

Housing & Homelessness Update**Report of the Strategic Housing Lead****1.0 Purpose**

Further to the dissolution of the Housing Commission, it was agreed that housing related briefings and updates would be considered by the Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee. This report provide updates on the following areas:

- Recent policy and funding announcements by the Government affecting housing. The briefing also provides an update report on the progress made against the planned installations of sprinklers to council owned high-rise housing blocks.
- Current nature and extent of homelessness in the Borough, and key areas of work to address the issue. In particular, it outlines the response to the Mayor's commitment to provide 'A Bed for Every Night' to rough sleepers over the whole of the winter period and other sub-regional activities.
- Progress in delivering the Viaduct Housing Partnership development Programme.

2.0 Policy and Funding Update

- 2.1 Government have confirmed a total additional budget for Homes England of £1.67 billion to deliver Social Rent as well as affordable rent and shared ownership. Social Rent funding will only be available within a local authority that is subject to high affordability pressures. The key metric is the difference between average social rents and private rents and Homes England will fund Social Rent in local authorities where the difference between these is £50 per week or more. Stockport is listed within the Addendum as an eligible authority for the submission of bids. The Council is working up bids for social rent developments and ongoing discussion with HE are underway to see if the grant rate will be increased enough to make social rent work in the borough.
- 2.2 The cap on how much councils can borrow against their housing revenue accounts was removed in October 2018. For Councils that are at their HRA debt cap, or very close to it, or which do not have an established development company and borrowing facility, the additional HRA borrowing is welcome news. In Stockport the Council's current position is that there is capacity within the borrowing facility already in place for Viaduct to cover the period of expenditure set out within the Additional HRA borrowing programme to be able to deliver homes for social rent. There is also headroom in the HRA and the debt cap is not hit.
- 2.3 Social Housing Green Paper was released in August 2018 which reversed a number of controversial policies proposed under the previous government such as; the sale of high value homes, lifetime tenancies, stopping housing benefit for

under 21s, starter homes, removal of grant from rented housing, and the right to buy extension to properties owned by registered providers looks almost impossible to implement with no funding mechanism attached.

2.4 Funding Programmes

- Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Forward Fund (FF) (£500m announced in the Budget, in addition to £5 billion previously announced).
- Estates Regeneration Fund (approximately £180m)
- Short term Home Building Fund (£4.5bn)
- Small Sites Fund (£630m)
- Land Assembly Fund (£1.3bn)

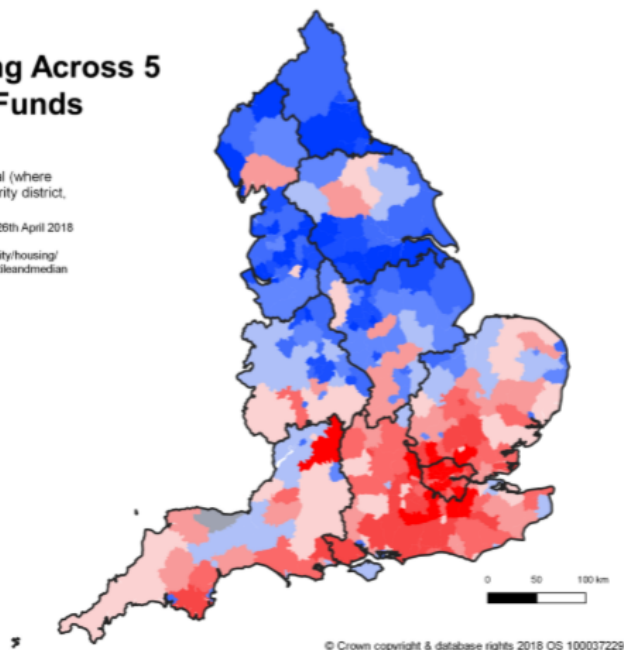
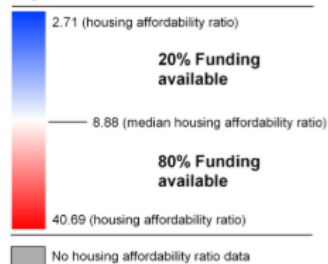
MHCLG: Geographical Targeting Across 5 Housing Programme Funds 30th October 2018

Ratio of median house price to median gross annual (where available) workplace-based earnings by local authority district, England, 2017

Source: ONS, House price to workplace-based earnings ratio, 26th April 2018

Table 5C: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

Legend



- 2.5 Whilst the above funding appears to be substantial, the heat map above illustrates how the funding will be shared across the country. It is clear that approximately 80% of all available funding will be allocated to the London and the South leaving only 20% for the North. The HIF fund for example allows for approx. £100m for the entire northern regions and Stockport has already been successful in being awarded £8.5m grant from the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund to kick-start housing developments in the town centre. The grant will be used to overcome the barriers of infrastructure costs and poor land conditions for Stockport's new interchange, the Weir Mill complex and Hopes Carr (Hempshaw Brook), bringing more than 500 new homes. The possibility of attracting further funding from these sources are limited.

