

# West Suffolk Housing Strategy Implementation Plan 2018-2023: Year 1 Review

<b>Report No:</b>	<b>OAS/WS/20/005</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	12 March 2020
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**Decisions Plan:** This item is not included in the Decisions Plan.

**Wards impacted:** All

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that, Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) **Notes** progress against the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan; and
- (2) **Notifies Cabinet of any issues or actions that should be considered further.**

## 1. Background / Context

- 1.1 [West Suffolk's Housing Strategy](#) was reviewed in 2018 and adopted by the former St Edmundsbury Borough Council on 18 December 2018 (Report no: COU/SE/185/025 refers) and the former Forest Heath District Council on 19 December 2018 (Report no: COU/FH/18/022 refers). This review provided the opportunity to reflect the priorities, actions and projects set out in the Strategic Framework 2018-2020, which are now contained in the [Strategic Framework 2020-2024](#).
- 1.2 By having a Housing Strategy in place, West Suffolk Council is able to maintain an overview of how we plan to address the housing challenges we are facing and to enable a range of housing options for the need for quality housing. The Housing Strategy sets out our three priorities which are to:
- **Priority one:** Plan for housing to meet the needs of current and future generations throughout their lifetimes, that is properly supported by infrastructure, facilities and community networks;
  - **Priority two:** Improve the quality of housing and the local environment for our residents; and
  - **Priority three:** Enable people to access suitable and sustainable housing
- 1.3 Detailed information about how the we are working to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping is set out in the West Suffolk Council [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#). The council's Housing Strategy does not therefore contain specific actions to a reduce homelessness however there is a clear link between both strategies.

## 2. Proposals

- 2.1 When the Housing Strategy was adopted, we committed to reviewing progress against the implementation plan. The implementation plan has been regularly monitored since it was adopted to ensure that progress is being made and that the tasks remain relevant. The implementation plan is attached as **Appendix A** to this report and sets out the progress that has been made along with some challenges that are being addressed.
- 2.2 We have made progress in a number of areas. The implementation plan contains detailed information and some key activities are listed below:
1. We achieved 30% affordable housing which delivered 200 affordable homes between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019;
  2. Adoption of an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document in January 2020;
  3. Development of an Affordable Housing Guide for parish councils to raise awareness about the different affordable housing products and how they can be delivered;

4. Development of a Housing Delivery Plan, that complements the Housing Strategy, to boost housing delivery and provide greater choice in the types and tenures of new homes;
5. Working with Community Action Suffolk to support parishes develop a local needs housing survey;
6. Commencement of the first two Barley Homes sites and approval of a further Business Plan in December 2019 to deliver two more sites;
7. Helping local residents by ensuring their homes are suitable and adapted for their needs by utilising Disabled Facilities Grant funding;
8. Consistently exceeding our targets for bringing empty homes back into use;
9. Responding to legislation to ensure that all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) are licensed which means higher standards in the private rented sector;
10. Serving Civil Penalty Notices (CPNs) against non-compliant landlords to raise standards and improve conditions in the private rented sector;
11. Supporting vulnerable households to become more energy efficient;
12. Transferring the Home-Link housing register system to a new provider (Locata) which led to a review of cases giving a better understanding of housing needs;
13. Providing effective advice, preventative and information services which has resulted in high homelessness prevention rates; and
14. Relaunch of the West Suffolk Lettings Partnership with a new incentive package which has led to working with more landlords in the private rented sector.

2.3 We have also faced challenges. A number of these are outside of our control but we continue to liaise with and influence our partners. We are working to address challenges in the following areas:

1. We continue to ensure the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service is maintained and we are working towards a re-designed service beyond November 2020 when the current contract ends.
2. Ongoing demand for housing for people with additional requirements as well as limited provision of specialist support to help people live independently.
3. Increase the rate of housing delivery. We are taking a proactive approach to exploring new ways of increasing the rate of housing delivery and being more creative in encouraging new types of housing that meets the current and future needs of our residents.

### **3. Alternative Options**

- 3.1 To brief Councillors in an alternative way, however, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the most appropriate body to consider this review. By working in this way we are highlighting the areas where we are on track, the challenges we are facing and ensure that the plan remains relevant and up-to-date.

### **4. Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy was the subject of public and stakeholder consultation through a workshop and online survey.

### **5. Risks**

- 5.1 That we are not delivering against the actions in the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan.

### **6. Implications arising from the proposal**

- 6.1 None.

- 6.1 Financial

The Implementation Plan is being delivered within existing budgets. Any external funding is being sought where appropriate.

- 6.2 Legal Compliance

The relevant legislation has been adopted.

- 6.3 Personal Data Processing

N/A

- 6.4 Equalities

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out on the Housing Strategy.

- 6.5 Crime and Disorder

There are implications relating to safer neighbourhoods addressed within the implementation plan.

- 6.6 Environmental or sustainability

There are implications relating to energy efficiency addressed within the implementation plan.

- 6.7 HR / Staffing

N/A

6.8 Changes to existing policy

N/A

6.9 Impact on other organisations (e.g. community groups, businesses, partner organisations)

We continue to work with other local authorities, partners and local people.

**7. Appendices**

7.1 **Appendix A** – Housing Strategy Implementation Plan.

**8. Background documents**

8.1 [Strategic Framework 2020-2024](#)

[Housing Strategy 2018-2023](#)

[Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2023](#)