

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

22 MARCH 2016

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY 2015 – 2021

Report of ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

Cabinet (Housing) Committee : Report CAB2768(HSG) 3 February 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report is the follow on report to CAB2768(HSG), in respect of which the Committee resolved as follows:

1. That the proposals within CAB2768 (HSG) were agreed for inclusion in the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.
2. Reference should be made in the Strategy to the work Private Sector Housing undertakes in respect of mobile home park sites

Following these resolutions, this report includes a draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy for consideration and approval by Members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-21 attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, including Priorities 1-8 within the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-21, as being the fundamental areas of work to be undertaken by Housing Services in respect of the private sector housing function in the Winchester district.

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22 MARCH 2016

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY 2015 -2021

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER)

DETAIL:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Winchester City Council does not have a current and up to date Private Sector Renewal Strategy which was identified in CAB2768 (HSG) brought to Cabinet (Housing) Committee on 3 February 2016.
- 1.3 The Council approved the last Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy in September 2009.
- 1.4 The aim of this report is to seek adoption of the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021.
- 1.5 This paper should be considered within the context of the overarching Winchester Housing Strategy 2013/14 – 2018/19.
- 1.6 The Winchester Housing Strategy priorities are as listed below:
 - a) To maximise the supply of high quality affordable housing in urban and rural areas
 - b) To improve the housing circumstances of vulnerable and excluded households
 - c) Supporting local people accessing high quality and affordable housing which meet their needs
- 2 The Private Sector Strategy
 - 2.1 The Strategy discusses the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey which has helped to identify the composition and condition of private sector accommodation in the District and identify those areas where resources should be directed.
 - 2.2 The 2016- 21 Private Sector Renewal Strategy replaces the former Strategy and is a slimmer and more focused document and targets the key areas for private sector housing intervention for the next five years.

3 Priorities for the Private Sector Strategy

3.1 The priorities are:

- a) Priority 1 – Increasing access to the private rented sector through the City Lets scheme. - City Lets was developed by the Council to help people who are in housing need, to find accommodation in the private rented sector. It offers tenants and landlords a range of support services in order to try and create lasting and sustainable tenancies.
- b) Priority 2 – Bring Empty Homes back into use - Report CAB2675(HSG) also submitted for Members' consideration elsewhere on the agenda gives Members a broader insight into the options which the Council will consider to reduce the number of long term empty properties.
- c) Priority 3 – Make best use of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) funding - The Council is responsible for the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) under our legislative duties. The PSH team is responsible for overseeing a budget in 2015/16 of £500k to provide and administer financial assistance in respect of DFG grants. These can include grants for kitchen and bathroom adaptations, stair lifts and specialist hoists for both owner occupiers and / or private / social housing tenants who are disabled or elderly. DFG grants help to prevent homelessness by enabling people to remain living independently in their own homes and who without a grant, might have ended up in a care or nursing home.
- d) Priority 4 – the promotion of energy efficiency and fuel poverty schemes - The PSH team is responsible for the statutory responsibilities imposed by the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995. This requires the Council to actively promote energy saving initiatives to help reduce domestic fuel consumption by improving energy efficiency and a decrease in CO2 emissions and thus in turn reduce fuel poverty. The latest Private Sector House Condition Survey has identified that Winchester levels of energy efficiency have improved significantly since 2007, as evidenced by an increase in average SAP ratings from 56 to 64.
- e) Priority 5 – Preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies through enforcement powers - The Housing Act 2004 (the Act) places a duty on the City Council to “consider the housing conditions in their district with a view to determining what action to take under their powers to deal with hazards identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) or provide financial assistance for home repair and improvement”.

The Act also places a duty upon the Council to deal with ‘Category 1’ hazards identified by the HHSRS by the most appropriate means and a discretionary power to deal with ‘Category 2’ hazards.

The enforcement options available to deal with domestic dwellings are:

- to serve an improvement notice;
- make a prohibition order;
- serve a hazard awareness notice;
- take emergency remedial action;
- make a demolition order; or
- declare a clearance area.

