

Housing Performance Report

Adults Health, Adult's Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28th March 2018

Author: Head of Housing
Wards: All
Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The report sets out the key current challenges and successes in the Housing Service.
- 1.2 The report assists members of the Committee to have a wider appreciation of the work undertaken by the Housing Service to enable the Committee to discuss priorities and challenges in the service area.
- 1.3 The links to the Swindon Vision in particular, Priority One: Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low carbon economy and Priority Four: help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable adults and children.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Comment on the challenges and successes identified in section 3.0 of this report.

3. Detail

- 3.1 **New Affordable Housing:** The first phase of completing 100 additional affordable homes will be delivered by May 2018. This includes supported housing developments at, Bembridge Close, Linden Ave and the Hawthorns. Additional developments are also preparing to go onsite. Significantly the business case for the Council's next major regeneration scheme at Queens Drive, Park South, was been approved by Cabinet in March 2018. The final tenure mix will be dependent on the type and level of grant available from Homes England.
- 3.2 **Homelessness:** The Temporary Winter Housing Provision has now closed as planned. A detailed evaluation is underway. All remaining guests received their appropriate housing offers and have been rehoused. 12 guests received housing support and planned interventions from partner agencies. 50 volunteers took part in assisting the project contributing to just short of 2000 hours of volunteering.
- 3.3 The Council voluntarily supports the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), a protocol established by Homeless Link and adopted by the Government. The Council instigates SWEP when temperatures drop to 0 degrees or less for 3 consecutive nights. This means that anyone who is on the

Housing Performance Report

Adults Health, Adult's Care and Housing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28th March 2018

streets and homeless that night will be accommodated. During the recent cold weather 50 individuals were housed, there was also excellent publicity with just short of 60,000 reaches on the Council's Facebook page.

- 3.4 **Tenancy Management.** An ongoing challenge continues to be rent collection. The income of the Housing Revenue Account to meet tenants' service aspirations depends on a high rate of collection. The collection rate stands at 95.87% (as at end of January 2018) a remarkable achievement given the on-going changes to the Welfare System. Swindon is now an "approved social landlord" on the Department of Works and Pensions Universal Credit assessment system. This means that the Council, can directly amend details (on a "Landlord Portal") to the housing element of our tenants Universal Credit claims, subject to their permission.
- 3.5 **Fire Safety** remains a priority. Tenders have recently been returned from interested contractors to complete our interim works ahead of the full findings and recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry. These include, new internal doors to our multi storey accommodation and a detailed survey recording the integrity of the compartmentalisation in the multi storey blocks.
- 3.6 **Housing Revenue Account (HRA).** The social housing rent reduction of 1% per year until 2019/20 is a considerable challenge, as it results in a reduction of over £20 million in the housing capital programme. Current reserves and work completed by officers on efficiency savings continue to reduce the immediate impact on tenants. The Leader of the Council has written to the Minister of State setting out a case to reduce the debt burden on the HRA by £60 million.
- 3.7 **Council housing voids.** The Council relet its Voids contract in 2017, the primary purpose of which is to complete works on council housing on the termination of tenancies, so that it can be brought back into use as quickly and as safely as possible. The contract was awarded to the Bell Group who despite passing all of the necessary due diligence, have performed poorly to the point where the contract was brought to an end earlier this year. Indeed in November 2017 officers had already made preliminary arrangements to work directly with their subcontractors. The main reason for this contract failing was the inability of Bell to mobilise a local work force to take on this significant and important work load. Officers are now, as well as directly managing the remaining subcontractors putting arrangements in place to retender the contract. A lessons learned report has already been submitted to the Housing Management CMAG and this will be followed up with a further report. The impact has been the increased turnaround time to get a property relet from 35 days to 47 days, which in turn has reduced the current supply of affordable homes, albeit the Council will see an increase in availability over the coming months.

Housing Performance Report

Adults Health, Adult's Care and Housing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28th March 2018

- 3.8 **Private sector housing.** As part of the changes in the private rented sector, Government has extended Mandatory House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing to a greater proportion of the HMO stock taking into account all HMOs with five or more person regardless of the number of stories in the property. Implementation is subject to the publication of detailed regulations. In Swindon this is likely to increase the number of HMOs that must be licensed from the current 120 to around 600 – 800. Work is being done to ensure that we are as ready as we can be for this very significant change. HMOs are regulated by, for example, minimum room sizes, fire safety and refuse storage arrangements. Due to the nature of Swindon's housing stock and market, the great majority of HMOs in Swindon will fall under a Licensing scheme following these changes, and this will allow for much more effective regulation of the sector.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Committee can choose how to operate performance reports from the Housing Service. Feedback on this report is welcomed.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications arising from this report.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 Section 21 of the Local Government Act requires every local authority to establish an overview and scrutiny function to hold the Executive to account, undertake policy development and review, monitor, and improve performance.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 There are no other direct implications arising from this report. Any further implications will be identified when a topic is reviewed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and in any recommendations made by it.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 No Diversity Impact Assessment is required at this stage. Any DIA that is required during review of topics included within the work programme will be identified at the appropriate stage.

Risk Management

- 5.5 No risk management issues have been identified at this stage. Any risk management issues will be identified at the appropriate time when a topic is

Housing Performance Report

Adults Health, Adult's Care and Housing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28th March 2018

under review by the Overview Scrutiny Committee and if it makes any recommendations.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

None