

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath  
District Council

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>West Suffolk Housing Strategy and West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>OAS/FH/18/029</b>	
<b>Report to and dates:</b>	<b>SEBC Overview and Scrutiny</b>	7 November 2018
	<b>Overview and Scrutiny</b>	<b>8 November 2018</b>
	<b>Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee</b>	11 December 2018
	<b>SEBC Council (Housing Strategy only)</b>	18 December 2018
	<b>FHDC Council (Housing Strategy only)</b>	19 December 2018
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<p><b>Purpose of report:</b></p>	<p>To present the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the draft West Suffolk Housing Strategy and the draft West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy, both of which are attached as appendices to the report.</p> <p><b>(1) West Suffolk Housing Strategy (Appendix 1)</b></p> <p>A review of West Suffolk’s Housing Strategy is due in 2018. By adopting this new strategy we are aligning our priorities for housing with the Strategic Framework 2018-2020 and responding to new legislation and additional duties such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the revised National Planning Policy Framework 2018.</p> <p><b>(2) West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy (Appendix 2)</b></p> <p>A review of West Suffolk’s Tenancy Strategy is due in 2018. The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that outlines how councils and registered providers approach issues which affect tenants living in their area.</p>

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</b></p> <p><b>It is recommended that, the West Suffolk Housing Strategy and West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, subject to any comments or feedback, be recommended for approval by Joint Executive (Cabinet) Committee on 11 December 2018 and Council on 19 December 2018, where appropriate.</b></p>
	<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>Consultation:</b>	<p>The Housing Strategy has been the subject of public and stakeholder consultation through a workshop and online survey.</p> <p>The Tenancy Strategy has been the subject of public and stakeholder consultation through an online survey.</p>
<b>Alternative option(s):</b>	<p>To continue with the current Housing Strategy and Tenancy Strategy. However, this means that our strategies would not be consistent with new legislation or duties, or with our Strategic Priorities.</p>
<b>Implications:</b>	
<p><i>Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None associated with either Strategy. However, an Implementation Plan accompanies the Housing Strategy which is being developed during the consultation period. Any resource implications associated with the delivery of the Housing Strategy will be set out in the Implementation Plan. External funding will be sought where appropriate and this will be indicated in the plan. In addition, where additional funding is required this will be subject to separate business cases for consideration by the democratic approval process as required.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None associated with either Strategy. However, resource implications, including any additional staffing requirements, will be included in the Implementation Plan and would be subject to separate approval processes as required.</li> </ul>

<i>Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
<i>Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> • The new Housing Strategy incorporates new legislation and duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the revised National Planning Policy Framework 2018. • The new Tenancy Strategy reviews our duties as set out in the Localism Act 2011.	
<i>Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> • Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) have been carried out and its findings are included in paragraphs 1.1.3 and 2.3.	
<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
Housing Strategy not compliant with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Medium	Sub-regional consultation on the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act and agreement of revisions to policy	Low
Housing Strategy not compliant with the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018	Medium	Adopt new Housing Strategy to ensure compliance with the NPPF	Low
Housing Strategy not aligned with the Strategic Framework	Medium	Adopt a new Housing Strategy that sets out our aspirations for housing	Low
Tenancy Strategy not compliant with the Localism Act 2011	Medium	Adopt a new Tenancy Strategy to ensure compliance with the Act	Low
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>		All wards	
<b>Background papers:</b>		None	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		<b>Appendix 1:</b> Draft West Suffolk Housing Strategy - Appendix A: Housing tenure - Appendix B: Evidence base - Appendix C: Implementation plan - Appendix D: Equality analysis  <b>Appendix 2:</b> Draft West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy	

## **1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation**

### **Background**

#### **1.1 (1) West Suffolk Housing Strategy**

- 1.1.1 A review of West Suffolk's Housing Strategy is due in 2018. Through the review we have taken the opportunity to reflect priorities, actions and projects set out in the Strategic Framework 2018-2020. Furthermore, there are a number of additional duties and fundamental changes to housing legislation that will need to be reflected in the Housing Strategy.
- 1.1.2 It is no longer a legal requirement for a local authority to have a Housing Strategy in place. However, it is recognised that a strategic overview is necessary in order to set out how we plan to address the housing challenges we are facing and to provide a range of housing options for the growing need for a range of quality housing in West Suffolk.
- 1.1.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out on the Housing Strategy. The EqIA is an assessment of any impact there might be on any particular group. It shows that there will be no negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. The strategy contains priorities and actions that seek to increase and improve the range of quality housing in West Suffolk to support a wide range of housing needs.

#### **1.2 Progress against our current Housing Strategy**

- 1.2.1 West Suffolk councils produced the first combined Housing Strategy in 2015, which covered the period to 2018. Since the publication of our first strategy, we have made progress in the following ways:

##### **Planning**

- Achieved 30% affordable housing on the majority of approved planning applications and delivered 578 new homes.
- Rural housing - maximised the delivery of affordable housing on rural exception sites.
- Established a West Suffolk self-build register and currently have 114 applicants on the register.

