually provided where the remaining property is not suitable or the costs of works to make it suitable are not viable.</p> <p>Funding might also be available to assist a tenancy move for a vulnerable tenant to move to a more suitable property, where without such assistance the move is at risk. This is determined on a case by case basis.</p>	£4000	One Off	Anyone over 65 yrs in receipt of income related benefit or disabled persons in receipt of a disability living allowance. Local land charge to be attached to the new property
Relocation Assistance (DFG)	Grant	Continuation of DFG. To provide assistance with the costs of relocating to a more suitable property where it is reasonable or practical to carry out works	Up to £10,000	One off	The DFG is subject to a test of financial resources.



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

UTTLESFORD HOME REPAIRS ASSISTANCES

POLICY

DRAFT

Version 1.0
March 2017

Executive Summary

This policy makes use of the powers provided under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to offer a range of assistance offers to better meet the needs of low income and vulnerable groups.

The Council's view is that it is primarily the responsibility of homeowners to maintain their own property but accepts some homeowners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in safe and good repair. This policy reflects this safety net approach and provides a range of flexible offers of assistance to support the Council's Health and Wellbeing agenda.

In particular it focuses on:

- Providing a range of adaptations to meet individual residents needs to enable them to live safely and independently at home.
- Maximising the housing stock to enable long term empty homes is brought back in to use.
- Improving the energy efficiency of properties and ensuring the maximum use of the private sector housing stock.

All grants, loans & assistance are available subject to the eligibility criteria and conditions. The Director of Housing & Environmental Services will consider exceptional circumstances outside the scope of the policy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 requires local authorities to develop a policy for providing households with financial assistance to improve their homes.
- 1.2 This policy sets out what assistance UDC is able to offer to support residents, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, who do not have resources to live in decent and suitable properties for their needs. Assistance is available to support the existing statutory Disability Facilities Grant (DFG), make homes safer for vulnerable people, improve substandard homes and improve heating and energy efficiency.
- 1.3 To ensure the longevity of this policy and in keeping with on-going financial pressures facing the Council, the assistance provided in this policy will be a combination of grants and loans. By providing more loans, it ensures sustainability, allowing assistance to be recovered and re-used at some point in the future.
- 1.4 This policy updates and replaces the Uttlesford Housing Repair Assistance policy approved by Cabinet in 2003, then amended in 2008 to include thermal insulation and energy efficiency measures in mobile homes.

2. Background

- 2.1 There is a growing body of evidence detailing the many ways that inadequate housing adversely affects health. The condition of a property has the potential to have both direct and indirect impacts on physical, social and mental health. From indoor dampness and mould, physical injuries from falls, cold homes, overcrowding to household carbon monoxide poisoning, the links between poor housing and health are many and complex.
- 2.2 According to the British Research Establishment (BRE), it is now widely accepted that the calculated cost of poor housing to the NHS is approximately 1.4 billion. This represents first year treatment costs of those living in the poorest 15% of the housing stock. If expanded to include all homes the figure rises to approximately 2 billion.
- 2.3 In May 2015 the Council commissioned the BRE to report on the condition of housing stock within the district. The resulting stock model was combined information on property type, age, construction, insulation and heating method to give an overall assessment of the condition of property down to street level. The model also provides the Council with information on the economic status of the residents.
- 2.4 An indication of the condition of the housing stock can be gained by the number of category 1 hazards estimated to be in the district. Based on 2015 modelled data, 22% (6314) of private sector dwellings in the district have category 1 hazards present, this compares with 19% regionally and 17% nationally. 27% of properties in the private rented sector are thought to have category 1 hazards.

- 2.5 Excess cold is the most common category 1 hazard found in 18% of owner occupied stock and 22% of private rented dwellings.
- 2.6 In recognition of the range of housing problems within the private sector, there is a need to take a long term strategic view to help to improve the health, safety, and wellbeing of residents. To assist with the delivery of this strategic approach, and in keeping with the findings of the Care Act 2014, it is proposed that the existing home repairs assistance policy be withdrawn and a new suite of offers be made available.
- 2.7 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 requires local authorities to develop a policy for providing households with financial assistance to improve their homes. Every local authority is required to adopt and publish such a policy. This policy contains the loan and grant assistance that the Council provides together with the key conditions. Eligibility criteria is also outlined. However, due to on-going changes to benefit systems and methods of means testing, the criteria will not be set within this policy but will be determined by officers and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it meets the needs of those considered most vulnerable.
- 2.8 The aim of this policy is to support residents in improving their health and wellbeing by addressing problems with substandard and/or unsuitable homes that do not meet individual needs. The Housing Assistance function has a role in supporting the wider adult social care prevention agenda; specifically, those aims of the Care Act 2014 to promote wellbeing, independence and prevent or delay care and support needs.