Enforcement action will not normally be the first response to minor contraventions of legislation. The level of PSH enforcement action although low, is similar to other Hampshire local authorities and reflects the generally good condition of the PRS stock as identified in the 2015 survey report.

- f) Priority 6 –Licensing and accreditation of Houses in Multiple Occupation - The PSH team is responsible for undertaking the statutory requirement of the Housing Act 2004 to licence larger houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) of three storeys or more and occupied by five or more tenants. PSH also operates a voluntary Accreditation Scheme for shared HMOs and student rented accommodation. During 2015 55 properties were accredited and 23 properties were licensed providing safe and decent homes.
- g) Priority 7 – Reducing the numbers of non-decent homes - The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2014 identifies that housing conditions locally with regard to the Decent Homes Standard are better than the national average and that category 1 hazards (serious safety hazard) are also better than the national average with thermal comfort (heating and insulation) and amenity performance (lacking modern facilities) in line with the national average. It should be noted however that although numbers are low Costs to achieve Decent Homes within the private-housing sector are estimated at £52.354M averaging £7,672 per non-Decent home.
- h) Priority 8 - Mobile Home Parks and Caravan Sites - The Council has a duty under The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 to license all mobile home parks and caravan sites in its district. Within the Winchester District, there are 13 mobile home park sites and it is the responsibility of the Council to monitor and enforce the site licence conditions to ensure the maintenance of health and safety provisions on licensed sites. The Mobile Homes Act 2013 additionally introduced new powers for the Council which included the ability for a Local Authority to charge site owners a fee for applying for a site licence; for transfers of an existing licence; for varying site licence conditions and for depositing site rules. An annual fee for holding a site licence can also be charged which the Council does now apply following publication in 2015 of a Fees Policy in respect of the licensing of park home sites.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

4.1 The Community Strategy Active Communities outcome contains a commitment to 'support local people in accessing high quality and affordable housing which meets their needs'. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy will contribute to the Council achieving this aim.

4.2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

4.3 The intention is to prioritise existing staff time and resources to produce the new strategy and deliver the action plan in partnership with the wider housing teams and stakeholders.

4.4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.5 New legislation in the form of the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 which is still going through Parliament is due to be implemented in 2016 and which may impact on staff resources and on the delivery of the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy.

4.6 The Strategy is still subject to equality impact assessment.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016 - 2021



Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

2016 – 2021

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1 Introduction

Private Sector Housing (that is, owner-occupied and privately rented housing) sits within Housing Services and has a vital role to play in the Council's wider strategic housing activity. It is accepted that there is a direct relationship between the environment and our health and housing is a fundamental necessity. Housing is expected to meet the needs and aspirations of a wide spectrum of different households. What provides a safe and healthy environment for one household may be inappropriate for another. It should be a general principle that housing should provide an environment which is as safe and healthy as possible.

This strategy sits beneath the Council's overarching Housing Strategy 2013/14 to 2018/19 and expands upon it in relation to private sector housing and is designed to deliver the private sector housing element of that strategy.

Winchester City Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy aims to make a difference to local households by:

- Increasing access to the private rented sector through the Council's City Lets scheme
- Bringing empty properties back into use
- Making the best use of disabled facilities grants
- Promoting energy efficiency and fuel poverty schemes
- Preventing homelessness and sustain tenancies through enforcement powers
- Licensing and accreditation of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- Reducing the number of non decent homes

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 provided local authorities with the ability to offer grants (more appropriately termed, "assistance") to improve housing conditions. The Order repealed all of the previous legislation relating to grants and gave Councils the freedom and a wider power to choose how and if they so wish to provide assistance and for what. To exercise this power, a Council must prepare and publish a Private Sector Renewal Strategy. The Council however recognises that the prime responsibility for maintaining properties lies with the owners, and in recent years has stopped offering any form of discretionary grant to assist homeowners or landlords with works of repair or improvement. However, should new grant funds or other funding opportunities be secured by the Council for the delivery of housing related assistance during the period of the strategy, the assistance criteria and means of delivery can be approved using delegated powers held by the Portfolio Holder for

Housing and the Assistant Director (Chief Housing Officer). The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) currently remains the only mandatory grant specifically set out by the Government within housing legislation and offered by Private Sector Housing (PSH).

