

# **UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY 2017 – 2022**

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## Foreword by lead portfolio holder

*Suggested text (for approval by Julie Redfern):*

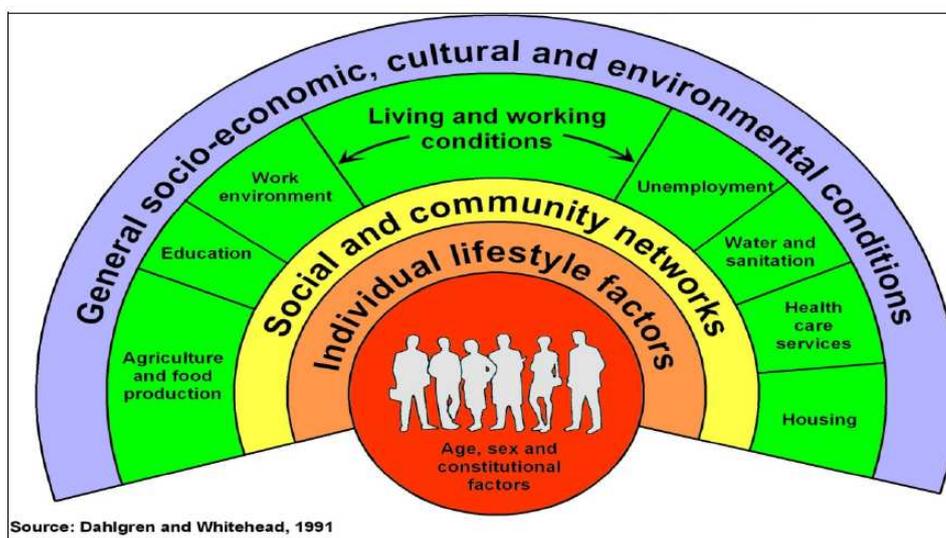
*Uttlesford District Council is passionate about looking after its residents and has a duty to help those most vulnerable in society. The built environment is of great importance to us all and the links to the wider determinants of health are well established. With the introduction of the Care Act we 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

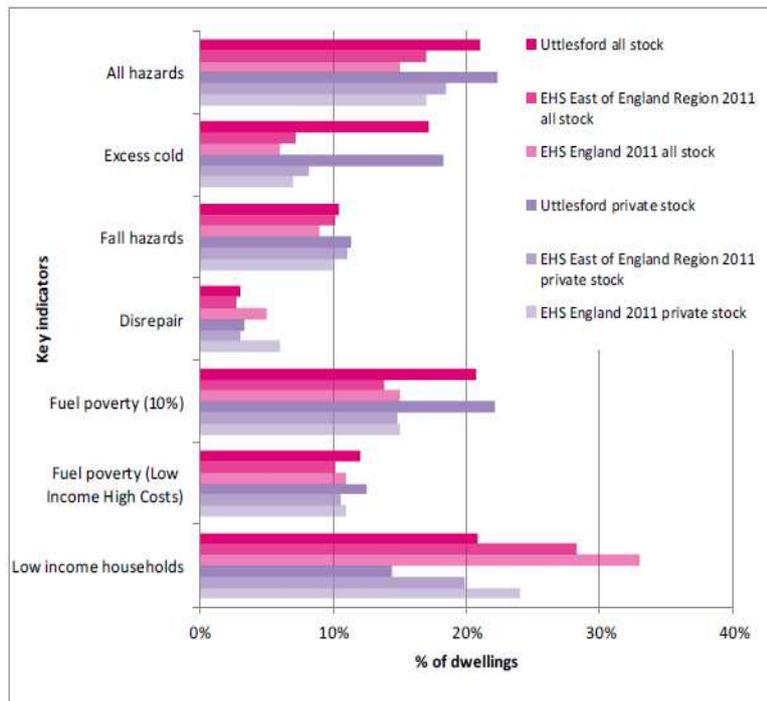
1.6 This strategy does not stand alone. It has been developed in line with the key objectives listed within UDC's Housing Strategy published in 2016 and it will also compliment the Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan, which will be published later this year. It sets out what the Council will do to support 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

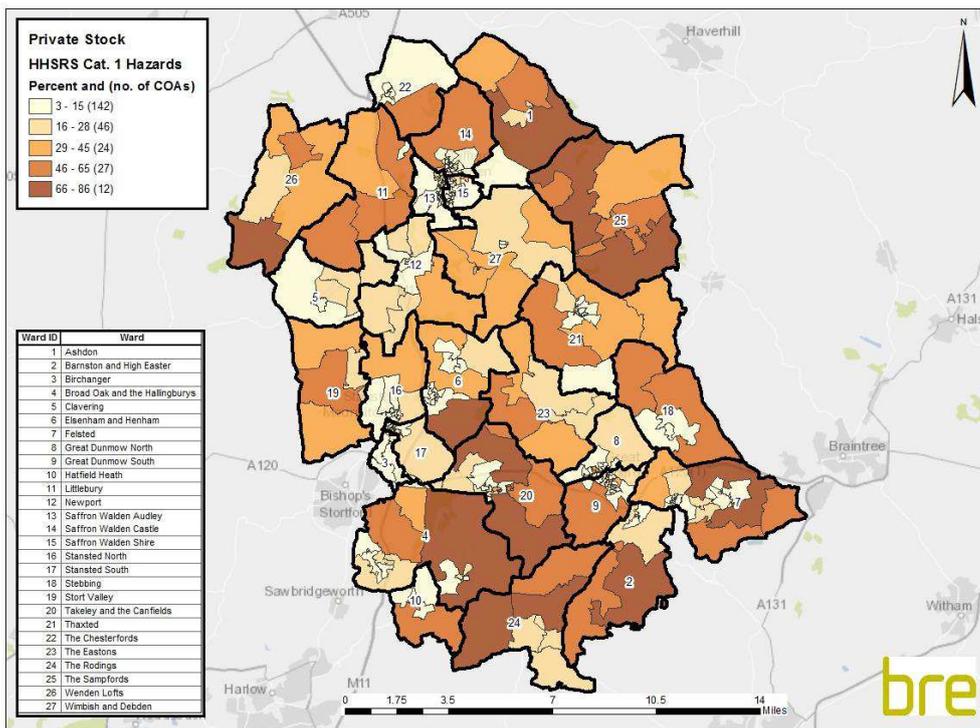
this policy alongside the strategy to target known problems and link works to improvements in health outcomes.

