

REPORT TITLE: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY

6 OCTOBER 2022

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Councillor Ferguson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community and Housing

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

To consider and comment on the direction and priorities of an early draft of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2022-2027.

The draft strategy has one variation from the existing strategy to charge fees for formal notices served under various legislation.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy supports the council's broader strategic housing aims:

- 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

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Policy Committee review and provide comment on the direction and priorities of an early draft of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2022-27.
2. That Members support the council exploring the possibility of implementing a private sector housing 'Grant Assistance Fund' targeted at providing financial assistance through grants or loans to fund essential repairs for owners and landlords who qualify under agreed criteria.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

- 2.1 The improvement of poor condition privately owned or rented property is a key priority for the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. Properties left in poor condition can have a harmful effect on the health, safety and well-being of its occupants and the local community and environment.
- 2.2 The council is required to review the condition of its private sector housing stock and establish the most appropriate course of action to bring properties up to a satisfactory standard. The council has a wide range of powers and practical options to assist through support and guidance up to enforcement powers by doing the work and recovering the costs, when owners or landlords fail to carry out their responsibilities. The council's preferred approach has been to encourage and support owners and landlords to undertake the work needed to improve the quality of its private housing stock.

Background

- 2.3 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 provided local authorities with the ability to offer grants to improve housing conditions. The Order repealed all of the previous legislation relating to grants and gave councils wider powers to choose how they provide assistance and for what. To exercise this power, a council must prepare and publish a Private Sector Renewal Strategy.
- 2.4 The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy is part of a family of strategies that underpin the council's overarching Housing Strategy.
- 2.5 The council approved the last Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy in 2016.
- 2.6 The Better Care Fund allocation methods changed in 2017 in that a proportion of the funding was diverted from the NHS to local housing authorities with the specific intention of local authorities to use the fund interventions in housing to reduce hospital admissions, enable prompter discharge from hospital, and delay the need for individuals to transfer to a care setting. Receipt of this funding from central government is combined with the existing Disabled Facilities Grant allocation, resulting in a substantial increase of grant funding from approximately £450k in 2016 to the current grant of £1.2m for 2022.
- 2.7 Mandatory HMO Licensing expanded in September 2018 to include all HMOs occupied by 5 or more people in 2 or more households, rather than only those of 3 storeys or more
- 2.8 The 'City Lets' Private Sector Housing scheme closed to new landlords in 2020, due to financial viability issues caused by large claims made on the council's Security Bond and due to landlords leaving the scheme.
- 2.9 Since 2016 there have been legislative changes that have provided additional enforcement tools within the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Electrical

Safety in the Private Rented Sector (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, changes to the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations (which come into force on 1st October 2022), the Mobile Homes (Requirement for the Manager of a Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020.

Priorities of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

- 2.10 Insecurity in the private rented sector is a growing problem and the cost of living crisis is likely to have a further impact with challenging rent increases and the potential of increased evictions. A recent recruitment of a Private Sector Housing Sustainment Officer will provide tenancy support, advice and discretionary financial assistance to help with household costs to prevent the threat of homelessness.
- 2.11 The broader aims of the strategy, which can be found in the tables at the end of the strategy document, have not significantly changed, but a strategy revision allows for the inclusion of new revenue streams, and for the provision of further targeted support to the private sector to improve private sector housing conditions generally.
- 2.12 The proposed strategy also suggests creating a stand-alone Fees Policy to cover all aspects of the service for which fees may be charged, in one live document. These are currently detailed in the various separate policies and an overview of each are detailed as below;

Fees for Notices (proposed): The Housing Act 2004 and other legislation under which the private sector housing team may take enforcement action against landlords or HMO or Caravan Site licence holders, allow for the charging of a fee for the service of notices. To date the council has not adopted this practice. The number of formal notices served each year by the council is small (10-15 in a typical year). The purpose of imposing a fee is twofold: first it recovers the council's reasonable costs in serving the notice and thereby reducing the council's expenditure and secondly the imposition of a charge encourages the offender to take the required action before a formal notice is deemed necessary, resulting in prompter resolutions of unhealthy housing conditions.

HMO Licensing and accreditation: There are currently 361 licenced HMOs within the district. Renewal fees (at current rates) for these over the 5 years of this Strategy document is $361 \times £776 = £280,136$. New licences attract a 5 year fee of £984. There are currently 100 accredited properties for which the 3 yearly renewal fee is £94, producing an income of approximately £15,000 over the period of this Strategy document. A new accreditation is charged at £138 for the 3 years.