2 Background

Local authorities have always had a role in improving the condition of the private housing stock. Since 1949 central government has encouraged and sometimes required local authorities to give grants for repairs and improvement. The details of these grants were laid down in statute by central government. Private sector housing has a vital role to play in the wider strategic housing activity. The Council has various duties and powers with regards to housing, in which private sector housing plays a key part, such as:

- assessing the quality, condition and quality of the management of the housing stock in the private sector;
- tackling poor housing conditions;
- developing measures to bring empty properties back into use;
- helping to drive up standards of property management in the private rented sector;
- helping to improve homes through grant assistance in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- preventing and reducing homelessness
- improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions from housing;
- administering and enforcing mandatory HMO (house in multiple occupation) licensing

We cannot deliver the aims of this strategy alone and it will only be achieved with the assistance of partners who range from other Councils within Hampshire, local landlords, the University of Winchester, Hampshire County Council, Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC), the Environment Centre (tEC) Southampton and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service.

3 The Owner – Occupied Sector

Home ownership is overwhelmingly the preferred tenure in the UK and most people who own their homes, particularly in the Winchester district are reasonably comfortable and well housed. Although successive Governments have provided incentives for people to become home owners, they have been less active in ensuring that home ownership is sustainable. For many years, money has been made available to low income home owners and landlords for various types of improvement works. However, due

the financial crisis in 2008/9 and the desire of the Government to address the deficit, plus the belief that home owners should be responsible for the upkeep of their homes, in March 2011 the Government ended funding for private sector renewal work.

4 The Private Rented Sector

The nature of the private rented sector (PRS) at local level and the way it operates (as a sector and as individual properties) can have a significant impact on households, communities, and service providers. The PRS makes up 21.5% of the housing stock in the Winchester District and helps meet a range of housing needs that are quite distinct from owner occupation and social renting, making it a vital part of the housing market. As access to owner occupation and social renting has become progressively more difficult in recent years, the role of the private rented sector in providing accommodation to many households has become widely recognised and valued. In particular, it has been seen as a major contributor to the resolution of homelessness and is indeed being utilised by the Council through its City Lets scheme to this end.

5 The Condition of Housing in Winchester

In order to maintain a detailed and up to date understanding of the private sector housing stock in Winchester and to meet its obligations under the Housing Act 2004 to keep housing conditions under review, the Council appointed David Adamson and Partners to undertake a Private Sector House Condition Survey in 2014. The survey did not include social housing owned by Housing Associations in the City, or Council owned housing stock.

6 Household occupancy and Tenure

The survey established that across the private sector housing stock there are:

- 41,458 dwellings containing 40,800 households and a household population of 90,479 persons
- Within the private sector housing stock 38,424 dwellings (92.7%) were occupied at time of survey
- 3,034 dwellings (7.3%) were vacant
- Within the occupied housing stock 37,711 dwellings (98.1%) were occupied by a single household
- the remaining 713 occupied dwellings (1.9%) were occupied by more than one household (HMO)

- Private-sector housing is dominated by the owner-occupied sector (29,531 dwellings -71.2%) but with a significant and increasing private-rented sector
- 8,893 dwellings were rented privately with rates of private rental in the City increasing from 14.1% in 2007 to 21.5% in 2014

Private sector households are predominantly small in size. 12,344 households (30.3%) are single person in size; an additional 16,482 households (40.4%) contain two persons. Average household size is estimated at 2.22 persons. Private sector households exhibit a broad demographic profile. 11,883 households (29.1%) are headed by a person aged 65 years and over; 8,200 households (20.0%) are headed by a person aged under 35 years. The City of Winchester contains a significant student population which inflates the number and proportion of households headed by an individual aged under 25 years. Approximately 713 dwellings were assessed to be in multiple occupation with the average number of households within these dwellings estimated at 4.3. These multiple occupied dwellings contain 3,090 individual households with over 90% being students.

