



**Horsham
District
Council**

Housing Strategy Position Statement



Annual Review 2016/17

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

Housing Strategy Update 2017

We published our Housing Strategy 2013-15 in April 2013. The Strategy outlined how we intended to provide housing and housing-related services for all residents in the District, making the best use of all the resources we have at our disposal and delivering the objective identified in the Horsham District Plan 2011-15: to access appropriate and affordable housing to meet local needs.

We said we would check where we had got to after a year; this update presents our progress to the end of 2016/17 financial year.

Since 2015 Housing authorities have been waiting for the Housing White Paper “Fixing Our Broken Housing Market” which after an 18 month delay was published in February 2017. 2017 will see a General Election being held, progress on the United Kingdom’s plans to leave the European Union and the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act. Like many Local Authorities these changes and anticipated Housing White Paper guidance have delayed us in reviewing our Strategic Housing Policies.

A light touch review and assessment of the current position at the end of the 2016/17 financial year against the originally agreed objectives has been undertaken to inform some of the initial work involved in creating a new strategy.

Our vision is that Horsham District should be a place where people and businesses feel they belong and are proud to call home, and in order to capture that vision we set out the following objectives:

1. An increasing supply of homes that people in need can afford
2. Effective support for homeless households
3. Appropriate housing provision for vulnerable people
4. Thriving rural communities

Latest Horsham District profile data suggests we will have a 72.2% growth in our population aged 65+ to 2039 including an extra 3,629 residents aged 90+ over the same period. The average house price in Horsham District is £390k against a national average of £300k with an increase of households on the housing register with 656 at the end of March 2017.

The headlines that we can report are the continued high delivery of affordable homes, an increase in demand for temporary accommodation to support homeless households to remain in the Horsham District and an increase in demand to support those most vulnerable and in greatest housing need.

These and other significant achievements are highlighted in this update.

The aim is not to repeat all of the background information in the Housing Strategy 2013-2015, however this update should be read in conjunction with that document.

1. An increasing supply of homes that people in need can afford

We said that we would:

Develop and implement new planning policies within the Horsham District Planning Framework to secure appropriate levels of affordable housing

Progress

- The Horsham District Planning Framework was adopted in November 2015 and set out proposed targets and thresholds for affordable housing provision when new housing is built as follows:
 - On sites providing 15 or more dwellings, or on sites of over 0.5 hectares, the Council will require 35% of dwellings to be affordable
 - On sites providing between 5 and 14 new dwellings, the Council will require 20% of dwellings to be affordable
 - Appropriate affordable provision on strategic sites at Land North of Horsham, Land West of Southwater and Land South of Billingshurst
 - Strategic sites in Southwater and Billingshurst are within development stages now and the planning application for North Horsham has been received.

Work with our Housing Association partners to develop over new affordable homes

Progress

- Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 224 affordable homes were delivered.
 - Previous years have delivered:

2015/16 – 150
2014/15 – 245
2013/14 – 239
0212/13 – 147
- The homes have been developed for both working age and retirement age households across the district by a number of the Council's Registered Provider Partners. Completions are as follows:

A2 Dominion

38 homes for rent

1 home for shared ownership

Hyde Housing

9 homes for rent

9 homes for shared ownership

Landspeed Homes

6 homes for shared ownership/shared equity

Moat

5 homes for rent

2 homes for shared ownership

Orbit Homes

37 homes for rent

36 homes for shared ownership

Saxon Weald

65 homes for rent

16 homes for shared ownership

Total: 154 homes for rent

70 homes for shared ownership

Continue to implement our Empty Homes Strategy

Progress

- Twenty five empty properties were brought back into use during the past financial year 2016/17.

Continue to implement our Housing Assistance Policy

Progress

- We approved 95 Disabled Facilities Grants and spent £554,140 in 2016/17 to assist households to remain in their homes. A majority of the funding has been used for wet rooms and stair lifts where appropriate.

Explore the possibility of self-build schemes within the District with organisations promoting self-build

Progress

- The Council operates a self-build register which at the start of April 2017 has 145 entries, 87 of which were Horsham District Residents.
- A proposal for a 30 units at The Land North of Horsham Strategic site for self-build or custom build will be considered as part of the planning application.