- 2.13. Complaints Handling: From 2016 to September 2022 the service dealt with 567 private sector landlord complaints. Detailed in the table below are the complaints broken down by number and type;

Nature of Complaint	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022 to date
Boiler/Heating	1	4	2	6	4	8	3
Damp & Mould	25	17	12	27	20	21	8
Vermin / Garden	13	7	11	14	14	11	3
HHS	11	6	1	0	2	0	2
General Disrepair	20	11	17	15	12	6	5
Empty Homes	3	2	5	4	7	9	3
Other	6	15	30	34	32	20	10
Drainage/Sanitation					2	5	1
Energy Efficiency					0	1	0
Gas/Electric					4	13	3
Fire Safety					3	1	0
HMO Management					0	14	1
TOTAL	79	62	78	100	100	109	39

2.14. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG): Government grant allocated to the council by Hampshire County council as the administrating authority is available to pay for essential housing adaptations to help people, living with disabilities to remain living independently in their own home.

2.15. In the year 2021/22 the council approved 97 DFG applications with a total value of approximately £1.1m. Of these:

- 6 grants were approved under the mandatory part of the Disabled Facilities Grant and are means tested which means that some people may have to pay a contribution towards the grant.
- 86 grants were discretionary grants of under £15,000, awarded to applicants that would not have qualified for assistance under the mandatory part of the Disabled Facilities Grant. The discretionary element of the grant funding ensures housing need is met and reduces the need for residential care and hospitalisation.
- 5 grants are discretionary grants specifically targeted to prevent hospital admission or care breakdown.

- Comparable approvals in preceding years:

Financial Year	Case Numbers	Grant Allocated
2017/18	80	£580k
2018/19	73	£785k
2019/20	70	£1.34 m
2020/21	78	£888k

2.16. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy is a legal requirement to enable the council to determine how it spends financial assistance in the form of grants to assist people directly living in the private housing sector. The strategy is also about setting priorities to enable that housing renewal services are effective and appropriate. In addition to grants this will involve the council providing assistance via third parties and signposting to ensure it can support the council's ambitions to reduce carbon emissions within the private rented housing stock through joint initiatives as set out below.

2.17. LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership)

In autumn 2020 a partnership agreement was signed with Agility ECO to promote the LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership) initiative. This is a free of charge energy and money saving support service offered to fuel poor and vulnerable households. It is a nationally run programme with its associated infrastructure and training. The LEAP service is completely funded by energy suppliers under the Warm Home Discount Industry initiatives and is available to owner occupiers / private tenants and social tenants who meet certain eligibility criteria:

Since April 2021 LEAP figures for Winchester are:

- 17 referrals
- 10 in-depth energy advice calls
- home energy visits
- 2 in depth calls

LAD (Local Authority Delivery) Scheme (1a and 1b)

The council, as part of a partnership with Portsmouth City Council and other local authorities entered an agreement to promote the installation of energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures across the district under LAD 1a. This included fully funded Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Panels / solid wall Insulate on to owner occupiers and the installation of park home insulation for both external wall insulation and underfloor insulation. (LAD 1a came to an end on 31st August 2021).

The LAD 1b programme ran until the end of March 2022 and 226 applications were received with 55 installations completed of which 30 were solar PV Panels.

The council has agreed to continue its partnership with Portsmouth City Council and Agility ECO who have been successful in securing £15.7 million of funding under LAD 3 which they anticipate will help improve up to 1,661 on-gas households (these are households with an existing gas connection) across the entire local authority consortium area.

The LAD 3 period of funding commenced in January 2022 and will run until March 2023, and supports on-gas EPC D, E, F & G rated Households with ASHP (air sourced heat pumps), insulation and solar PV with up to £10,000 of funding.