7 Demographic and Social Characteristics

Demographic and social characteristics vary by tenure reflecting a younger, more mobile private-rented sector against an older owner-occupied sector. In 57.9% of private-rented households the head of household is aged under 35 years; 37.7% of owner occupied households have a head of household aged 65 years and over. Household type distributions reflect the demographic differences between tenures. 14.7% of private rented households are single person households aged under 60 years; 13.2% of owner-occupied households are single elderly in composition. The private-rented sector is also highly mobile – 39.5% of private rented households have been resident in their current dwelling under 1 year. In contrast, 48.4% of owner-occupiers have been resident in their current dwelling over 10 years.

23,018 heads of household (56.4%) are in full or part-time employment, 164 heads of household (0.4) are unemployed, 4,522 heads of household (11.1%) are students and 12,675 heads of household (31.1%) are economically retired.

8 Housing Age Distribution

Private sector housing in the City of Winchester is representative of all building eras but predominantly of post Second World War Construction. 10,998 dwellings (26.5%) were constructed pre-1945. Within this group, 6,525 dwellings (15.7%) were constructed pre-1919, 4,473 dwellings (10.8%) in the inter-war period (1919-1944). 30,641 dwellings (73.5%) were constructed post-1944.

Within this group, 12,968 dwellings (31.3%) are of post-1980 construction. Private sector housing stock in the City of Winchester is younger than the national average.

9 Decent Homes Standard

The survey found that 34,634 private sector dwellings (83.5%) meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and are in good condition. The remaining 6,824 dwellings (16.5%) fail the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and are Non-Decent. Within the Decent Homes Standard itself the following pattern of failure emerges:

- 2,108 dwellings (5.1%) exhibit Category 1 hazards within the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- 4,546 dwellings (11.0%) are in disrepair
- 63 dwellings (0.2%) lack modern facilities and services
- 2,506 dwellings (6.0%) fail to provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Housing conditions locally with regard to the Decent Homes Standard are better than the national average. Locally, 16.5% of private sector housing is non-Decent compared to 23.1% nationally

Costs to achieve Decent Homes within the private-housing sector are estimated at £52.354M averaging £7,672 per non-Decent home.

10 Fuel Poverty

In the survey report fuel poverty was measured according to the traditional 10% income measure and also under new Low Income/High Cost (LIMC) measures in England. Under the new LIHC approach 1,409 households in Winchester (3.5%) have low incomes and high fuel costs and are in fuel poverty. This figure rises to 3,157 households (7.7%) under the traditional 10% income measure. Levels of fuel poverty are below the national average for England (11%). Demographically, fuel poverty impacts most strongly on the elderly. However, overall in Winchester levels of energy efficiency have improved significantly since 2007 as evidenced by an increase in average SAP ratings from 56 to 64.

11 Illness and Mobility

The survey found that 5,644 households in Winchester (13.8%) indicated that at least one household member was affected by a long-term illness or disability. The most common complaints were related to mobility impairment/physical disability, heart/circulatory problems and respiratory illness. Of those households with an illness/disability 2,579 households (45.7%) stated that they had a mobility problem with their dwelling. Only 17% of households with a mobility problem live in an adapted dwelling. Long-term illness and disability place significant pressure on local Health Service resources. 81% of affected households have made health service contact in the past year with predominant contact at GP or hospital outpatient level.

12 Repairs and Improvements

The survey found that 4,494 owner-occupied households (15.2%) live in homes which are non-Decent with total outstanding expenditure on Decent Homes improvements of £33.361M. 868 households within this sector are economically vulnerable, 210 households while not economically vulnerable are elderly. Economic factors will influence the ability of owner-occupiers to improve their homes but other factors will also impact. 90% of owner-occupiers in non-Decent Homes are very satisfied with their current home, 72% have completed no major repairs/improvements in the last 5 years and 81% have no intentions of carrying out repairs/improvements within the next 5 years. 54% of owner-occupied households have no existing mortgage or financial commitments on their home. Equity levels within the owner-occupied sector are estimated at £11 billion. Among owner-occupied living in non-Decent Homes 15% stated they would re-mortgage for home improvements, 25% were interested in Council interest free loans.

The survey found that 8,893 private dwellings are in private-rental representing 21.5% of all private sector dwellings in the City. This sector has grown significantly since 2007 serving both student and buy-to-let markets. Within the private-rented sector 713 dwellings (8.0%) were in multiple occupation and predominantly occupied by single person student households in the Stanmore area. No significant differences in housing conditions were recorded between tenures or within the private-rented sector itself between dwellings in single or multiple occupation.