3.0 Progress of Sprinkler System Installation

- 3.1 Detailed report by Stockport Homes on the progress made against the proposed installation of Sprinkler systems to all 22 high-rise residential buildings owned by the Council is included as appendix 1.

4.0 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update

- 4.1 Homelessness poses a significant and increasing challenge to almost all local authorities, with a number of underlying factors. These range from a basic lack of affordable accommodation, through to the roll out of Universal Credit and meeting the often complex needs of rough sleepers. Stockport is no exception to these pressures, particularly at a time where related services addressing issues such as mental ill health and substance abuse face such financial constraints. However, it is aided in its response by a strong record of collaborative working across the statutory and third sectors to provide innovative solutions and take advantage of opportunities on a local and sub-regional basis.
- 4.2 The Council retain the strategic responsibility for addressing homelessness, with Stockport Homes Group (SHG) delivering the main operational services on behalf of the Local Authority. Guided by a five-year strategy that was last reviewed in April 2018, tackling the issue also draws in a wider tier of partners from Health, Social Care and housing providers through to charities such as H3 (Helping the Homeless into Housing).
- 4.3 It is an area with a high public and policy profile, with a commitment by Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester (GM), to end rough sleeping by 2020, and a new national rough sleeping strategy with the same goal for 2027. Whilst those who are literally roofless represent the most visible face of homelessness, the issue has a far wider scope affecting hundreds of households every year in the Borough and encapsulating domestic abuse, landlords ending private rented tenancies and people being asked to leave home by friends and family.
- 4.4 This briefing provides an outline of the current nature and extent of homelessness in the Borough, and key areas of work to address the issue. In particular, it outlines the response to the Mayor's commitment to provide 'A Bed for Every Night' to rough sleepers over the whole of the winter period and other sub-regional initiatives.

4.5 The nature and extent of homelessness

- 4.5.1 The main causes of homelessness within Stockport are the loss of private rented accommodation, domestic abuse and exclusion by parents or family members. This largely reflects the national picture and during 2017/18, 1548 households approached the Housing Options Team at SHG for assistance with their housing situation.
- 4.5.2 The key objective of the Housing Options Team is to prevent the loss of accommodation, but of those seen in 2017/18, 429 households were accepted as being homeless. Of these 188 met the grounds for being in 'priority need' and owed an ongoing duty to provide somewhere to live. However, in all cases where someone is actually rough sleeping, all attempts to provide accommodation are made, whether or not a person considered a 'priority' under legislation.

4.5.3 Homelessness Services are delivered within a prescriptive legal framework, and local authority duties towards homeless people were greatly extended in April 2018 following the introduction of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act. While the numbers approaching SHG as homeless have remained more or less the same in the first two quarters of 2018/19 as 2017/18, the extent of advice and ongoing work required with all applicants irrespective of priority need has increased significantly.

4.5.4 Accommodation provided is usually through SHG in one of the three temporary accommodation schemes they manage, or in one of 20 flats out of the Council's housing stock used for the purpose. This amounts to 115 units of accommodation in total for both families, couples and single people, in a mixture of self-contained flats and rooms with shared facilities. Support is provided to all residents, and there is close partnership working to enable people to move on to settled accommodation with the support they need to maintain a tenancy. Stockport remains only one of two GM local authorities not to have had to make use of hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people, however provision is almost always at full capacity.

4.5.5 Those actually sleeping rough make up a small percentage of those accessing homelessness services, and on any one night there are rarely more than ten people likely to have nowhere to stay. However, this cohort tend to have multiple and complex needs, and in many cases have demonstrated challenging behaviours, such as threats or actual assaults to other residents or staff in temporary accommodation. In these cases SHG and partner agencies seek to maintain contact and work to resolve underlying issues to make further placements possible and sustainable.