- 2.18. Winchester Area SuperHomes: The council supports this initiative run by Winchester Action on Climate Change in partnership with the National Energy Foundation and Petersfield Climate Action Network, funded by the Energy Redress Scheme. The initiative is to create a new service that supports homeowners across Winchester District to transform the energy performance of their properties by retrofitting to reduce their carbon emissions, as energy in the home is responsible for around 20% of direct carbon emissions. Their target is to turn 25 or more existing homes in the Winchester District into retrofit SuperHomes show homes and support another 125 homes to be assessed and retrofitted. The project will provide help with some costs for homeowners on low and middle incomes. This will include some of the survey and design costs, plus a proportion of the cost of installing solar panels. All homeowners will be helped to apply for any available government grants, such as the Renewable Heat Incentive.
- 2.19. The Private Sector Housing team in liaison with the council's Energy Officer and the Climate Emergency Team will actively monitor available funding streams and initiatives through partnership engagement with Portsmouth City Council and Agility ECO and other bodies which present themselves. This is to improve the energy efficiency of the entire private housing stock and to try to reduce carbon emissions from private housing to achieve the ambition of a carbon neutral district by 2030.
- 2.20. This paper also wishes to explore the consideration of a 'Grant Assistance Fund'. The council recognises that primary responsibility for maintaining privately owned properties lies with property owners and stopped offering any discretionary grants to assist homeowners or landlords with works of repair more than a decade ago. In the current cost of living crisis, officers would like to explore adopting an emergency fund to provide grants or loans to owner occupied households struggling to carry out essential repairs to their homes, such as roof repairs, heating system replacement, replacement of doors or windows. The linked, draft Financial Assistance Policy (see below) outlines the qualification criteria and terms and conditions of such a scheme. This

paper and the policy currently makes no recommendation as to a level of funding available and seeks the comments of the committee on the principal and the potential commitment.

Conclusion

- 2.21. The revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy updates the council's approach to delivering the varied services provided by the private sector housing service to improve the quality of privately owned or rented property across the district. The strategy now incorporates and promotes wider energy efficiently work within the private sector housing stock through its enforcement and Disabled Facilities Grant work to reduce carbon emissions and to help reduce fuel poverty.

The strategy is an early draft and seeks the views of Members to help inform strategic direction and the setting of key priorities.

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposed strategy does not require any extra staffing resources, as any additional administrative requirements will be minor and can be absorbed within the current staffing resource. The delivery of the strategy action plan is also supported and in partnership with wider housing teams and the council's stakeholders.

Should the committee support in principle the suggestion of a 'Grant Assistance Fund' additional financial resources will need to be identified.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 4.1 The council could consider not having a Private Sector Renewal Strategy. This option is rejected as the terms of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 requires a local authority to have such a strategy in place if it wishes to use its discretionary powers to provide funding assistance to private owners and landlords. The council already uses these powers successfully to deliver the discretionary funding element of Disabilities Facilities Grants and Better Care Funding.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports (2016):-

[https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet%20\(Housing\)%20Committee/201603221600/Agenda/CAB2789-HSG-.pdf](https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet%20(Housing)%20Committee/201603221600/Agenda/CAB2789-HSG-.pdf)

Other Background Documents:-

Current Private Sector Renewal Strategy - [Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016 to 2021.pdf \(itss.local\)](#)

Enforcement Policy (currently under revision) –

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/attach/24727/PSH-Enforcement-Policy-2020.pdf>

Empty Homes Policy (recently approved) -

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/attach/33276/WCC-Empty-Homes-Strategy-2022-27.pdf>

Caravan Licensing Policy 2021 - [Camping and Mobile Home Sites - Winchester City Council](#)

DFG Policy - <https://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/attach/19843/DFG-Policy-and-ProcedureV11-August-2019.pdf>

APPENDICES:

A Draft Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2022-2027



PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY (Draft)

2022-2027

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Private Sector Housing sits within Housing Services and has a vital role to play in the Council's wider strategic housing activity. There is a direct relationship between our housing environment and our health. It is a general principle that housing should always provide an environment which is safe and healthy for the occupants.

1.2 This strategy, and the policies supporting it, applies to all privately owned homes, i.e. all dwellings (houses, flats, caravans etc.) that are not owned by the Council, including those owned or run by housing associations and it specifically outlines the Council's strategic approach to:

- Identifying and dealing with unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions
- Providing advice and assistance with regard to unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions
- Taking enforcement action with regard to unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions
- Maintaining standards by operation of licensing schemes for Houses in Multiple Occupation and Caravan Sites
- Improving the energy efficiency of the private sector housing stock
- Providing adaptations to meet the needs of disabled residents in their homes through Disabled Facility Grants, or by
- Providing grants and loans under the Better Care Fund
- Providing financial assistance to achieve other housing policy aims of the Council
- Reducing the level of long term Empty Homes in the district
- Handling comments and complaints in relation to any of the Council's housing renewal functions