13 Household Attitudes to Housing and Local Areas

Housing satisfaction levels are good. 36,216 households (88.8%) are very satisfied with their current accommodation, 4,128 households (10.1%) are quite satisfied. Only, 456 households (1.1%) expressed direct dissatisfaction with their home. Household satisfaction with their local areas is also high. 37,321 households (91.5%) are very satisfied with where they live; 3,315 households (8.1%) are quite satisfied. 165 households are dissatisfied with the area in which they live (0.4%). The majority of households (37,831 households – 92.7%) regard their local area as largely unchanging over the last 5 years; 597 households (1.5%) perceive their area as improving while 2,372 households (5.8%) perceive a decline in their local area.

14 Owner-Occupiers in Non Decent Homes

4,494 owner-occupied households (15.2%) live in homes which are non-Decent with total outstanding expenditure on Decent Homes improvements of £33.361M. 868 households within this sector are economically vulnerable, 210 households while not economically vulnerable are elderly. Economic factors will influence the ability of owner-occupiers to improve their homes but other factors will also impact. 90% of owner-occupiers in non-Decent Homes are very satisfied with their current home, 72% have completed no major repairs/improvements in the last 5 years and 81% have no intentions of carrying out repairs/improvements within the next 5 years. 54% of owner-occupied households have no existing mortgage or financial commitments on their home. Equity levels within the owner-occupied sector are estimated at £11 billion. Among owner-occupied households living in non-Decent Homes 15% stated they would re-mortgage for home improvements.

15 The Private Rented Sector and Houses in Multiple Occupation

8,893 private dwellings are in private-rental representing 21.5% of all private sector dwellings in the City. This sector has grown significantly since 2007 serving both student and buy-to-let markets. Within the private-rented sector 713 dwellings (8.0%) were in multiple occupation and predominantly occupied by single person student households in the Stanmore area. No significant differences in housing conditions were recorded between tenures or within the private-rented sector itself between dwellings in single or multiple occupation. All HMO's identified were located in Parish Group 8 and are typically represented by inter-war and early post-war semi-detached and terraced housing. All HMO's surveyed were shared houses with the majority located over 2 occupied storeys. From a total of 713 HMO's only 54 dwellings were assessed as licensable under the Housing Act 2004. Repair

conditions and amenity sharing ratios within HMO's were assessed as satisfactory. Fire detection and means of escape from fire were however assessed as poor. Only 97 dwellings (13.6%) offer fully working AFD, fire doors were not present in 519 dwellings (72.7%). Overall, 97 HMO's (13.6%) were assessed as fit for multiple occupation. The remaining 616 dwellings (86.4%) were unfit for multiple occupation on the basis of means of escape from fire and other fire precautions.

The attitudes of private-rented tenants in general towards their accommodation and the areas in which they live are positive and on a par with the views of owner-occupied households:

- 85.9% of private-rented tenants are very satisfied with their current accommodation compared to 89.9% of owner-occupiers. While a slightly higher proportion of private-rented tenants expressed direct dissatisfaction with their accommodation this remains low at 2.4%
- 90.2% of private-rented tenants are very satisfied with the area in which they live compared to 91.9% of owner-occupiers

16 Implementing the Strategy (how we will get there)

Our action plan, which is outlined later in this document, sets out what we will do to implement the Strategy based around the delivery of the following priority areas.

The Council has identified eight Strategy Priority Areas that will be focused on, as follows:

17 Strategy Priorities

Priority 1

Increasing access to the private rented sector through the City Lets scheme

The City Lets scheme is a new initiative aimed at helping people who are in housing need to find accommodation in the private rented sector. In some circumstances, tenants may be on a low wage or receiving top-up benefits and the Council can offer both

tenants and landlords a range of support services in order to try and create long term and sustainable tenancies for the benefit of all. The scheme offers landlords a bond guarantee and encourages them through a number of incentives to let their properties at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate, rather than at the market rate.