##### **Private sector housing**

- Empty Homes Strategy implemented: 50% overall reduction in empty homes.
- Alignment of approach to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and enforcement policies.
- Homes being utilised through our West Suffolk Lettings Partnership are safe and up to standard.

- Between 2016 and 2018, 1873 homes have been adapted through Disabled Facilities Grants and minor works through the Orbit Home Improvement Agency contract.
- 374 properties have been brought up to standard, or made decent, through grants over the lifetime of the strategy (2015-2018).

## **Homelessness**

- Additional temporary accommodation units provided across West Suffolk by directly purchasing properties, refurbishing council owned properties and via service level agreements with registered providers. Focused much of our work on prevention – in 2017 we actively assisted or prevented some 500 households across West Suffolk, from becoming homeless.
- Established a number of arrangements with housing providers to secure unused supported accommodation following a change of contract.
- Ensured that no family would have to spend more than six weeks in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Successfully bid for funding from the then Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) domestic abuse accommodation fund. Funding of £516,244 has been granted to partners to provide accommodation for victims of domestic abuse across Suffolk.
- Successful in our bid for funding for a rough sleeper outreach worker to work across the areas cover by West Suffolk, Babergh and Mid-Suffolk councils. This post is now included within the councils' staffing structure.
- In 2017 we established a Winter Night Shelter to provide accommodation for rough sleepers over the winter months. With extra provision now in place all year round.
- In June 2018, secured £607,994 from the government's Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding for the next two years which has enabled five new outreach staff to be employed as well as providing additional accommodation specifically to support rough sleepers into housing.

## **1.3 Consultation**

- 1.3.1 The review of the current Housing Strategy was started in March this year with Councillor workshops. Councillors had the opportunity to discuss some of the challenges we are facing across West Suffolk and how the strategy and approach can be shaped to respond to these challenges in the future.

- 1.3.2 A consultation exercise took place in July this year with a number of key partners. The aims of the workshop were to give partners the opportunity to discuss the challenges we are facing and how together we can work towards plans and actions in the future.
- 1.3.3 Outcomes from the Councillor and partner workshops have fed into the development of the strategy.
- 1.3.4 The formal consultation is taking place for a six week period between 9 October and 20 November 2018. It involves an online survey available on our webpages and has been sent directly to Councillors, parish councils and a number of our partners.
- 1.3.5 As at 18 October 2018, 15 responses have been received to the online survey from residents, partners and registered providers. The responses so far show that there is strong support for the priorities and actions set out in the strategy and for the issues that we are addressing.
- 1.3.6 Through the consultation, specific comments have been received that relate to affordable housing and the importance of infrastructure to support the needs of individuals and communities.
- 1.3.7 As this is at an early stage of the consultation, we will continue to monitor the responses received and determine whether any changes to the strategy will be required.

#### 1.4 **Implementation Plan**

- 1.4.1 An Implementation Plan will accompany the Housing Strategy so that we can deliver against the priorities and actions set out in the strategy. The Implementation Plan is being developed during the consultation period and will be finalised once the consultation has concluded.

## 2. **(2) West Suffolk Tenancy Strategy**

- 2.1 A review of West Suffolk's Tenancy Strategy is due in 2018. The Localism Act 2011 requires all local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that outlines how councils and Registered Providers (RPs) approach issues which affect tenants living in their area. This Tenancy Strategy updates the previous strategy that ran from 2012-2018 and incorporates all applicable changes from updated legislation.
- 2.2 Through the Tenancy Strategy we will seek to work with RPs to provide good quality housing where successful tenancies can be sustained. The strategy is intended to promote quality and fairness and to offer a guide to RPs who may manage stock within West Suffolk. While we no longer own our own housing stock, having transferred them to Flagship Housing Group and Havebury Housing Partnership, we still have an interest in how these properties and other properties owned by other RPs are managed for the residents of West Suffolk.

- 2.3 The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) carried out for the original Tenancy Strategy produced in 2012 has been reviewed and updated. The EqIA was an assessment of any impact there might be on any particular group. It shows that there will be no negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010. The strategy sets out our position on the provision of affordable housing including the use of Flexible Tenancies, Affordable Rents and the use of private sector tenancies for homeless households.
- 2.4 **Consultation**
- 2.5 Initial informal discussions have taken place with the key RPs operating in West Suffolk to highlight some of the key changes that it is proposed are included in the updated Tenancy Strategy.
- 2.6 The formal consultation is taking place for a six week period between 9 October and 20 November 2018. It involves an online survey available on our webpages and has been sent directly to a number of our partners.
- 2.7 We are at the early stages of the consultation and as at 18 October 2018, no responses have so far been received to the online survey.
- 2.8 We will monitor any responses that we receive and determine whether any changes to the strategy will be required.