1.3 This strategy provides the outline – the framework – to which the Private Sector Housing department operates. The strategy is then supported by several Policy documents, namely:

- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy – which details how the various legislative powers relating to housing conditions will be applied
- Disabled Facility Grant and Better Care Fund Policy – which details how applications for grant or other assistance for people with disabilities will be managed, and the additional financial support available through the Better Care Fund and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- Empty Homes Policy – which details how owners of empty property will be encouraged to return the homes to use.
- Financial Assistance Policy – discretionary assistance for essential repairs, DFGs and provisions under the Better Care Fund
- Fees Policy – details of fees for licences and services

2.0 The Private Rented Sector – the context for identifying unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions

- 2.1 The private rental sector (PRS) is an important part of the provision of housing in Winchester, as it is across England. It is not only vital in providing a home for the approximately 20,000 people that live in it, and a living for those that are landlords, but also has a wider impact upon the economy and community of the city.
- 2.2 The legislative and policy framework which surrounds the renting of private homes is complex and has developed over a number of years, with a focus on health and safety, home standards and the requirements surrounding tenancies. Government has clearly indicated that more legislation can be expected, particularly with the ending of Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions.
- 2.3 The licencing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) has been a major change in recent years but only covers a part of the HMO sector, and whilst mandatory licencing has enabled the council to focus on the standards within in-scope properties, there are still many HMOs that are not licensable and which may have a detrimental effect on the neighbourhoods in which they are typically located, particularly with regards to waste management and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.4 Winchester’s private rented sector is still largely a suppliers market with demand continuing to gradually rise, partly as a result of the student population and partly due to increasing numbers not able to own their own home and the slow shrinkage of the social rented sector. 2022 has also seen an influx of Ukrainian refugees to the UK with Winchester taking a larger number than many similar authorities. These refugees are likely to need to access the private rented sector when the initial hosting arrangement ends. In many cases market rents are significantly above local housing allowance rates, what those on benefits can reasonably be expected to afford, and access often requires a significant deposit, rent in advance and/or a guarantor.
- 2.5 Maintaining a healthy private rented sector is vital to the broader local housing strategy and in providing safe secure and affordable homes for all, and the Private Sector Housing team has a central role to play in encouraging landlords to provide such housing.
- 2.6 The Private Sector Housing Team also has a role to play in encouraging tenants to play their part by ensuring that they pay their rent on time, take care of their home, act within the terms of their tenancy agreement, be good neighbours, and, most

importantly, communicate with their landlord or landlord's agent during the time of their tenancy.

- 2.7 Many of the landlords with properties in the city are individuals with small portfolios or even single properties to let, and are doing so either as an investment or have obtained property unintentionally as a result of family bereavement or work taking them elsewhere. The additional regulations imposed in recent years have been complex and have added overheads to the cost of letting their properties, not all of which may have been passed onto tenants in the rent.
- 2.8 For many small landlords, keeping up with the ever changing regulations has proved difficult and they are consequently the most likely to fall foul of them. It is vital that the Private Sector Housing Team provide guidance and advice to help educate all landlords and drive standards up.
- 2.9 However, regardless of a landlord's portfolio size, the council should be actively making every effort to expose landlords who intentionally or through ignorance put the health safety and welfare of their tenants at risk, and where necessary taking appropriate enforcement action and imposing financial sanctions to deter other landlords from taking a similar approach.
- 2.10 In dealing with landlords the Private Sector Housing Team will encourage landlords to act in a fair and considerate way towards their tenants, offer suitable tenancy arrangements, work with their tenants to resolve problems that arise during the period of the tenancy, and end tenancies in a legal and appropriate way should that be required.
- 2.11 The Private Sector housing team therefore plays a supporting role in preventing homelessness and in assisting the housing options team in maintaining tenancies where possible.

