

COUNTY COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS – SIX MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE

To: **Communities and Partnership Committee**

Meeting Date: **23 January 2020**

From: **Sarah Ferguson, Assistant Director – Housing, Communities and Youth**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To provide Members with a progress report on the cross Council Officer Working Group's activity over the past six months.**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

- a) Note the Working Group's progress since July 2019;**
- b) Consider and agree a revised Key Outcome for Cambridgeshire County Council in relation to housing and homelessness: "To play our part in contributing to the system-wide change required to improve housing and reduce homelessness across our County in order to achieve better outcomes for citizens"; and**
- c) To support the ongoing activity of the Working Group and agree to receive an update in six months' time.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 4th July 2019, Members were presented with a detailed paper from the cross Council Officer Working Group on the Council's responsibilities and duties in identifying the current and future housing needs of the citizen groups we serve, the needs of our staff and whether our current activity is aligned to meet these needs.
- 1.2 The Working Group's activity in the last six months has focussed on the four priority areas which were endorsed by Members in July and this paper provides an update on each (see detail in section 2). These are:
- Supporting our most vulnerable citizens in preventing them from becoming homeless
 - Supporting our workforce, particularly our lower paid and / or essential staff, to enable them to support the communities they live and work in (note the wording has changed – see 2.2)
 - Influencing planning decisions, ensuring plans and strategies for new and existing communities maximise opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of residents
 - Adopting a commercially minded approach to trial new initiatives that will benefit our workforce and citizens alike (note the wording has changed – see 2.4)

The full Action Plan can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

- 1.3 Members also commented on the Key Outcome presented which has been revised (see section 3).
- 1.4 Our work in housing and reducing homelessness continues to be an important area for the Council to prioritise and invest in. Housing is a fundamental human right. The provision of housing which does not meet needs, or the lack of an appropriate affordable home for vulnerable people, can cause much greater demand on Council resources if not adequately addressed.
- 1.5 Although the Council is not the statutory Housing Authority, it does have key statutory duties and responsibilities, the execution of which impact on the housing economy and citizens for whom we have a duty of care. These citizens include: older people and vulnerable adults (with learning, physical or mental disabilities); older people with care needs; young adults with learning or mental health difficulties and those leaving care; vulnerable citizen groups who may be victims of domestic abuse, drug or alcohol dependant or offenders and ex-offenders. The Council also has a statutory duty through the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take steps to improve residents' health for which housing is an important determinant.
- 1.6 In addition, as of October 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act placed a new duty on public sector agencies to refer individuals or families who may be at risk of homelessness to local housing authorities.
- 1.7 It's recognised that homelessness prevention is integral to our work and it's acknowledged

that the majority of the statutory responsibilities sit elsewhere within the overall housing and homelessness system. However, the Council is tackling system-wide transformation through our partnerships primarily through the Cambridgeshire Public Service Board (CPSB) and the Housing Board (Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and West Suffolk).

2. PROGRESS ON THE PRIORITIES

2.1 Priority One: Supporting our most vulnerable citizens in preventing them from becoming homeless.

2.1.1 What has been achieved

A potential new model for Young People's services in Cambridge has been developed in collaboration with providers and other partners. Work has also started to look at different ways in which a different package of support could be provided to single homeless people, in particular those who are sleeping rough, which will lead to long term sustained tenancies.

Work on the Homelessness System Transformation (which was covered in the report to Committee in July) has started. This work was scoped in collaboration with partners through the Housing Board who had opportunities to input and shape the work needed to transform the housing and homelessness system.

A Needs Analysis of clients and potential clients across Cambridgeshire, as well as research into the wider context and opportunities which exist for system change, began in December 2019. This is a foundation stone for the delivery of the Housing Related Support (HRS) Commissioning Strategy which will be delivered by spring 2020. The development of the strategy will ensure that future commissioned services are provided in the right place to meet the identified need for the future, within the available resource.

Embedding a Think Communities approach within the housing and homelessness system will build resilience for individuals and communities – increasing the capacity of people to get the right support at the right time in order to prevent homelessness in the first instance. The Council, and our partners, have a shared vision and shared priorities in which housing and homelessness is a key focus.

2.1.2 Next stages

The Needs Analysis work is due to be completed by the end of January 2020. This will inform future potential operating models and opportunities for system-wide transformation and enable a clearer articulation of the Council's role within the system.

The work will also shine a light on the needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens across the County who are adversely impacted by homelessness. The needs analysis work will influence the use of future HRS funds to meet these needs better, with detailed proposals to be considered by future Adults and Children and Young People's Committees as appropriate.

2.2 Priority Two: Supporting our workforce to access affordable homes, particularly our lower paid but essential staff, to enable them to support the communities they live and work in.

2.2.1 What we have achieved

The wording of this priority has changed slightly following comments from Members in July, to ensure that the intentions are clearer about the inclusion of our lower paid workforce.

