

**Meeting** Executive

**Portfolio Area** Housing and Investment

**Date** 9 December 2020



## HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY 2020-2030

### KEY DECISION

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek the adoption of the Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS) 2020 – 2030 (Appendix A). The strategy will ensure joined up working between Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), aid decision making and focus on providing suitable long term housing for older people in Stevenage.
- 1.2 The strategy contributes to the Excellent Council Homes priority by reviewing how and what SBC delivers to support older people in Stevenage. It links in with the Housing Development priority by increasing the number of social and affordable homes for older people. This strategy has incorporated feedback from residents in Stevenage to ensure the Council meets the corporate priority of Connecting to our Customers to improve accessibility to older persons housing and support and improve the customer experience.
- 1.3 The strategy is set around four key themes:
  - Housing Development, standards and design

- Information, advice and technology
  - Support and assistance to help people move
  - Inter-organisational working
- 1.4 Each theme has a number of commitments that will be met through the actions detailed in the action plan of the draft strategy. There will be a front facing document that will be produced after the strategy has been approved by the Executive Committee. The 'Strategy on a page' also details the themes, commitments and actions.
- 1.5 It is recognised that this is an ambitious strategy and although there are minimal new resources required to support the commitments, expectation is, through collaborative working, we can pull on resources more widely to produce the outcomes needed. There are a few actions that would only be deliverable if funding is secured and will require a commitment from HCC. There may be a need to have a further discussion with key partners on resourcing the strategy at a future date.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be adopted.
- 2.2 That the Older Persons Strategy delivery post to implement the strategy be agreed (this is included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) draft budget report and Medium Term Financial Security (MTFS) report presented to the December 2020 Executive).
- 2.3 That an interim report be submitted to the Executive in 1 year's time and a progress report in 2 years' time with any resource request or review that may be required.
- 2.4 That a growth bid of £17,000 will be recommended for 2022/23 and included in the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy for modelling purposes for the initiatives as set out in section 5 of the report.
- 2.5 The proposed performance and monitoring indicator details, as set out on page 38 of the draft strategy, be agreed.
- 2.6 That, subject to approval of the draft Strategy, the front facing document be shared with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People and Leader of the Council for approval.
- 2.7 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Housing and Investment), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People, to make any minor amendments as are necessary to the Strategy prior to its publication.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Housing for Older People Strategy (set out at Appendix A to the report) is a joint endeavour with SBC and HCC to improve housing options for older people in Stevenage. This is set within the context of large-scale redevelopment programmes currently being undertaken by SBC; HCC's new Extra Care Programme and Residential / Nursing Care requirement and pressure on the (HRA). The strategy also reflects the increased pressure on services for older people across all statutory services due to the demographic changes; and central government requirements to plan for services that meet older peoples' changing needs and aspirations.
- 3.2 Grant money received through Hertfordshire County Council has steadily reduced since 2013 and has now ceased with the exception of a small amount of grant towards flexicare support. There has been no uplift on the amount received for a number of years and the amount has never covered the cost of the support service provided. SBC have been continuing to subsidise the service to those in receipt of housing benefit, fairer charging or who were 2003 protected (when supporting people started) as it recognised the value for older residents. SBC have not been in a position to continue to fully subsidise the service and in 2017/18 introduced a small weekly support charge, as a contribution. SBC currently still subsidise the support service for these residents although this has decreased over the past 3 years as the charge has increased. The aspiration is to move to a cost neutral position and have a strategy on how to do this through a fair and equitable charging system.

### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

- 4.1 It was decided at the Stevenage Strategic Supported Housing Accommodation Board (SSAB) to produce a joint Housing for Older People strategy to enable both Council's to achieve more for older people in Stevenage by working collaboratively towards the same objective.
- 4.2 This has enabled both Council's to focus on what needs to happen within Stevenage to support older people to remain as independent as they can in their own home and maximising limited resources available to both Councils.
- 4.3 A resident's survey has been conducted in Stevenage for those over the age of 45 including a separate professionals' survey and 2 stakeholder events. The organisations that were consulted with are listed on page 52 of the strategy. It had been planned to do further consultation but due to prioritising work around the coronavirus pandemic, this has not been possible.
- 4.4 The draft strategy has been to the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group, and the Housing Management Advisory Board has had the opportunity to comment on two occasions to get their direction and feedback. Some members also took part in the stakeholder events.