Implement Our Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople (GTTS) Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)

Progress

- The Council's Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (2012) identified a requirement for the provision of an additional 39 pitches up until 2017. The Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) Policy 21 details how to meet the requirement of 39 pitches up until 2017. At present, the site allocations identified in this policy have not yet come forward. There remains a need to identify land to for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation beyond 2017. In the meantime, there continues to be a criteria-based policy (Policy 23) for assessing planning applications which have not been specifically allocated through the HDPF

- To address the future need for Gypsy and Traveller sites, the Council has updated this previous Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment and has undertaken a thorough site assessment of potential sites within the district. The draft Accommodation Needs Assessment has identified an overall need for 93 pitches over the Plan period that includes an existing 'backlog' of 47 pitches that are either unauthorised, have a temporary planning permission, or a personalised planning permission. A number of potential sites and options to meet this need have been considered and are set out in the 'Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) – Preferred Strategy' which was published for consultation between 21 April and 2 June 2017.
- In terms of transit provision, in partnership with other Local Authorities in West Sussex, the Council had agreed to jointly fund the provision and maintenance costs of a Transit Site for Gypsies and Travellers as a County-wide resource. A transit site within the Chichester District for 9 pitches was officially opened on 16 March 2015 at Westhampnett and can be used by any Gypsy and Traveller visiting West Sussex, including those working or visiting the Horsham District.'

2. Effective support for homeless households

We said that we would:

Eliminate the use of B & B for expectant mothers and households with children

Progress

- The Council's objective is always to eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for expectant mothers and households with children. There has been an increase of homeless approaches and there are currently 16 households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation that are pregnant or with children. The average number of households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation throughout the year is 19.
- Attempts are made to prevent homelessness by undertaking visits to the family home and through landlord liaison to mediate with families and discuss alternative housing options where possible.

Enable people to remain in their homes, possibly with financial support

Progress

- During the past financial year the Council prevented 198 households from becoming homeless. For 21 of these households, homelessness was prevented by using the Council's rent deposit scheme and the Eviction Prevention Fund.

Ensure that customers have access to the best housing options advice and information from the Council

Progress

- Our daily housing triage drop-in service has been further redesigned to prioritise homeless households ensuring they receive face-to-face advice from a Housing Officer which will be tailored to their individual circumstances as early as possible.
- The Council's Housing Register and Nominations Policy was adopted in April 2013, and underwent a 'light touch' reviews in both January and October 2016. The reviews amended minor working updates and introduced additional qualification criteria to reflect the needs of those working in the District to have secure appropriate accommodation close to employment. Households needed to demonstrate employment in the District of at least 16 hours per week for at least nine of the last twelve months prior to an application being received. 656 households remained on Horsham's housing register on 1st April 2017.
- Commitment to engage in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Service (SVPRS) was also added as part of the January 2016 review. We committed to rehouse two families per year for five years (2016/17 – 2020/21). Two families were resettled within the Horsham District during 2016/17
- The number of households on the register have reduced since the Housing Register and Nominations Policy was adopted 2013 (April 2013 – 722, April 2017 – 656), the households that remain on the register need to be housed and the Council has a duty to enable such households to find suitable accommodation, either through nomination to housing association properties or the private rented sector.
- The Council introduced online housing applications to ensure everyone throughout the District can submit a housing application regardless of their location within the District or work patterns. Support is provided to those households without online access at the main Council offices.

Maintaining the quality of temporary accommodation provided in the District, expanding the stock of one and two bed flats and providing enhanced support where necessary with newly acquired stock to be centrally located, near to services

Progress

- The Council purchased ten 3 bedroom houses throughout the District to ensure those families with dependant children could remain as close to support networks, children's schools and social support wherever possible.
- Acquisition of a block of 17 one and two bedroom flats within the Bishopric, Horsham is nearing completion and due to be handed over June 2017. The property contains two disabled adapted units.
- Two additional sites have been identified to potentially deliver additional units of temporary accommodation to further support the Councils ambition to eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for expectant mothers and households with children.