3.0 Identifying unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions

- 3.1 There are several statutory provisions relating to housing conditions which provide both the framework for identifying unsatisfactory or unsuitable conditions, and the powers by which to enforce improvement where required. Principal of these is the Housing Act 2004 which deals with general housing conditions, the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation, Empty Homes and the supporting regulations that include the method of assessment for conditions, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). There are additional regulations related to smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and electrical safety, minimum energy efficiency standards, and other primary legislation including the provisions of the Mobile Home Acts, Public Health Acts, Building Acts and Environmental Protection Act that are available to the private sector housing department to use. The detail of how enforcement will be used is detailed in the Private Sector Enforcement Policy.
- 3.2 The Housing Act 2004 places a duty on the council to keep the housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may be required under the provisions (of the Act).
- 3.3 The private sector housing department will therefore:
 - Respond to complaints received regarding housing defects or poor housing conditions, particularly from tenants in private rented accommodation. Complaints from social landlord tenants will initially be referred to the social landlord, however the Housing Act 2004 and other legislation can be used to enforce on social landlords, and action will be taken when appropriate.

- Respond to requests from landlords and owner-occupiers for assistance in respect of tackling housing defects or poor conditions, or concerns regarding the suitability of their housing for their needs.
- Carry out regular routine inspections of housing subject to licensing schemes
- Carry out surveys of the housing stock to respond to the general duty under the Act
- Take appropriate enforcement action where unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions are identified
- The council will impose a charge for enforcement action as detailed in the Fees Policy

3.4 Housing conditions in the private sector in Winchester are generally better on all measures than the national average (see Executive summary BRE Stock Modelling Report 2021) and there are no wards or other sub-divisions of the district which have significant levels of poor housing conditions. Such matters of disrepair as there are exist on an individual property level across the district and as such strategies such as neighbourhood or area renewal programmes are inappropriate.

4.0 Advice in respect of unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions

- 4.1 In addition to carrying out inspections and, where necessary, using enforcement powers, the private sector housing team will provide advice and assistance to tenants, landlords and owner occupiers.
- 4.2 The appropriate response to complaints or requests as detailed in 2.3 may be solely to provide advice, particularly when a tenant has not raised the matter of their complaint with their landlord before contacting the council.
- 4.3 Advice may be provided verbally, by direct communication by letter or email, or by the provision of appropriate information on the council's website.
- 4.4 The private sector housing department will maintain a library of appropriate advisory documentation and legislation available via the council's website to tenants, landlords and owner-occupiers alike.
- 4.5 The council's strategy is to provide advice and encouragement, and to engage landlords and tenants in resolving issues of unsatisfactory housing without the need for the use of enforcement tools in the first instance

5.0 Financial assistance

- 5.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 provided local authorities with the ability to offer financial assistance to improve housing conditions. The Order repealed all of the previous legislation relating to grants and gave Councils wider powers to choose how they provide assistance and for what. To exercise this power, a Council must prepare and publish a Private Sector Renewal Strategy.
- 5.2 The Council recognises that although primary responsibility for maintaining properties lies with the owners, there are occasions when owner occupiers are unable to readily finance necessary repairs to their homes and may need financial assistance not available to them through other sources.

- 5.3 In certain circumstances financial assistance with unsatisfactory or unsuitable housing conditions may be available where the occupier is disabled or where assistance would meet the aims of the Better Care Fund. This is explained in more detail in the section on Disabled Facility Grants, and in the DFG Policy, but in broad terms the Better Care Fund may be used to:
- enable vulnerable individuals to stay living independently in their own home.
 - reduce the need for admission to a care home.
 - reduce the likelihood of hospital admission
 - reduce the cost of necessary domiciliary care
 - enable prompt discharge from hospital to a safe home
- 5.4 Discretionary grants or loans may be available, subject to available funding, to assist owner occupiers with essential repairs to remedy Category 1 Hazards and Category 2 Hazards assessed at band D or E under the HHSRS.
- 5.5 Assistance may be available to owner occupiers in receipt of means tested benefits or on low incomes and with limited savings
- 5.6 Funding may be available provided no other source of grant or low cost loan being available.
- 5.7 Applications will be assessed in strict order of receipt subject to funding and when funding becomes limited, priority will be given firstly to the most vulnerable applicant and then to the most serious hazards, as assessed by officers.
- 5.8 Parameters including the overall funding available, the financial limits and qualification criteria will be reviewed annually and published in the Financial Assistance Policy.