We will actively promote and engage with as many landlords as possible to attract them to sign up to City Lets in order to expand the pool of properties available that the Council has to offer customers approaching the Housing Options service.

Priority 2

Bring Empty Homes back into use

The Council's Empty Property Strategy 2016 provides a detailed summary of the Council's approach to empty properties within the district. Reducing the number of empty properties within the district is an important part of improving the quantity and quality of property available to people.

We will actively identify the number of long term empty properties, provide advice and information to homeowners, develop the empty property register and reduce the number of long term empty properties.

Priority 3

Make best use of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) funding

The Council must provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) under the provisions of Section 23 of the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, when it has been assessed (usually by an Occupational Therapist through Occupational Therapy Direct) that the works entailed will meet the needs of a registered, or registerable disabled person. The DFG remains the only mandatory grant specifically set out by the Government within housing legislation and assistance can be provided towards:

- Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, from and within the property

- Making the property safe for the disabled occupant
- Providing suitable and accessible living, sleeping, bathing and cooking facilities
- Providing suitable heating
- Altering as required the heating, lighting and electrical systems/fittings.

The stock condition survey identified that 5,644 (13.8%) of households in Winchester indicated that at least one household member was affected by a long-term illness or disability. Of those households with an illness / disability 2,579 households (45.7%) stated that they had a mobility issue with their home. Only 17% of those households with a mobility issue live in an adapted home.

In 2015/16 the PSH team was responsible for overseeing a budget in excess of £500k to provide and administer financial assistance in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants. These can include grants for kitchen and bathroom adaptations, stair lifts and specialist hoists for both owner occupiers and / or private / social housing tenants who are disabled or elderly. DFG grants help to prevent homelessness by enabling people to remain living independently in their own homes and who without a grant, might have ended up in a care or nursing home.

We will ensure that we maximise the use of DFG funding in order to provide assistance to the largest number of people as possible who are referred by Occupational Therapy Direct.

Priority 4

The promotion of energy efficiency and fuel poverty schemes

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 aims to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings across the country. If dwellings are adequately insulated and have more efficient heating systems installed, such as modern gas boilers, the amount of fuel used to heat a home and produce hot water can be reduced. HECA requires the Council to actively promote energy saving initiatives to help reduce domestic fuel consumption by improving energy efficiency and a decrease in CO2 emissions and thus in turn reduce fuel poverty. The 2014 Private Sector House Condition Survey identified that Winchester levels of energy efficiency have improved significantly since 2007, as evidenced by an increase in average SAP ratings from 56 to 64.

We will continue to work in partnership with external agencies to explore and promote energy efficiency initiatives that the government or energy providers might launch, in order to assist home owners, landlords and tenants access good quality impartial advice and possible finance to undertake energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

Priority 5

Preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies through enforcement powers

The Housing Act 2004 places a duty on the City Council to “consider the housing conditions in their district with a view to determining what action to take under their powers to deal with hazards identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) or provide financial assistance for home repair and improvement”.

The Act also places a duty upon the Council to deal with ‘Category 1’ hazards identified by the HHSRS by the most appropriate means and a discretionary power to deal with ‘Category 2’ hazards.

The enforcement options available to deal with domestic dwellings are:

- to serve an improvement notice;
- make a prohibition order;
- serve a hazard awareness notice;
- take emergency remedial action;
- make a demolition order; or
- declare a clearance area.

Enforcement action will not normally be the first response to minor contraventions of legislation and Officers will, except where statute requires otherwise or there is an imminent risk to health and safety, attempt to informally resolve all problems.

We will seek to engage with landlords and when poor quality housing is identified seek to improve it through education, mediation, negotiation and raising awareness.

Priority 6

Licensing and accreditation of Houses in Multiple Occupation

Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) provide a valuable housing resource, in particular within the main Winchester town area and are the primary type of accommodation lived in by students once they have moved on from university halls of accommodation. Private Sector Housing is responsible for undertaking the statutory requirement of the Housing Act 2004 to licence larger HMOs of three storeys or more and occupied by five or more tenants. Under the Act a HMO is generally defined as a building or flat where the basic facilities are shared, such as the kitchen, bathroom or toilet, by persons who do not live together as a related group. PSH also operates a voluntary Accreditation Scheme for shared HMOs and student rented accommodation. During twenty fifteen 55 properties were accredited and 23 properties were licensed providing safe and decent homes.