Expanding our forum of private landlords willing to offer tenancies to homeless households

Progress

- The Council works with Private Landlords to manage their properties. This enables households an alternative to staying in temporary accommodation or having to remain on the Housing Register when the private sector can provide them with a suitable housing solution.
- The Council's Housing Officer for Private Landlord Services has created 9 new tenancies in the last financial year (2016/17) and in total sustains tenancies for 40 self-contained privately rented properties for households accommodated from the Council's Housing Register.

3. Appropriate housing provision for vulnerable people

We said we would monitor and where possible, work with our partners to increase our support for various groups:

The purpose of supporting the groups listed below is to provide early solutions to prevent the need for a household to present as homeless. These services also enable households to sustain accommodation leading to a reduction of homeless applications from 203 in 2014/15 to 191 during 2016/17.

Progress

Older people with support needs

- The Council has worked alongside Saxon Weald to occupy older persons housing schemes in Steyning, Upper Beeding and Partridge Green in recent years. During 2016/17 Highwood Mill, an extra care community was developed and let to those on the Council's Housing Register.
- Disabled Facilities Grants enable adaptations to be made to accommodation to ensure residents can continue to live independently. 95 households were supported during 2016/17. This is a reduction against the 103 households supported during 2015/16.

Mental health

- Horsham District Council works alongside West Sussex Homelessness Prevention Partnership's (WSHPP) *Hospital Team* which introduces integrated Housing Support Workers to assist those with mental health issues and work with practitioners in local Hospitals across the County. The Hospital Team consists of 3 full time Housing Support Workers who are fully integrated within Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust acute sites, and 1 full time Team Leader supervising the staff.

- Langley Green Hospital (LGH) is a 4 ward, 69 bed mental health hospital based in Crawley. LGH predominantly serves patients who are registered at GP surgeries in the Crawley, Horsham and Mid Sussex areas. Homeless households accepted as priority need due to a mental health or handicap issue has decreased from 10 during 2015/16 to 7 during 2016/17.
- One of the Housing Support Worker posts is based full time in LGH and is tasked with offering direct housing support to inpatients staying at the hospital, as well as their care teams and carers. The main aims of the Housing Support Worker are to:
 - Collaborate with ward and community mental health team staff to offer a housing needs assessment to all inpatients. These will identify potential housing issues as soon as possible, with a view to intervening early so to prevent homelessness.
 - Work in partnership with Local Housing Authorities, landlords and support providers to prevent homelessness where possible and source suitable accommodation upon discharge for homeless patients.
 - Establish good working practices within the hospital in terms of developing the ward staff's understanding of, and ability to identify housing issues promptly.
- The Richmond Fellowship also provides a specialist accommodation and a floating support service for people with mental health needs and learning difficulties. Their accommodation consists of 7 residential units at Blatchford House in Horsham and move on is facilitated through two additional preference allocations per year.

Learning and Physical disability

- Southdown Housing Association continues to support clients across West Sussex as part of its Independent Living Scheme (ILS). Southdown have contracts with two local Registered Providers for 37 properties to support residents through a subletting arrangement. Conversations are ongoing to increase the capacity of this service.
- The current ILS provision in Horsham was successfully re-tendered and is now linked to Horsham, Crawley and Worthing in a single contract. Southdown currently works in all three areas delivering traditional ILS, Floating Support and a range of small initiatives supporting people to develop independent living skills.
- Southdown Housing replaced the MyKey Floating Support Service with West Sussex Homeless Prevention partnership in January 2017.

Ex-offenders

- The Council works with Youth Offending Service and Change Grow Live (CGL) to support homeless ex- offenders or those at risk of becoming homeless.
- Change, grow, live (CGL) Supported Housing provides short to medium term, good quality, accommodation with support for ex-offenders being released from prison. The aim of the service is to accommodate, safely manage, support and reintegrate individuals who have demonstrated the motivation to change their offending behavior. Resettlement of service users into the community, together with the management of any risk, is the main focus of the service. The Council resettled 2 clients during 2015/16 and 1 client during 2016/17.