6.0 Houses in Multiple Occupation and licensing

- 6.1 The Housing Act 2004 covers licensing of certain properties:
- Mandatory licensing – HMOs occupied by 5 or more occupants forming 2 or more households.
 - Additional licensing – which can be adopted at the council’s discretion to include all HMOs (mandatorily licensable or not) in areas where large numbers of HMOs in a given area are demonstrated to be the source of anti-social behaviour or other problems.
 - Selective licensing – which can be adopted at the council’s discretion to cover all privately rented housing in an area where problems of crime or widespread housing condition problems are recognized. Selective Licensing schemes involving more than 20% of the geographical area of the district or 20% of the housing stock would require DLUHC approval.
- 6.2 The council currently only imposes Mandatory licensing and does not believe any Additional or Selective licensing scheme is required within the district, although this will be kept under review.
- 6.3 Control on the spread of HMOs within the Stanmore and Winnall estates has been successfully managed through the implementation of Article 4 directives, a planning tool requiring consent to be sought for any change to HMO use which would otherwise be allowed under permitted development rules.
- 6.4 Non-licensable HMOs are still subject to the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Regulations) England 2006. The council maintains a register of known non-licensable HMOs and will carry out inspections of these on an irregular basis as resources allow, and will update this register as new information is received.

- 6.5 Private Sector Housing continues to operate an Accreditation scheme jointly with Winchester University. The scheme is a gateway for landlords to advertise their properties through the student accommodation service of the University and to be accredited the property must meet an acceptable standard, similar to the licensing standard.
- 6.6 The council applies national statutory licence conditions and room-size standards where applicable and has, with neighbouring authorities, adopted a local Hampshire-wide standard for amenity provision in HMOs.
- 6.7 As with general housing conditions, the council will aim to firstly advise and encourage landlords to maintain standards in HMOs without recourse to enforcement tools.
- 6.8 The council will similarly maintain a library of appropriate advisory documents and legislation on the website available to tenants and landlords alike.
- 6.9 The council will charge fees for HMO Licences and for the Accreditation scheme as detailed in the Fees Policy.
- 6.10 The council will impose a charge for enforcement action as detailed in the Fees Policy

7.0 Caravan and Camping Sites and licensing

- 7.1 The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 requires the licensing of certain caravan sites. Such licences will attach suitable conditions which are based on a set of national model standards relating to the standards of facilities that ought to be provided, suitably adapted for the individual site.
- 7.2 Permanent residential mobile home parks (Park Home sites) are also subject to the Mobile Homes Act 2013 and The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020
- 7.3 The council will continue to carry out annual inspections of licensed permanent residential sites.
- 7.4 Site owners will initially be given advice and encouragement to maintain sites to the standards required by the licence conditions prior to recourse to enforcement action.
- 7.5 The council will similarly maintain a library of appropriate advisory documents and legislation on the website available to residents and site owners alike.
- 7.6 The council will regularly review the extent and location of new caravan sites in the district to ensure that all sites are appropriately licensed and, where appropriate, a fit and proper person is managing the site.
- 7.7 Camping sites will require licences issued under the Public Health Act 1936 to ensure that suitable amenities are provided for the size and nature of the site.
- 7.8 The council will impose fees for licencing and fit and proper person applications as detailed in the Fees Policy.

8.0 Energy Efficiency

- 8.1 The recent BRE stock modelling report identifies that the average SAP rating of housing stock in the Winchester district is slightly worse than the national average, and that, as with other housing conditions, the less energy efficient housing is scattered throughout the district on an individual dwelling basis rather than focused in particular areas. Winchester has a relatively large rural area and city and town centres comprising a high number of older, and harder to heat, dwellings.
- 8.2 In addition to the BRE modelling, the council commissioned a dataset of modelled EPC ratings for all housing in the district from Absolar.

- 8.3 The enforcement tools available to the private sector housing department can deal with the more extreme cases of energy inefficiency through Housing Act 2004 powers and the identification of Excess Cold Hazards through the HHSRS, and the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Regulations (MEES) which currently disallow the private letting of any dwelling with an EPC rating of F or G (unless exempt).
- 8.4 Government have signaled an intent to change the MEES regulations from 2028 such that new lettings must achieve a Band C or better EPC. This new target will then apply to all lettings from 2030. The updated regulations are also expected to tighten the rules on exemptions.
- 8.5 The Absolar dataset has been used in providing addresses to target the financial assistance provided through the department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for providing energy efficiency improvements to dwellings with a current Band D or lower EPC – the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) schemes and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) schemes.
- 8.6 The council is, and will continue to be, part of the Warmer Homes Consortium of 21 local authorities, led by Portsmouth City Council which bids for this funding stream from BEIS, or of other schemes and bidding processes in the future. The delivery of grants is managed by a third part contractor.
- 8.7 These schemes are targeted at low income households in dwellings with a low EPC rating, including privately rented housing where the household income rather than the landlord's is the determining factor.
- 8.8 For households who do not qualify for these schemes the council will maintain a library of appropriate advisory documents and legislation on the website available to tenants landlords and owner occupiers alike, with the clear aim of encouraging all households to improve their domestic energy efficiency either by the installation of better insulation and more efficient heating and hot water systems, or through management of energy use generally.
- 8.9 In certain circumstances, as detailed in 5.0, financial assistance to improve energy efficiency may be provided through the Better Care Fund if the provision of such assistance meets the criteria for which the fund is intended.