3. Scope

- 3.1 Legislation does not restrict policy or its forms of assistance to private sector homeowners alone. However, no forms of discretionary assistance (other than Relocation assistance in exceptional circumstances) is available for Council or housing association tenants, as other mechanisms are in place to improve their homes.

4. Policy detail

- 4.1 Uttlesford District Council is required to meet its mandatory requirements in respect of Disabled Facilities Grant and will seek to maximise resources to assist as many eligible clients as possible in obtaining the necessary and appropriate adaptations to their homes. To meet this objective, the Council will place charges upon the property where the grant exceeds £5,000, up to a charge limit of £10,000. This only applies to owner occupied households and the charge will last for 10 years.
- 4.2 The Council will also provide discretionary assistance to meet priorities outlined below. However, the availability of discretionary assistance from Uttlesford District Council will always be dependent upon resources being available.
- 4.3 In recognition of the above and the findings of the BRE stock profiles, this policy has prioritised assistance to:

1. The safety and security of older persons and other vulnerable groups, living in their home,
2. Reducing cases of fuel poverty,
3. Reduction of category 1 hazards, (with associated health related benefits) & major adaptations for people with disabilities
4. Reducing the number of non decent homes, primarily with loan assistance,
5. Reduction of empty homes,
6. The improvement in the thermal efficiency of the housing stock.

4.4 One of the driving forces of this policy will be to promote independence, enabling people to remain in their own homes. Continuing from the existing good work of the Council, this policy will link in with the Disabled Facilities Grants system and will look to help people return to their homes following a spell in hospital by providing the necessary and timely adaptations. This policy also provides assistance to remedy fall hazards in the home and to provide adaptations to allow safe access in and around the home.

5. Housing Assistance Summary

5.1 The table below provides the list and value associated with this housing assistance policy. A summary of the specific forms of assistance within this policy is detailed in a table in Appendix A. The table is an outline of the aims and outcomes of the assistance proposed.

Assistance Title	Grant/Loan Value
Safety, Security and Emergency Repair Grant	£500 grant
Home Improvement Loan	£5000 loan
Affordable Warmth Assistance	£500 loan
Winter Resilience Assistance Loan	£5000 Loan
PLACE Scheme Assistance	Up to £50,000
Disabled Facilities Grant (mandatory)	£30,000 Grant/Loan
Disabled Facilities Grant (discretionary top up loan assistance)	£10,000 Loan
Park Homes Energy Efficiency grant	£4000 Grant
Relocation Assistance	£4000 Loan
Relocation Assistance (DFG)	£10,000 Grant

5.2 Specific Housing Assistance Eligibility and Conditions are available separately on request from the Housing Service. The key loan and grant conditions are detailed below.

6. Loan & Grant Conditions

- 6.1 Due to on-going financial pressures on the Council, the majority of assistance will be provided as a loan, as this will be recovered or recycled in time.
- 6.2 The repayment conditions are at zero% interest rate, in the form of a land registry charge where possible. Financial assistance is normally returned to the Council when the applicant is in a better position to do so, such as through the sale of the property. There would be exemptions to repayment conditions where the property is sold to enable the client to move into a care home or with relative carers.
- 6.3 There are two exceptions to the repayment of loan assistance. Firstly, where the Council provides funding for the most urgent cases to help the most vulnerable households resolve safety or security issues. This is in the form of Safety, Security and Emergency Repair Grant as set out in Appendix A. Secondly, grants of up to £3,000 are available for eligible households on Park Homes as loans cannot be charged to Park Homes. Although charges cannot be placed against Park Homes, recipients of assistance will be required to sign an undertaking to repay the funding provided if they sell their home within 5 years. There are exemptions where moving for health or care reasons.
- 6.4 To administer all types of assistance under this policy, fees are charged for the assistance provided. In most cases, fees are included in the assistance moneys as a percentage of the assistance amount. Fees will be reviewed annually in line with the Council's Fees and Charges Policy. It is expected that the fees for administering DFGs will be 15% of the awarded grant. All other assistance will attract a fee of % (To be agreed). Land registry fees are also included in the assistance moneys.

7. Capital Resources

- 7.1 The availability of assistance (grants/loans) from the Council will always be dependent upon the finite resources available. These resources are available from the Housing Assistance Budget and the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant Budget. Both budgets are dependent on capital funding, being a combination of Council HRA funding and ECC Capital grant funding taken from ECC Better Care Fund.
- 7.2 PLACE grants and loans are paid from a fund held by a consortium of six local authorities as part of a scheme to refurbish and renovate empty homes so that they are suitable for re-occupation. The money available for grants is finite and may not be available for the duration of this policy. Loan moneys will be recirculated as available.

8. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant Budget

- 8.1 Legislation enables some recovery of DFG assistance in specific circumstances under the provisions of Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008. Under this legislation, the Council imposes a charge upon the property for ten years in all owner occupation cases

where the grant exceeds £5,000 (for the part of the grant that exceeds £5,000), up to a charge limit of £10,000.

- 8.2 Upon sale of the property within ten years of the grant completion, the presumption will be to recover the cost of the adaptation. However, in accordance with formal government guidance, the individual circumstances of the owner will be considered.

9. Applicant Support

- 9.1 The Council does not have the resources to replicate services provided by Home Improvement Agencies. However, it is recognised that there is a need for a level of client support in helping complete the various forms required for financial assistance. Many applicants are vulnerable and/or elderly and officers will look to provide an appropriate level of support to ensure that the process for applying for assistance progresses in a satisfactory manner. The fees attached to the assistance provided, which may include sourcing quotations and monitoring works as they progress, are justified in light of these support costs.

10. Complex cases and hardship

- 10.1 It is considered that most cases will be overseen by officers. However, on occasion, unforeseen problems associated with complex cases arise that may require an alternative approach. These cases as well as particular cases of hardship may require support and assistance beyond the assistance outlined within this policy. Where such unusual cases occur, the details will be discussed with officers and team managers and the Assistant Director of Housing & Environmental Services. Only in exceptional circumstances will assistance be considered beyond that set out within Appendix A.

11. Appeals about Decisions in Individual Cases

- 11.1 Appeals about how the policy is operated in individual cases, for example, where an enquiry or application for assistance is refused, will be considered initially by the service manager. Where this does not resolve the case in question to the satisfaction of the person concerned, the appeal case will subsequently be considered by the appeal panel consisting of the Assistant Director of Housing & Environmental Services, the Service Manager and Environmental Health Officer.

- 11.2 Appeals will be considered only on the following grounds:

- That the policy has not been applied correctly in the case in question, for example there has been a mistake, or
- That the case in question is exceptional in some way that justifies an exception to the general policy.

11.3 Appeals will not be considered on the grounds that the appellant simply disagrees with the policy. However, any written comments and complaints about the policy will also be considered by the service manager.

11.4 The decision of the Appeal Panel is final. Decisions will be notified to appellants in writing within 14 days from receipt of the written appeal.

12. Monitoring and reporting arrangements

12.1 The success of this policy is monitored through performance indicators relating to category 1 hazards and empty homes that are reported to the Social Care, Health and Housing Performance Board monthly.

12.2 Satisfaction surveys are also sent to clients to understand the quality of the service provided, outcomes achieved and to monitor the diversity of clients.

Assistance Title	Grant Loan or Assistance	Brief outline of assistance	Max awarded grant/ loan	Availability	Eligibility
Safety & Security & Emergency repair grant	Grant	To make a property, secure and to pay for emergency works. Primarily aimed to address urgent/distressing circumstances.	£500.00	Once every 3 years	Eligible for income related benefits or in receipt of income related benefits.
Home Repairs Loan	Loan	To remedy Category 1 hazards, serious disrepair and/or essential works	£5000.00	Once every 3 years	Eligible for income related benefits or in receipt of income related benefits.
Winter Resilience Assistance Service	Assistance	A series of quick fix measures provided by a handyman service to tackle immediate problems associated with the onset of winter. Measure to combat fuel poverty and/or poor thermally efficient homes.	Works up to the value of £400.00	Once every 3 years	Anyone over 65 yrs in receipt pf income related benefit or disabled persons in receipt of a disability living allowance No repayment conditions
Winter Resilience Assistance Loan	Loan	To pay for energy efficiency works such as central heating boilers, radiators, insulation works etc. Intended to remedy fuel poverty. Works may attract external funding.	£5000.00	One off	Constrained to those on means tested benefits or fuel poverty assessment.
Disabled Facilities Grants	Grant/loan	Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will be assessed and paid under the provisions of Chapter 1 of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as amended	£30,000	One each year	The DFG is subject to a test of financial resources. The grant for the adaptation is a maximum of £30,000, less any contribution to reflect that the contribution counts towards the maximum of £30,000. Grant repayment conditions apply, in particular where the grant is for more than £5,000 but only for a maximum charge of £10,000.
Disabled Facilities Grants (Discretionary top up loan)	Loan	Discretionary Loan Assistance to "top up" the DFG. Loan assistance will also be considered for applicants that fall outside the DFG eligibility criteria	£10,000	One off	Available for owner occupiers only. Cases assessed on individual basis with input from Adult social care
Park Homes Energy Efficiency grant	Grant	To address cat 1 disrepair and/or energy efficiency measures	£4000	One off	Anyone over 65 yrs in receipt pf income related benefit or disabled persons in receipt of a disability living allowance No repayment conditions
PLACE Scheme	Lease agreement (Grant) &/or Loan	Grant available to bring the dwelling up to the government's Decent Homes Standard in return for a lease arrangement. Loan to allow a dwelling to be renovated for sale, whereupon the loan is repaid, or made available for letting, repaying the loan through rental income. The owner has full control over future occupation of the dwelling.	Up to £50,000	One off	Any home owner in possession of a property vacant for a period greater than 6mths. PLACE terms and conditions apply
Relocation Assistance	Loan	A loan of up to £4,000 for costs of relocating to a more suitable property.	£4000	One Off	Anyone over 65 yrs in receipt pf