We will continue to respond to requests for properties to be accredited or mandatory licensed to meet the required standards thus ensuring a continuing supply of good quality shared accommodation. We will continue to work closely with the University of Winchester and the agreed accord that no student HMO accommodation is added to their accommodation list unless it is inspected and meets the agreed accreditation standard.

Priority 7

Reducing the numbers of non-decent homes

The Decent Homes Standard has four criteria which are:

- i. It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing (i.e. the dwelling should be free of category 1 hazards under the HHSRS);

- ii. It is in a reasonable state of repair;
- iii. It has reasonably modern facilities and services;
- iv. It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Private Sector House Condition Survey identified that housing conditions locally with regard to the Decent Homes Standard are better than the national average. Rates of non –Decency have fallen from 22.1% in 2007 to 16.5% in 2014. Local conditions with regard to category 1 hazards (serious safety hazard) are also better than the national average with thermal comfort (heating and insulation) and amenity performance (lacking modern facilities) in line with the national average.

It should be noted that although numbers are low Costs to achieve Decent Homes within the private-housing sector are estimated at £52.354M averaging £7,672 per non-Decent home.

We will endeavour to work with private sector landlords to encourage them to instigate improvements where required to ensure properties achieve the Decent Homes Standard.

Monitoring and Review

Priority 8

Mobile Home Parks and Caravan Sites

The Council has a duty under The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 to license all mobile home parks and caravan sites in its district. Within the Winchester district there are 13 mobile home park sites and it is the responsibility of the Council to monitor and enforce the site licence conditions to ensure the maintenance of health and safety provisions on licensed sites. The Mobile Homes Act 2013 additionally introduced new powers for the Council which included the ability for a Local Authority to charge site owners a fee for applying for a site licence; for transfers of an existing licence; for varying site licence conditions and for depositing site rules. An annual fee for holding a site licence can also be charged which the Council does now apply following publication in 2015 of a Fees Policy in respect of the licensing of park home sites.

We will inspect all mobile home park sites on an annual basis to ensure compliance with site licence conditions

18 monitoring and review

This strategy is operational for five years from 1st April 2016 to 2021, but will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure it remains responsive to local and national issues, changes in legislation / guidance and operational requirements.

19 Equality Impact Assessment

The Strategy is still subject to an equality impact assessment.

20 Action Plan

| Action No. | When will we do it by | Who will monitor and deliver this? | Resources Needed | Task/Steps | Target/Outcome | Progress to date |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| Priority 1: Increase access to the private rented sector through the City Lets scheme | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|---|--|---|--|
| 1.1 | September 2016 | PSH & HO teams | Staff time and promotional budget | Actively promote City Lets to potential landlords to increase the number of City Lets properties available through the scheme | A good supply of suitable and affordable private sector accommodation available for our customers and a reduction in homelessness | |
| 1.2 | September 2016 | PSH & HO teams | Staff time | Engagement with landlords to provide advice and assistance to encourage letting their properties through City Lets | Ensure a continued good supply of accommodation is available, reduction in empty properties and homelessness | |
| 1.3 | April 2017 | PSH & HO team/ Policy development Officer | Staff time & homelessness prevention budget | Ongoing monitoring of outcomes to make improvements and adjustments, where necessary to adjust to any changes in budget, profile of customers and impacts of welfare reform. | City Lets scheme is operating effectively to, reduce homelessness and reduce empty properties and provide suitable and affordable accommodation | |
| Priority 2: Bring empty properties back into use | | | | | | |

