

**Committee:** Council

**Date:**

**Title:** Report of the Portfolio holder for Housing

Tuesday, 9 October  
2018

**Report  
Author:** Councillor Julie Redfern

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## Summary

1. This report summarises matters that the Cabinet Member has been working on.

## Recommendations

2. None, this report is to note only

## Financial Implications

3. None

## Background Papers

4. None

## Situation

## Housing Strategy

5. The Scrutiny Committee has been included in the process of reviewing and updating the Housing Strategy to take account of the Local Plan proposals. The new strategy will be an important element in delivering the proposed new garden communities.
6. The Homelessness Strategy and Housing Allocations policy have been reviewed and updated to take into account the new Homelessness Reduction Act which was implemented in April 2018.
7. The bid has been prepared for additional Housing Revenue Account borrowing headroom to fund an increase in the Council's House building Programme.
8. We have a target of delivering 100 additional affordable houses across the district each year. In 2017/18 157 properties were delivered. In 2018/19 it is expected that we will exceed this number.
9. We are working with a registered provider and Essex County Council for the successful delivery of a new learning disability scheme in Saffron Walden. The scheme will contain six self-contained units of accommodation and is due for completion this month, October 2018.
10. Two council owned houses have been converted into shared houses for people with learning difficulties. Properties have now been leased to Family Mosaic who will be providing the support required.

11. Criteria and application process was approved for the Community Housing Fund Small Grant Allocations at the last Cabinet meeting.

### **Housing Options and Homelessness**

12. The Housing Options Team has been fully trained in how to deliver the requirements of the New Homelessness Reduction Act and the Homelessness Strategy and Allocations Policy have been reviewed and updated. New systems are in place to record all homelessness prevention work and generate personalised housing plans.
13. Homelessness Partnership meetings are held quarterly to enable cross-organisational homelessness prevention work to be carried out across the district.
14. Essex Trailblazer homelessness reduction project is working well with some success recorded in preventing homelessness in the district.

### **Council Housing Development Programme**

15. The Council's housing development program has now delivered more than 100 additional council owned properties to date.
16. Reynolds Court was completed ahead of schedule in September 2018 and I will report on this further at the next full council meeting.
17. The remodelling of Hatherley Court in Saffron Walden commenced in May 2017 and is now really taking shape. The scheme is being modernised to a high standard and when completed will provide 26 spacious flats suitable for modern living. There will also be two new one-bedroom flats added to the scheme, a new ground floor dining room with a conservatory overlooking The Common and a new entrance area. The first phase of the works is due to complete this month, October 2018.
18. A new build development at Sheds Lane Saffron Walden was completed on time and on budget in July. This provided 2 x 2 bedroomed houses and one three-bedroom bungalow. Officers worked with occupational therapy professionals to ensure that the bungalow would meet the specific needs of a local family.
19. We also gained planning approval for two further sites, one in Frambury Lane in Newport and one in Newton Grove, Great Dunmow. Again I will report further on this at the following council meeting.

### **Private Sector Housing**

20. Both the Private Sector Housing Strategy and Home Repairs Assistance Policy were approved by Cabinet last year. Work has now commenced to deliver on the key policies of that strategy as outlined within the action plan and working with partners to target assistance to those in the greatest need.
21. A Well Homes Initiative is being developed to improve housing conditions and

the health and well-being of residents living in private properties. Vulnerable groups and poor housing are to be targeted for help using stock profiling data.

22. The council are now in complete control of the DFG process since the previous arrangements with The Papworth Trust Home Improvement Agency ended in April 2017. Since bringing the services in house, processes have been streamlined which has already shown a significant improvement in response times.

23. We are developing a new civil penalty policy for Housing Act offences.