- 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

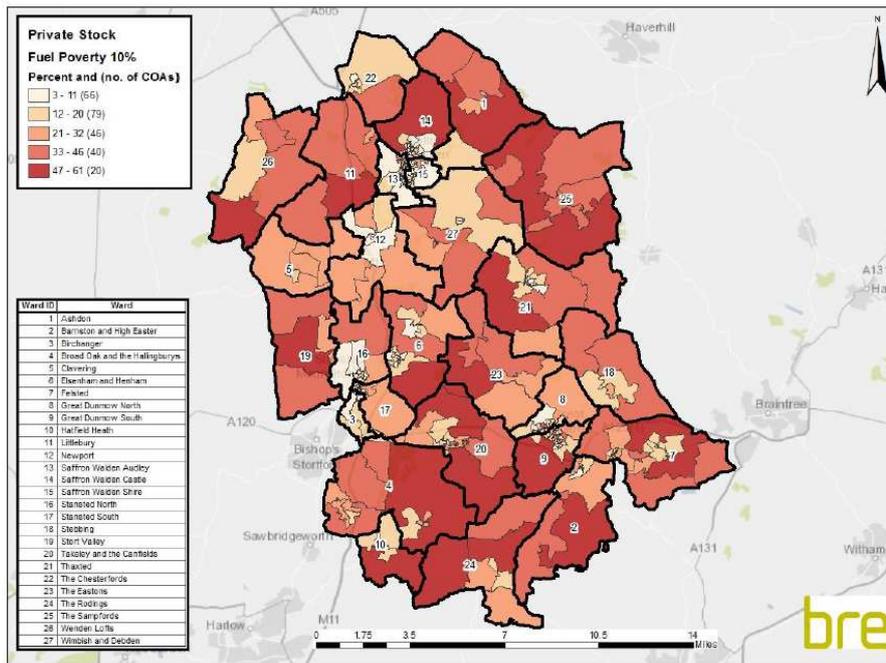
- Maintain accurate information about the numbers of long-term empty properties.
- Encourage owners of privately owned empty homes to bring them back into use using the PLACE scheme.

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

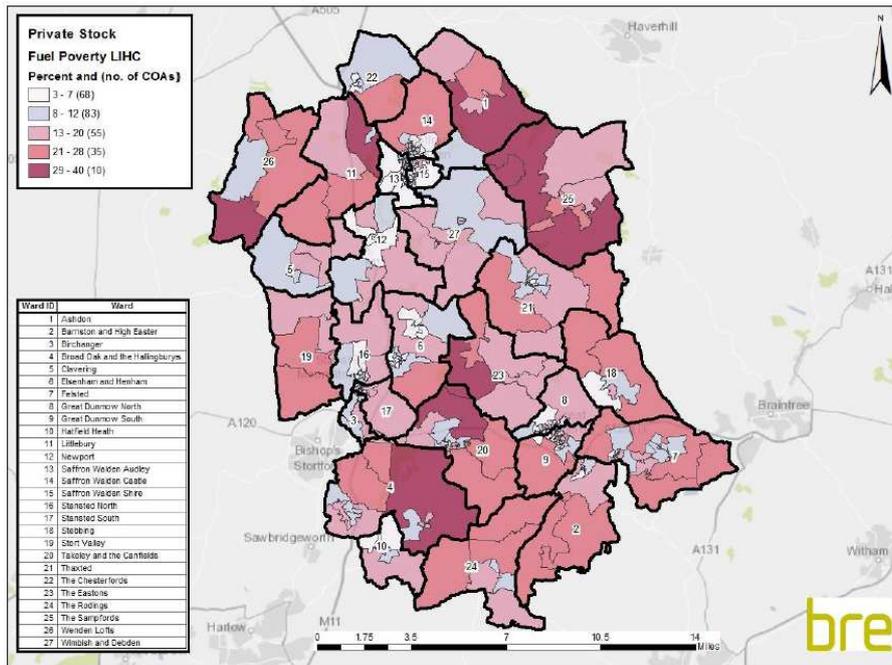
- 6.1 Fuel poverty and excess winter death are issues in Uttlesford. Being able to afford heating bills and ensuring homes are warm and not damp or draughty reduces ill health and demands put on health services.
- 6.2 UDC's private sector housing stock shows lower than average overall levels of energy 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](mailto:Environmentalhealth@uttlesford.gov.uk) Tel 01799 510482.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Action Plan**

## Key Priorities - Action Plan

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Key priority 1</b> | Raising standards in the private sector by encouragement and support owner occupiers to maintain safe homes, free from category 1 hazards |
| <b>Key priority 2</b> | Encourage, support and regulate private landlords and agents to provide safe and well managed properties, free from category 1 hazards    |
| <b>Key priority 3</b> | Helping older and vulnerable people remain in their own homes.  |
| <b>Key priority 4</b> | Maximise use of the existing private sector housing stock   |
| <b>Key priority 5</b> | 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<br><br>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<br>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   |

|   |  |  |  |  |  |
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|   | 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 |