- We retain a statutory duty to house vulnerable people discharged from prison and can provide Additional Preference to those that have successfully managed residency in approved premises.

Outreach Support Services

- As part of a planned move-on, CGL offers a follow on Outreach Support Service for approximately 1 – 6 months, occasionally more if needed. This service enables support to service users through the difficult transition from supported to independent accommodation.

Substance (Drug) Misuse

- Change Grow Live (CGL) provide services at Baptist Church, Brighton Road, Horsham in order to support people homeless or threatened with homelessness to manage substance misuse issues.
- The Council will be working closely with Emerging Futures who support people actively in recovery. Emerging Futures are a community interest company contracted to provide direct transitional support to CGL clients by way of one to one coaching support.

Care leavers and young people with support needs

- West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Local Housing Authorities have a joint working protocol for care leavers. Care leavers are aged 18-21, at the end of March 2017 there were 18 care leavers residing in the Horsham District. This is a decrease from 2016 when there were 20 care leavers residing in the Horsham District being supported with the transition into independent living.
- This protocol aims to ensure that accommodation needs and associated support in the community for young people leaving care are identified and procedures put in place to ensure that agencies work in partnership to achieve this. This protocol will also address practice relating to those young people age 16/17 as they approach adulthood. It is the belief of the partner agencies that there should be no need for a young person to make an application under homelessness legislation if the pathway planning and this protocol have been successful. This is because housing and support needs will be kept under review from a young person's 16th birthday and suitable accommodation identified before the young person's 18th birthday.
- Regarding 18-20 year old care leavers who are considered to be in Priority Need if they are made homeless, liaison continues between HDC and WSCC as they are still able to access support.

Women and children suffering domestic violence

- The Council supports North Sussex Refuge Service and runs the Safe@Home scheme, which aims to make it possible for households that experience violence to remain in their own home and feel safe. When these support measures aren't appropriate or fail households have to access homeless services. Throughout 2015/16 and 2016/17 5 households have been accepted as homeless as a result of domestic violence.

- Where residents are at risk of Domestic Violence the Housing Register and Nominations Policy amended October 2016 enables four households to be nominated through additional preference per annum.

Other related support for vulnerable groups

Community Link (Assistive technology).

Horsham District profile data suggests we will have a 72.2% growth in our population aged 65+ to 2039 including an extra 3,629 residents aged 90+ over the same period. Projected demand for care exceeds supply in sheltered and residential accommodation and we have the highest projected increase in the number of people expected to be living with dementia (74%)

- This service, provided by the Council, continues to provide a home safety and personal security system that enables people to live independently within their homes. The service involves the provision of a telephone link 24 hours a day between the home and the control centre.
- At present around 1700 households benefit from a Community Link system.
- The scheme was successfully accredited by the Telecare Services Association in March 2014. This accreditation was retained when reassessed April 2016.
- To support the growing diagnosis of dementia referred to above and desire to remain independent, the Community Link team has increased the offer of technology to a GPS tracking device. There is a perceived reduction in the missing person reports for High Risk vulnerable, for those who are using the device.

Going forward beyond 2017

Horsham District Council is fortunate to be working closely with co-located workers from the following projects:

Worthing Churches Homeless Project (WCHP)

- A Homelessness Outreach Worker commenced in November 2016 to work with the council and other agencies, including a partnership with Horsham Matters. The annual rough sleeper count during November 2016 identified six rough sleepers, an increase from three the previous year.

The role will continually review further resources that are needed in the local area to work with single homeless applicants and identify which services may be needed to help the homeless and insecurely housed in Horsham including a Housing First pilot.