4.6 Service Development on a Borough-Wide Level

4.6.1 SHG, aligned with the Council's strategic direction, have continued to develop homelessness services over the past twelve months, with particular regard to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

This has included:

- Extending the mediation service for people asked to leave home by friends or family
- Additional temporary accommodation for single people – increased by 21 units since April 2017
- Improved access to quality, private rented sector accommodation
- Extension of 'housing first' approaches – including towards people experiencing domestic abuse with complex needs
- Development of protocols with key agencies to ensure effective notification of people at risk of homelessness
- Targeted housing options service to older people relieving pressure on Adult Social Care
- Agreeing an armed forces covenant with a focus on housing advice and assistance

4.6.2 The Housing First approach, providing a tenancy with very intensive and holistic support, has proved particularly effective with 15 households accommodated

over 2018. In some cases with a long history of rough sleeping with multiple and complex needs, sustainability rates have been high with outcomes including:

- Significant reductions in alcohol and substance misuse
- Less hospital admissions
- Engagement with primary healthcare
- Less police-call outs and levels of offending

4.6.3 Developing experience in this area has also helped establish partnerships that enable Stockport to play a role in related sub-regional contracts.

4.7 Sub-regional initiatives

4.7.1 Stockport Council is engaged with the development of GM wide approaches towards the prevention and relief of homelessness, which have been core elements of sub-regional work by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Funding of over £11 million has been provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to enable GM to act as a 'homelessness trailblazer', including developing a wide-ranging housing first scheme across all ten boroughs. Main initiatives include:

Winter provision and 'A Bed Every Night' (ABEN)

4.7.2 Currently, the most high profile initiative is the ABEN commitment by the Mayor and the GMCA to aim to provide accommodation for rough sleepers from 1st Nov through to 31st March. This replaced a previous agreement between local authorities to do so when temperatures fell to zero degrees. Co-ordination of the ABEN initiative rests with a steering group led by the GMCA, with specific work streams leading on fundraising, developing common approaches and sharing good practice. SHG are a member of the Group, and the Council have an overarching leadership role through the Greater Manchester Housing Needs Group.

4.7.3 Additional provision has been made available in Stockport through adapting some of the communal areas in the existing SHG managed temporary accommodation schemes, which can provide up to 16 extra bed spaces. As well as providing accommodation, there is a real focus on ensuring people are accessing health services, claiming benefits and receiving the support they need to ensure longer term positive outcomes. Volunteers are assisting paid staff to help people cook meals and take on a befriending role, improving the experience for those staying.

4.7.4 During the first two weeks of ABEN operating in Stockport¹, the most people accommodated on any one night was eight, with seven people moved on into longer-term placements. A local health centre has agreed to register all those accommodated as emergency patients, meaning they can get flu and hepatitis inoculations, as well as accessing general primary medical care and onward referrals to more specialist services.

4.7.5 Alongside the work outlined above, officers from the Council, Stockport Homes, Police and The Wellspring are meeting monthly to coordinate activity and support for individuals that are begging within the town centre. While numbers are low, and very few are actually homeless, they give a perception to the wider public of rough sleeping being an unaddressed issue within the Borough.

Entrenched Rough Sleeper Programme (Social Impact Bond)

- 4.7.6 The GM Social Impact Bond for Entrenched Rough Sleepers (The SIB) had an initial maximum value of £1.8m, and is a payment-by-results programme targeted at entrenched rough sleepers. While having less people meeting the criteria than other areas within GM, six Stockport placements have been accommodated.
- 4.7.7 This scheme was due to end in early 2019, however has now been extended with extra funding to meet demand from Manchester City Centre, which will include ongoing work with a small number people with main links to Stockport.

Homelessness Trailblazer workstreams

- 4.7.8 The Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer Programme was developed across GM in preparation for the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018. £3.8m was awarded for the programme consisting of various themes to improve homelessness prevention works. This is not funding that local authorities can make independent bids for; rather it is assigned for cross-cutting sub-regional activity.
- 4.7.9 This covers areas as diverse as rehousing pathways for offenders and hospital discharges, through to co-ordinated implementation of the new Act. A key element of the Greater Manchester (GM) approach towards preventing and relieving homelessness is to improve access to a quality, private rented sector offer for those in housing need. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) commissioned some consultancy work to look at the best way of meeting this objective, and decided to look at establishing a social lettings scheme across the sub-region. This would seek to incentivise landlords to offer homes to those struggling to find accommodation, by managing or leasing properties for tenants. One option was to create a new entity from scratch, however as several schemes were already in operation by members of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers Group, they were asked to put together a proposal to act as delivery partners. Four providers, Salix, Forviva, Bolton Council and Stockport Homes Group (SHG) have the most advanced services in place (though with differences in how they operate) and have created a plan which the GMCA are currently considering. This will seek to deliver homes across the whole of GM, with SHG focussing on increasing provision within Stockport and providing units in geographically neighbouring areas (exact areas still to be determined). The proposal will enable the four providers to pilot and share information on different initiatives/approaches, with all costs covered through the trailblazer programme, whilst also providing much needed properly managed accommodation. The funding for the Scheme amounts to £960,000 over three years, and is made available through the GMCA's Trailblazer Programme. No additional funding is required by the Council or SHG.