4.5 The consultation and research has led to the recommended key deliverables under each theme, some are listed below:

#### **Housing Development, standards and design**

- Remodel the existing independent living/flexicare schemes to ensure they are fit for purpose through the asset management strategy
- Increase the provision and deliver on the new independent living scheme at Kenilworth and develop further new schemes with a mix of housing types.
- Develop design standards on housing for older people

#### **Information, advice and technology**

- Update SBC website pages with new information on this strategy, development and advice for older people wishing to move and/or their families and carers
- Work with private landlords to develop better understanding of needs of older people living in the private rented sector
- Ensure that integral or retrofitted technology is reflected in the Asset Management strategy
- Ensure new build properties are connected to good quality broadband services
- Develop marketing materials and possible show homes to help older people understand what benefits specialist housing can have.

#### **Support and assistance to help people move**

- Develop a business case and plan for expanding Community Support Services across the town.
- Recruit a dedicated resource to act as a single point of contact for older people including those with complex needs and needing specific assistance to manage a move
- Review our Allocations Policy to make it easier for older people to move into suitable housing
- Undertake joint awareness campaigns across services linking older people's benefit take up and housing options advice
- Investigate ways of funding a handyperson service to help older people with practical aspects of moving to a more suitable home.

#### **Inter-organisational working**

- Review Stevenage's Older Person's Network to create a HOPS Partnership comprising a range of statutory and voluntary services and older person representatives including those with disabilities.
- Undertake joint professionals' workshops to improve operational understanding between organisations and remove barriers to collaborative working
- Identify and exploit land opportunities in both public and private ownership that can help increase housing options across all tenures for older people

- Review information and data sources and recording mechanisms (cross authority) to capture strategic information on older people's housing needs and aspirations.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

- 5.1.1 To manage the implementation of the strategy there will need to be an Older Persons Strategy Delivery Post that links in with both Councils to ensure that the programme is on track and will also manage the projects within the action plan. It is estimated that this post be a grade 5, approximately £35,000 (subject to job evaluation). This is in the HRA draft budget report and Financial Security report going to the December Executive.
- 5.1.2 The costs of remodelling existing schemes and making the stock fit for purpose is within the Asset Management Strategy and has an allocated budget already identified in the HRA business plan.
- 5.1.3 Future older people housing development programmes have been included in the 30 year HRA business plan. Housing development will maximise any opportunities for funding bids to support these developments.
- 5.1.4 To inform reviews of strategic housing market assessments (SHMA), local housing need assessments and Local Plan / Planning Policy updates a one off sum of £5,000 would be required to commission any data needed. This is likely to be needed in year 2022/23.
- 5.1.5 To review the Private Stock Condition, a new survey would need to be commissioned (from 2022/23 onwards) which would be a one off cost of approximately £12,000.
- 5.1.6 To support the Aids and Adaptations Policy a growth of £30,000 has been requested for an Aids and Adaptations Co-ordinator and is in the HRA draft budget report and MTFS report going to the December 2020 Executive.
- 5.1.7 Currently 20 hours at grade 6 is incorporated in the Housing and Investment base establishment as part of the Business Unit Review for the post of Health and Wellbeing Programme Officer. SBC has been successful in getting funding from Hertfordshire County Council to cover the remaining 17 hours until end March 2022. SBC will be receiving £12,500 for 20/21 and £25,000 for 21/22. Recruitment is underway.
- 5.1.8 Future provision of Housing related support funding from HCC is still unknown.
- 5.1.9 There may be resources needed to meet the standards as set out in the Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance which came out on 20th October 2020 but this work needs to be scoped out.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 In the implementation of the Housing for Older People Strategy, Stevenage Borough Council must have regard to:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985;
- Housing Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Tenancy strategy
- Resident engagement strategy

5.2.2 The Decent Homes Standard sets out that social housing must: meet the current statutory minimum standard of housing, be in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services, and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. The white paper published on 17 November has no detailed comment on Decent Homes standards.

### **5.3 Risk Implications**

5.3.1 There is limited land availability in the town which is a risk to developing significant numbers of new housing specifically for older people within wider housing market demands.

5.3.2 There is a risk that if the resources are unable to be provided for the action plan then delivery will not be possible.

5.3.3 There is a risk that partners will not engage with the strategy action plan, especially if resources are reduced and they face other pressures

5.3.4 There is a risk that Covid 19 and lock down restrictions could delay or prevent some of the action plan progressing.

5.3.5 There is a risk that the Council will not get enough residents involved in some of the project work.

5.3.6 Some of the actions within the strategy are dependent on HCC's continuing support and if this changed SBC would need to review the strategy.

### **5.4 Policy Implications**

5.4.1 Many of the policy implications for the Strategy will build on existing strategies and policies, but there will be some new processes that may be required. Because the Strategy is a joint one, it is important that understanding of what it means is understood and new ways of working are developed between the two authorities, within the context of Adult Care Services' work across the whole county.