Desktop research has been undertaken of how other organisations have approached supporting their staff to access affordable homes. Many have opted to include the categories previously defined by government, but with caveats to allow flexibility to include other groups as well if needed. Most have also specified a particular income range as part of the eligibility for being considered a 'key worker'. The key criteria for organisations are:

- The employee must provide an essential service to the community
- There must be evidence of recruitment and retention difficulties in the service area
- Be on a low to moderate income that is insufficient to allow them to rent or buy a home on the open market

We have confirmed our interest with Homes England in providing key worker housing. There is the potential that key worker housing for staff employed in the public sector in areas of skill shortage such as social care and NHS would be eligible to apply for accommodation on strategic development sites. The Council has recruitment challenges in key skills areas, such as experienced social workers and professionals in planning, transport planning and highways areas. All strategies need to be considered to facilitate the recruitment and retention of these staff.

2.2.2 Next stages

A draft definition will be tested out with services within the People & Communities and Place & Economy directorates. This will enable the Council to clarify which workers this would apply to and how it can support them.

Once a definition has been agreed, it will be possible to estimate accurate numbers of workers to apply to growth sites around our region, taking into account the variants across our county.

2.3 **Priority Three:** Influencing planning decisions, ensuring plans and strategies for new and existing communities maximise opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

2.3.1 What we have achieved

The Council has a key role in influencing section 106 funding for new developments and works closely with developers and partners such as Homes England and our planning colleagues within the Districts. For example, as a landowner at Northstowe, our Strategic Assets team is working with Homes England on Phase 3B looking for opportunities for new ways of delivering older people and specialist housing, and is exploring the allocation of key worker housing focused on the health and social care workforce.

The Council has a key role in influencing planning policy as well as the planning applications for the strategic sites. It works closely with developers and partners such as Homes England and our planning colleagues within the Districts. It has been involved in the Healthy New

Towns Programme and the resulting guidance developed by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) “Putting Health Into Place¹” which documents core principles to design and deliver healthy places to live. These principles have been adopted in sites like Northstowe, Alconbury Weald and Waterbeach.

The Draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Strategy recognises the important contribution “having a home” makes to a person’s health and wellbeing. The Strategy proposes outcomes on new housing which supports resident’s health and preventing homelessness and improving pathways into housing for vulnerable people. The draft Strategy will be available for consultation in January.

2.3.2 Next stages

We are exploring how the healthy new town principles can be applied to all developments across Cambridgeshire and we are exploring opportunities for key worker housing in other major growth sites.

The Council will continue to work with the relevant partners to deliver healthy new communities in keeping with the “putting Health into place” and Think Communities principles. This will include refining the housing requirements for the strategic sites across Cambridgeshire, which includes older peoples accommodation, specialist housing and affordable key worker housing – utilising Northstowe Phase 3 A&B as a pilot.

2.4 **Priority Four:** Adopting a creative and commercial approach to trial new initiatives that will benefit our workforce and citizens alike.

2.4.1 What we have achieved

The wording of this priority has changed slightly following comments from Members in July and takes into consideration that creative opportunities should also be looked at, not just commercial opportunities.

This workstream is reliant upon the results of the completion of the Needs Analysis (see 2.1.1) as these results will inform and shape creative and commercial opportunities.

2.4.2 Next stages

Opportunities will be identified following the outcome of the Needs Analysis. This will lead to piloting commercial/creative ideas which will be underpinned by the Think Communities concept with the ultimate aim of easing pressure on our most vulnerable citizen groups. It is anticipated this will result in a number of new business cases for 2021/22. In addition, the recent formation of a new Commercial Team within the Business Improvement Directorate will provide specialist commercial expertise and knowledge.

3. **KEY OUTCOME**

3.1 The recommended Key Outcome presented to Members in July 2019 for the Council to adopt was: ‘To play our part in contributing to the wider housing system in order to achieve

¹ Documents available from <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/innovation/healthy-new-towns/>

better outcomes for Cambridgeshire citizens.'

- 3.2 After the comments from Members and reflection by the Working Group, we are recommending that Members approve our revised Key Outcome:

'To play our part in contributing to the system-wide change required to improve housing and reduce homelessness across our County in order to achieve better outcomes for citizens.'

- 3.3 This key outcome better reflects the system wide change required by all partners in the housing system to tackle homelessness which will ultimately result in better outcomes for Cambridgeshire's residents.
- 3.4 It also more accurately represents the need to get 'up stream' within the system in terms of tackling demand management into Council services which impacts on outcomes and ultimately expenditure for Cambridgeshire County Council. Acting preventatively with partners is an essential step and presents opportunities for public sector reform across the system.