Housing First GM

- 4.7.10 The MHCLG has made £8m available to GM for a three-year pilot to test the Housing First approach on a large scale. With similar schemes announced in Merseyside and the West Midlands, its outcomes will be rigorously assessed and is currently being tendered in GM by the GMCA.

- 4.7.11 A collaborative bid has been made through the GMHPG, with SHG having helped develop a potential model. The outcome of the tender process should be known in December 2018.

5.0 Viaduct Housing Partnership Development Programme

- 5.1 Since March 2017 regular update reports regarding the Viaduct development programme have been presented to the Housing Commission. At the Housing Commission meeting on 19th July 2018 it was agreed that future update reports would be presented to the Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee. This report is the first of these updates.
- 5.2 Full details of the Viaduct development programme are attached as Appendix 2.
- 5.3 In summary the total number of homes completed is 676, which includes 590 new build homes and acquired 86 existing properties. There are currently 219 new homes under construction and there are 272 properties in the pipeline programme.
- 5.4 Significant progress has been achieved since the previous report in July 2018 including the completion of new homes, two development's achieving a start on site and the approval of a planning application and a funding bid. In addition there continues to be high demand for new homes for shared ownership.
- 5.5 New sites are brought forward on an ongoing basis and each is evaluated for its viability. If development can be delivered it will be brought into the programme. Site referrals are always welcome.

5.6 Completions

- 5.6.1 Since the previous update report the following new homes have completed and been handed over from the contractor;
- **St. Thomas' Hospital, Shaw Heath** – this is a development of 59 homes; 28 for affordable rent and 31 for shared ownership. During September and October 2018 all 59 properties were handed over and sold or tenanted.

5.7 Start on Site

- 5.7.1 Since the previous report two new schemes have started on site;
- In September land was acquired and a building contract was entered into to build 12 new one bed flats at Bardsley St. in Heaton Norris. The flats are ring fenced for young people with learning disabilities, enabling and supporting independent living within a fully staffed environment. This scheme will enable the Council to provide the required support in a cost effective way.

- In October a start on site was achieved at York House in Heaton Moor. This development will deliver 11 apartments for shared ownership comprising the refurbishment of an existing Victorian villa into 5 apartments and 6 new build flats within the grounds.

5.8 Pipeline Programme

5.8.1 Developments in relation to the pipeline programme since the previous report are summarised below;

- **Stockholm Rd. Adswood** – A planning application to construct 48 apartments on this vacant plot of land with previous commercial use was granted in July 2018. A funding bid was submitted to Homes England to part fund this project and was subsequently approved. It is anticipated that a start on site will be achieved in December 2018 to deliver 24 new homes for affordable rent and 24 for shared ownership.
- **Booth St. Edgeley** – Tender documents have now been issued for this scheme of 47 new homes. It is expected that the land will be acquired and a building contract will be entered into in January 2019.
- **Hempshaw Lane, Offerton** – it is expected that the delay in acquiring the site as a result of probate in relation to one of the two land owners will be resolved towards the end of November. It is expected that a start on site will be achieved in January 2019.

5.8.2 The team is constantly investigating new opportunities for development and these sites will be added to the pipeline programme once deliverability has been established.

5.9 Sales

5.9.1 To date Viaduct has sold 208 new homes for shared ownership. In addition to this 58 new homes are reserved and awaiting legal completion.

5.9.2 There are currently ten new apartments available for sale as the Lea Rd. development in Heaton Moor was released for sale in October.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the Communities and Housing Scrutiny Committee notes and comments on the contents of this report.

Further information

To discuss this report or for further information please contact Andy Kippax telephone number 0161 474 4319 or by e-mail on andy.kippax@stockport.gov.uk