- 5.4.2 The HOPS Partnership is suggested to further the Council's co-production ambitions, and to also allow residents to help shape, deliver and assess activities in the town. It is important that, while statutory organisations will have a place at the table, ideally the Partnership will have residents involved, and will produce well designed and cost-effective solutions to meeting community issues for older people. It is expected that this will also build on existing networks, rather than setting up duplicate or competing activities, and ideally will also link with HCC's Older Person's Co-production Board.
- 8.3 Proposals that may be suggested relating to adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) or of using DFG grant in innovative ways in the Borough, will need to be considered by the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency Board, and may require sign off from the other authorities who belong to this consortium before being able to be actioned.
- 8.4 It is hoped that actions and policy changes that arise from this Strategy will be able to be replicated in other districts where appropriate, and that learning will be shared as the Strategy is reviewed and refined over its lifetime.

## **8 Planning Implications**

- 9.1 The government has strengthened the revised National Planning Policy Framework so that local planning authorities are expected to have planning policies which identify the size, type and tenure of homes required for different groups in the community, including older people and people with disabilities. Further information is included in the Planning practice guidance on housing for older and disabled people.

## **9 Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

- 10.1 It is likely that some processes may need to be developed or realigned as a result of this Strategy. The action plan needs to be incorporated into department service plans to ensure staff are aware of what they need to do to support the strategy including working with partners.

## **10 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 11.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered, the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.
- 11.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 11.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic

and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

11.4 An EqlA has been completed and is in Appendix B.

## **12 Other Implications**

12.1 Specific considerations relating to data management and sharing may be required for specific projects. These will be scoped as part of the project initiation process, and a DPIA should be completed in these cases. GDPR guidelines will be adhered to.

## **13 Strategy development**

13.1 The work has been guided by a series of surveys, workshops and events, and feedback from both residents and people who work with older people to shape the main themes of the strategy, and to guide the recommendations within it. This work has been supported by national and local research and data sources, and best practice from other areas and national organisations.

13.2 The Strategy has one Strategic Objective: to enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer. It was felt that this met both housing objectives and social care but was sufficiently flexible to allow interagency and collaborative working.

13.3 The four themes that were identified as important to service users and workers were:

- Development, standards and design:
- Information, advice and technology:
- Assistance and support to help people move:
- Inter-organisational working

13.4 An Action Plan has been added to the strategy document which brings together the commitments shown in green at the end of each section. Each action has been given a short/medium- or long-term timeframe, lists the themes it relates to, states who is responsible for the action being achieved, and major stakeholders. Detailed timelines have not at this point been included but there is another version of the action plan (Appendix C) that



contains approximate costs to commission pieces of work and confirmation of resources available.

- 13.5 A number of performance and monitoring indicators have been proposed on page 38 of the Strategy. These have been suggested as suitable ways of monitoring whether the Strategy is meeting its stated aims but should not be too onerous or burdensome to gather. Where possible, these are statistics that should already be in existence, but have not been brought together in a single dashboard. It is proposed that the HOPS Partnership Board is allowed a role in evaluating and monitoring the success of the Strategy, and in the review process, with reports back to the Executive at agreed intervals.
- 13.6 Throughout the process of developing the Strategy, the timeline has changed several times. This has been due to a number of factors, including the scope of the Strategy being reassessed following feedback and new research becoming available, difficulties in staff time and capacity to complete the work (both from HCC and SBC), pre-Election period considerations, and most recently the Covid 19 pandemic response.
- 13.7 In the current climate around how local authorities and county councils are funded through the proposed devolution there is no certainty of funding from Hertfordshire County Council or Government therefore SBC is aiming to achieve as near to a cost neutral support service that is flexible to the demand needed in the town for older people.
- 13.8 The draft Strategy has been sent to a number of stakeholders for their feedback and agreement to the actions, and has also been reviewed by Public Health.
- 13.9 The Strategy was reviewed by Stevenage's Strategic Supported Housing Accommodation Board on 5 June 2020. It was noted that the current situation has highlighted the need for a different housing offer for older people, and that more self-contained housing where people can isolate more safely should be encouraged. It was also noted that this strategy would need cross-organisational support, and that a resource mapping exercise will need to be done if the actions are approved.
- 13.10 This strategy is also going through HCC's governance process for approval.
- 13.11 SBC are leading the way with this exemplar joint Housing for Older People Strategy with HCC, and County are keen to reproduce this in other districts once approved.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

**1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:**

BD1 Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance

BD2 Draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030

## **APPENDICES**

A Draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030 with appendices

B Equality Impact Assessment

C Action Plan with resources

D Strategy Plan on a Page