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| 2.1 | April 2016 | PSH team | Staff time & external funding sources | Develop a separate strategy and action plan for the Council's approach to dealing with empty properties | Identify empty properties and work towards a reduction in number of empty properties in the District | |
| Priority 3: Make the best use of disabled facilities grants | | | | | | |
| 3.1 | September 2017 | DFG lead officer/Policy Development Officer | Staff time | Undertake a comprehensive review of the delivery of DFG's including procedure, process and recording systems to take into account best practice | Provide a more cost effective, responsive and seamless DFG service | |
| 3.2 | April 2018 | Head of Housing Options/DFG lead officer | Staff time | As part of review process consider using a schedule of rates for contractors in place of current 2 quote system | More cost effective and efficient service for our customers | |
| 3.3 | 2016/17 | Head of Housing Options | Staff time | Consider all options for utilising additional DFG funding received 2016/17 and consider options for future funding adjustments. | Full DFG provision utilised, increased number of adaptations and prevention of homelessness | |

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| 3.4 | 2016 - 2017 | PSH team | Staff time & promotional costs | Advertise and promote DFGs in response to additional funding received 2016/17 | DFG funding utilised effectively | |
| Priority 4: Promote energy efficiency and fuel poverty schemes | | | | | | |
| 4.1 | 2016 - 2021 | PSH team | Staff time & promotional costs | Work in partnership with external agencies i.e. HCC / Win ACC / tEC to explore and promote energy efficiency initiatives to households in the district | Reduction in numbers of households considered to be in fuel poverty in our district | |
| 4.2 | 2016 – 2021 | PSH team | Staff time | Maximise any funding opportunities available to engage with the scheme or to promote the scheme | Increased take up of schemes providing more energy efficient homes | |
| Priority 5: Prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies through enforcement powers | | | | | | |
| 5.1 | September 2018 | Housing Options Service | Staff time and budget for promotion and other event costs | Develop a fully inclusive landlords forum and consider all other available opportunities to engage with landlords | Improving communications with landlords and increasing the quality & supply of PRS available to our customers | |

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| 5.2 | April 2018 | PSH & HO team | Staff time & promotional costs | Promote the services to both landlords and tenants. Raise awareness through the website of advice and assistance on landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, mediation and negotiation in partnership with the housing options team. | Preventing homelessness, improving relations between landlords and tenants. | |
| 5.3 | April 2017 | PSH team/Policy development officer | Staff time | Ensure appropriate enforcement policies and procedures are in place and are regularly monitored and updated. | Using enforcement powers in a targeted and effective way to ensure good quality accommodation | |
| Priority 6: Licence and accredit houses in multiple occupation | | | | | | |
| 6.1 | 2016 – 2021 | PSH team leader/Housing technician | Staff time | Respond to requests for properties to be accredited or mandatory licensed | Ensuring a continued good supply of private sector housing in the District | |

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| 6.2 | September 2018 | PSH team leader/Housing technician | Staff time | Maintain and improve the work alongside the University in relation to student HMOs and no HMO will be advertised by the University unless it has been inspected and meets the accreditation standard. | Providing safe and decent homes and providing a source of income. | |
| 6.3 | 2016 - 2021 | PSH team leader/Housing technician | Staff time | Maintain free accreditation for all properties let through City Lets scheme | Ongoing suitable accommodation available in the district | |
| Priority 7: Reduce the number of non decent homes | | | | | | |
| 7.1 | September 2018 | PSH team | Staff time & any additional funding streams available | Encourage landlords and homeowners to repair, improve and maintain their homes to meet the decent homes standard through information, advice and assistance. | Reduce the number of non decent dwellings | |
| 7.2 | 2016 – 2021 | Head of Housing Options & PSH team leader | Staff time | Consider any funding opportunities through central Government/Health or other which will enable the reduction of non decent homes | Reduce the number of non decent dwellings | |

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| 7.3 | April 2018 | PSH team | Staff time | Respond to housing condition complaints through HHSRS visits and an appropriate response; consider the promotion of this service. | Improved property conditions | |
| 7.4 | April 2017 | PSH team | Staff time | Continue the promotion of Homefix Hampshire (handy person scheme) | Encourage vulnerable households to maintain their properties | |
| Priority 8: Mobile Home Parks and Caravan Sites | | | | | | |
| 8.1 | September 2018 | PSH team | Staff time & training budget | Review mobile home park licences to bring licences in line with 2008 model standards | Ensuring enforcement of licence standards | |
| 8.2 | 2016 - 2021 | PSH team | Staff time | Carry out an inspection of each mobile home park annually | Maintain standards across all mobile home parks | |