9.0 Empty Homes

- 9.1 Full details of the council's empty homes strategy is contained in the supporting Empty Homes Strategy document
- 9.2 The prevalence of long term empty homes in Winchester is low compared to the national average, with market demand for housing acting to keep the numbers low. However, there are still a small number of potentially problematic empty homes which may become detrimental to their immediate neighbourhood.
- 9.3 Regulatory tools available to the Private Sector Housing Team are limited and set a high bar regarding the length of time a property is empty, and its condition and effect on neighbours, before action may be considered.
- 9.4 The approach is therefore one of monitoring and provision of advice and guidance and the council will maintain a library of appropriate advisory documents and legislation on the website available to property owners and the public in general.
- 9.5 The adoption of an increased rate of Council Tax has had a positive effect on the number of long term empty properties and will continue to do so while in place.
- 9.6 The Private Sector Housing Team will maintain close links with Revenue Services to receive a regular list of all properties known to have been empty for 6 months or more.

This enables close monitoring of the changing list of addresses and direct contact with owners to encourage them to bring homes back into use.

10.0 Providing Adaptations to meet the needs of disabled and vulnerable residents in their homes

- 10.1 The council has a statutory duty to provide Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) to residents who qualify for such assistance due to disability, subject only to a prescribed means test.
- 10.2 Such grants are available to owner-occupiers and social and private tenants alike and the terms under which mandatory grants are provided are set by Government in the Housing Grants Construction and Renewal Act 1996 (as amended) and supporting Regulations. Adaptations for Winchester City Council tenants are provided by Property Services through the Housing Revenue Account and not through DFG funding.
- 10.3 In addition to mandatory grants, the council can provide discretionary grants and loans, through its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002, provided it has a policy in place for doing so.
- 10.4 Since 2017, the funding the council receives from Government to provide DFGs has been combined with Better Care Fund provision which has enabled the council to provide discretionary grant funding to a much broader range of residents, either through addition discretionary funding for those who qualify for DFGs, or for other vulnerable residents for whom the provision of assistance meets the key aims of the Better Care Fund as detailed above at 5.3.
- 10.5 Full details of how the council will provide both mandatory DFGs and discretionary assistance using the Better Care Fund under the Regulatory Reform Order is in the Disabled Facility Grant Policy.
- 10.6 The Private Sector Housing Team will maintain a library of appropriate advisory documents and legislation on the website available to all residents in order to raise public awareness of the facility.
- 10.7 The Private Sector Housing Team will develop and maintain contacts with healthcare teams in the NHS and the occupational therapy service at Hampshire County Council to ensure that the availability of assistance is widely promoted to and understood by associate professional services.
- 10.8 Financial assistance may also be provided from the Better Care Fund to local projects whose purpose meets one of the key aims of the fund as detailed above at 5.3.

11.0 Working with local partners

- 11.1 The Private Sector Housing Team works in partnership with other agencies in the Hampshire area to achieve both national and regional strategic aims with the private housing sector. These include Hampshire County Council Social Services, Hampshire and IOW Fire and Rescue Service, Winchester University and the Private Sector Housing functions of other district and unitary authorities through the Hampshire wide Housing Action Group of senior officers.

12.0 Strategic Priorities

- 12.1 Improving energy efficiency in the private housing stock
- 12.2 Improving housing conditions in the private rented sector
- 12.3 Improving conditions in both licensable and non-licensable HMOs

- 12.4 Using the Better Care Funding to best effect to reduce the number of hospital admissions and care home admissions, and to enable prompt discharge from hospital to safe accommodation.
- 12.5 Improving conditions on caravan and park homes sites in the district.