4. A JOINED UP APPROACH

- 4.1 In July Members commented that a clear diagram of how the Council connected and interacted with all its different partners on homelessness and not just on housing would be helpful. This is included as **Appendix 2**.

5. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 A good quality of life for everyone

- Housing is a fundamental human right – to have a safe place to live. The Council also has a statutory duty through the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take steps to improve residents' health for which housing.
- Improving social and economic equality so that life expectancy, opportunity and social mobility are not determined by wealth or background.
- Using our public assets wisely and raising money in a fair and business-like way to generate social return for all citizens of Cambridgeshire.

5.2 Thriving places for people to live

- Working with District and Parish Councils, Public Sector Partners and other community organisations to provide local services which build supportive, resilient communities and great places to live.
- We want to ensure our citizens feel safe, healthy and connected to their community; that our places are integrated and possess a sense of place which supports its residents; and a system wide approach to better deliver services and community-led activity.

5.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

- Joining services across health, education and social care to address social inequalities in our most deprived communities.
- The Council has a duty as corporate parents to support our young people into sustainable accommodation.

6. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Resource Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Expertise has been, and will continue to be, sought from support services (such as HR, Legal) as appropriate.
- It's recognised that partnership working is fundamental to delivery.

6.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Any commercial opportunities would need to adhere to current procurement and contractual regulations as per existing policies.

6.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The report above sets out details of significant implications upon the Council's statutory duties in 1.5 and 1.6.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- There are no significant implications within this category – as anyone can be affected by housing related issues, however we are focussing our efforts on 'those in need'.

6.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Detailed engagement will be planned and implemented across the Council, with partners and clients impacted by the review if the recommendations are agreed by Members.

6.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- There is a strong interface with District Councils and Members.

6.7 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Working with partners to secure sustainable good quality homes which meet the needs of our citizens is an essential building block to supporting their health and wellbeing and to reduce health inequalities.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade
Have the procurement/contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Name of Officer: Matthew Hall
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Iain Green

SOURCE DOCUMENTS GUIDANCE

Source Documents	Location
None	N/A

Appendix 1: Action Plan

Action Plan						Progress (on / off track)
Priority	Recommendations	Complimentary activities	CCC resources	Partners	Timeframe	
Supporting our most vulnerable citizens in preventing them from becoming homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to fund initiatives through the redesigned Housing Related Support (HRS) model Undertake a comprehensive Needs Analysis, using HRS as a framework, to understand our clients' needs that will capture relevant and current data that will inform decisions around service delivery now, and in the future 	Housing First, HRS Commissioning activity, Adults Positive Challenge Programme	Commissioning Team	Districts CPSB Housing Board	Continuing through this financial year and into 20/21	On
			Commissioning Team	HRS providers	Start in September 2019 with the analysis completed by January 2020	On
Supporting our workforce to access affordable homes, particularly our lower paid but essential staff, to enable them to support the communities they live and work in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm our interest with the developers of Northstowe to their offer of including units for low paid workers in their design, and explore the opportunities to deliver similar housing schemes in other major growth sites in Cambridgeshire Work with other public sector partners to ensure a joined up approach to similar schemes across the local system to 	Cambs 2020, Neighbourhood Cares Model, People Strategy	Growth & Development, Strengthening Communities	Developers	Confirm our interest as soon as possible; work will continue through this financial year and into 20/21	On
			HR with support from Services	Districts CPSB Housing Board	New policies in place by Spring 2020	On

	<p>maximise scarce availability of such housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formally define how we support our lower paid but essential staff Put in place supporting measures for new and existing staff to find a home Investigate where we have 'hot spots' of recruitment issues by analysing where our staff live and how they travel to work Review our recruitment / retention policies to ensure we are supporting our workforce 					
Influencing planning decisions, ensuring plans and strategies for new and existing communities maximise opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to build on the existing relationships with developers (and where they don't already exist we will forge new partnerships) to ensure that housing, land use planning and development strategies for new and existing communities maximise the opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of residents 	Supporting New Communities Strategy, Planning Obligations Strategy, Ageing Well, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy	Growth & Development, Strengthening Communities, Public Health	Districts Combined Authority Developers	Continuing through this financial year and into 20/21 and very likely beyond	On
Adopting a creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once a comprehensive 	Think Communities	Property,		Will begin once	On

and commercial approach to trial new initiatives that will benefit our workforce and citizens alike.	Needs Analysis has been undertaken for our citizens (as recommended above) opportunities will then be identified as to piloting commercial ideas which will be underpinned by the Think Communities concept with the ultimate aim of easing pressure on our most vulnerable citizen groups		Finance, HR, Legal et al (depending on the solution), Transformation Team		the Needs Analysis work completed (February 2020) Present business cases to Committees Spring 2020	On
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Appendix 2 – Diagram Illustrating the Council’s Strategic Alliances for Homelessness and/or Housing