		<p>Usually provided where the remaining property is not suitable or the costs of works to make it suitable are not viable.</p> <p>Funding might also be available to assist a tenancy move for a vulnerable tenant to move to a more suitable property, where without such assistance the move is at risk. This is determined on a case by case basis.</p>			<p>income related benefit or disabled persons in receipt of a disability living allowance. Local land charge to be attached to the new property</p>
Relocation Assistance (DFG)	Grant	Continuation of DFG. To provide assistance with the costs of relocating to a more suitable property where it is reasonable or practical to carry out works	Up to £10,000	One off	The DFG is subject to a test of financial resources.

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 7 March 2017

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**Title: Essex Countywide Homelessness
Prevention Trailblazer Bid/Homelessness
Reduction Bill – For Information Only**

**Author: Judith Snares –Housing and Communities
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Summary

1. This report brings to the attention of the Housing Board the Essex Countywide Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Bid and the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

Recommendations

2. This report is for information only

Financial Implications

3. N/A.

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Members,
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

5. The Government recently asked for bids for a pot of money to set up Trailblazer Projects to prevent homelessness. Essex County Council with the support of the District Authorities put in a bid for this money and were awarded approximately 900K over two years. The projects target client group will include those who may not be owed a statutory homeless duty at the moment but who may be already known to existing agencies such as health or criminal justice
6. The money will be used to fund 10 specialist support case workers who will work across all districts in Essex. They will take on individual cases, working across various agencies to help resolve not only housing problems but the issues that may have led to homelessness or the threat of homelessness or that will make sustaining a tenancy difficult
7. The case workers will use a model of individualised personal assessments and actions plans. The project is due to go live in April
8. The Trailblazer Project is envisaged as an opportunity for districts to see how this way of working with clients can be used to pilot the way authorities will need to work if and when the Homelessness Reduction Bill is passed by Parliament
9. This Bill although a private members bill has gained government backing and is championed by the leading homelessness charities. It is currently in the committee stage in the Lords and it is thought likely that it will be passed on its return to the commons, leading to it receiving royal assent by June of this year
10. The Bill is based on a similar bill that has been law in Wales for some time now. It will put new homelessness duties on local authorities meaning that anyone who is within 56 days of homelessness will be owed a duty by the council
11. Initially this will be a duty to prevent homelessness, followed by one to relieve homelessness if prevention is unsuccessful. This will require everyone seeking advice from the council in this situation, to be given a personalised action plan of the things that they must do to try prevent their homelessness and actions that the council will take
12. Where homelessness cannot be prevented the bill will require local authorities to find accommodation for everyone including single people who were previously classed as non-priority, initially this may be temporary accommodation but the duty will then be to find accommodation of at least six months duration

13. There will also be a duty for other agencies to refer their clients to the council if they think they are threatened with homelessness
14. The implications of this for the housing options service are difficult to assess at the moment but there will definitely be an increase in the housing options team's workload and the budget implications may also be considerable. All decisions throughout the processes as laid out in the Bill are reviewable. These reviews can only be carried out by an officer not previously involved with the case. The difficulty in finding sufficient staff to carry out these reviews within a small team may prove challenging
15. Funds will be required to try to prevent homelessness, this may be for topping up rent where there is a shortfall in benefits, paying off arrears where there has been a loss of rent due to housing benefit issues
16. Money will also be required to help fund and facility the availability of an increased amount of temporary accommodation as well as to secure more longer term housing by way of rent deposits, rent in advance, incentive payments to landlords
17. The effects of the push out from London boroughs is also likely to increase as London Authorities look for more affordable accommodation for their clients
18. Uttlesford is lucky in that we are not in an area with a high level of homelessness and currently our resources both staffing and monetary are sufficient for the needs that we have to meet. If the Homelessness Reduction Bill comes into law later this year then these resources may not be sufficient to cope with the new duties that will be placed upon the council

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The council fails to have sufficient resources in place to meet its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Bill if it becomes law later this year	3 – Until the council can fully understand the demands that this legislation may put on services it is difficult to judge the resources that may be required	3 – The council will be open to legal challenge if it does not fulfil its duties under homelessness legislation	The housing department will do work to understand the demands that may be placed upon it by this legislation and put bids forward for the required resources as they are identified

- 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.