19. Action Plan

ACTION NO:	TARGRET DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE Officer	RESOURCES NEEDED	TASKS/STEPS:	TARGET OUTCOME:
PRIORITY 1: Improving Energy Efficiency in the private housing stock					
1	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing staff resources and government targeted funding streams	Utilise central government funding schemes providing grants for energy efficiency improvements, either unilaterally or, as currently, in partnership with other local authorities	Reduction in properties with a Band D-G EPC in the private sector.
2	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing staff	Use enforcement tools available to improve energy efficiency, where appropriate	Reduction in properties with a Band D-G EPC in the private sector.
3	2022-2027	PSH Team	Existing staff	Use the Better Care Fund to install energy efficiency measures alongside DFGs and other discretionary Better Care Fund grants	Targeted energy efficiency improvements in vulnerable households
4	2022-2027	PSH Team	Existing Staff	Ensure the departmental webpages are maintained with the latest information and guidance	Readily available information for landlords tenants and owner occupiers

ACTION NO:	TARGRET DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE Officer	RESOURCES NEEDED	TASKS/STEPS:	TARGET OUTCOME:
PRIORTY 2 Improving housing conditions in the private rented sector					
1	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Encourage landlords and homeowners to repair, improve and maintain their homes to meet acceptable standards (no Category 1 or high Category 2 Hazards) through information, advice and assistance.	Improvement in general housing conditions in the private sector
2	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Use enforcement tools where appropriate to ensure landlords meet minimum standards and regulatory requirements	Improvement in general housing conditions in the private sector
3	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Ensure the departmental webpages are maintained with the latest	Readily available information for landlords tenants and owner

				information and guidance	occupiers
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ACTION NO:	TARGET DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE Officer	RESOURCES NEEDED	TASKS/STEPS:	TARGET OUTCOME:
PRIORITY 3: Improving conditions in both licencable and non-licencable HMOs					
1	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Monitor and randomly inspect the existing HMO licences, and inspect all licenced HMOs at their renewal	Continuity of standards in the existing licenced HMOs
2	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Use available information sources to identify licensable and non-licensable HMOs and carry out inspections	To reduce the number of unknown HMOs in the district
3	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Maintain and develop the accreditation scheme operated alongside Winchester University	To encourage landlords to accredit non-licensable HMOs and meet and maintain accreditation standards
4	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Ensure the departmental webpages are maintained with the latest information and guidance	Readily available information for landlords tenants and owner occupiers

ACTION NO:	TARGRET DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE Officer	RESOURCES NEEDED	TASKS/STEPS:	TARGET OUTCOME:
PRIORTY 4: Using the DFG/Better Care Funding to best effect to reduce the number of hospital admissions and care home admissions, and to enable prompt discharge from hospital to safe accommodation.					
1	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Continue to provide discretionary grants and loans to meet the criteria of the Better Care Fund and to reduce the number of hospital admissions and care home admissions, and to enable prompt discharge from hospital to safe accommodation	Reduction in healthcare costs within local NHS and social services.
2	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	To continue to provide discretionary grants of up to £15,000 for all applicants who qualify, by reference to their condition and needs, for a disabled facility grant.	To ensure that those in need are provided with adaptations suitable for those needs regardless of financial status, to reduce the number of hospital admissions and care home admissions.
3	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	To continue to offer discretionary assistance over and above the mandatory £30,000 maximum for all applicants who qualify, by reference	To ensure that those in need are offered financial assistance with adaptations suitable for those needs regardless of financial

				to their condition and needs, for a disabled facility grant.	status, to reduce the number of hospital admissions and care home admissions.
4	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Ensure the departmental webpages are maintained with the latest information and guidance	Readily available information for landlords tenants and owner occupiers

ACTION NO:	TARGET DEADLINE	RESPONSIBLE Officer	RESOURCES NEEDED	TASKS/STEPS:	TARGET OUTCOME:
PRIORITY 5: To improve conditions on caravan sites and park home sites in the district.					
1	2023	PSH team	Existing Staff and external contractor	To investigate and assess all known caravan sites in the district, and where necessary, issue licences with appropriate conditions	To ensure the council is correctly licencing this element of the private sector, and collecting all appropriate fees, and to improve conditions on licenced sites
2	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	To take appropriate enforcement action where caravans/park homes are let through private tenancies/licences	To improve conditions in privately rented caravans/park homes
3	2022-2027	PSH team	Existing Staff	Ensure the departmental webpages are maintained with the latest	Readily available information for site owners and occupants

				information and guidance	
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