- WCHP have the following objectives:
 - Locate, assess and support those who are rough sleeping and vulnerably housed in Horsham
 - Develop and maintain strong partnership working across the Horsham Community including statutory and voluntary sector organisations
 - Create resources and a hub for those who may be at risk of homelessness and eviction to prevent future homelessness

- Develop a 'housing offer' for those who are rough sleeping and long term homeless with continuation of support once they are suitable housed

Citizens Advice

- Citizens Advice provide a Homeless Prevention and Debt Advisor who has vast of experience and skills to bring to the housing team. The advisor is co-located within the housing department four mornings a week (this was increased from two mornings per week October 2016) to support the work of the Housing Officers dealing with homelessness prevention. During 2016/17, the case worker supported 75 referrals from Housing Officers for debt advice.
- The objective is to meet with applicants at the Council offices who have a number of complex financial needs. Focus most recently has been contacting applicants disadvantaged by Welfare Reform (Benefit cap) to stabilise their financial situation.
- Citizens Advice has the following objectives:
 - Maximising income and checking entitlement to benefits and health related support
 - Advice on debt solutions and options
 - Advice on all tenant-related issues including rent arrears, disrepair, deposits, access to accommodation
 - Advice for home owners including mortgage arrears, shared ownership, leases, buying and selling a home
 - Housing and Relationship breakdown
 - Support and advice on other types of accommodation
 - Support and Advice relating to the Benefit Cap

West Sussex Homeless Prevention Partnership (WSHPP)

Horsham District Council has two Floating Support Officers co-located in the Council offices in order to assist in the prevention of homelessness by working collaboratively with the Council Homelessness Officers.

West Sussex Homeless Prevention Partnership has a number of objectives to support vulnerable households in need of advice and assistance.

4. Thriving rural communities

We said we would:

Work with Saxon Weald Homes to develop local needs rural housing schemes in Cowfold, West Chiltington and Partridge Green

Progress

- A housing scheme in Partridge Green has been completed and occupied by households from the Council's Housing Register.

- The housing scheme in Cowfold is due to be completed in financial year 2017/18 and will deliver 20 affordable rented homes.
- A planning application has been approved for a West Chiltington scheme which will deliver 14 affordable homes.

Explore developing a mixed tenure model for local connection schemes with Housing Association partners

- Discussions are ongoing, but such developments are likely to come through the Neighbourhood Planning process.

Looking ahead

Horsham District Council is committed to finding creative and innovative solutions to meet the objectives set out within the Housing Strategy.

Some options currently being considered include:

- The creation of a Housing or Property Company which would be used to develop and manage residential property delivering flexible tenure options. This would ensure accommodation can be used most effectively to house eligible people in housing need.

It is clear from the Housing White Paper “Fixing Our Broken Housing Market” that housing companies will be treated similarly to Registered Providers and the benefits of a company need further consideration. Once further legal advice has been obtained an options report will be delivered to members.

We need to ensure we continue to deliver much needed temporary accommodation for homeless households which we have previously delivered and can continue to do.

Identify options to increase the delivery of Affordable Rented accommodation to provide a solution to those households waiting on the Council’s Housing Register.

Identify options to deliver alternative tenure types such as Assured Shorthold Tenancies to provide a housing option to those that may or may not currently be identified on the Council’s Housing Register whilst also providing a financial return to the Council.

- Options for increasing the delivery of smaller unit schemes either through encouraging site interest from Registered Providers or developing our own Registered Provider to deliver these schemes that generally deliver less than eight affordable units. A full report will be delivered to members in due course which will identify the risks and benefits of such an option in light of appropriate legal advice which is currently being sought.
- Increase the use of Section 106 commuted sum payments to support the delivery of affordable rented units as often as possible where appropriate.
- Increase the use of Section 106 commuted sum payments to deliver additional self-contained temporary accommodation units. This will in turn reduce the reliance upon costly Bed and Breakfast placements for homeless households.

- Undertake a further review of the Housing Register and Nominations Policy to ensure it best reflects and supports households securing affordable accommodation with the added considerations required in light of continued Welfare Reforms.
- Consult with partners and stakeholders regarding the creation and implementation of a new housing Strategy once the recommendations contained within the 2017 Housing White paper “Fixing Our Broken Housing Market” have been fully considered. These include changes to the definitions of Affordable Housing, the commitment to make private renting fairer and increase homeless prevention focus in light of the upcoming Homeless Reduction Act.
- Identify options to support hidden households with a housing need. These households could include local workers within the Horsham District on a reduced wage or a locally defined key worker.