

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
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JOINT HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the initial progress of the Joint Housing for Older People's Strategy agreed by the Executive in December 2020 and outlines the next steps to be undertaken.
- 1.2 The next steps include a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and to work on a number of projects in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council that will benefit older residents in Stevenage.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the progress of the Housing for Older People Strategy following its adoption in 2020 be noted.
- 2.2 That the future plans, as identified in the Action Plan, including their financial implications, be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The joint 10-year Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS) was adopted in December 2020 following its development by Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). The project team held public and professional consultations to ensure that the strategy considered the future needs of the town's older population.
- 3.2 The HOPS was developed in the context of:
- the delivery of large-scale housing development programmes currently being undertaken by SBC.
 - HCC's new Extra Care Programme and Residential / Nursing Care requirement; and
 - Ever increasing pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 3.3 The planned development programmes create a new supply of high-quality accommodation options for older people and provide the opportunity to decommission and redevelop some of the ageing and low demand housing schemes within the borough.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 The HOPS responds to objectives set in the Social Housing and Adult Social Care Reform White Paper and the Social Housing White Paper.
- 3.6 The vision of the HOPS is to deliver 'Homes for Healthy Ageing in Stevenage' and its strategic outcome is 'to enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer'.

Four key themes were identified:

3.7 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 in 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.

Assistance and support 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 the Council's 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 handyman 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.

3.8 Upon adoption of the Strategy in 2020, the Executive requested this progress report.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was agreed to delay the launch of the strategy to enable resources to focus on the pandemic response. A HOPS Project Manager was subsequently recruited in January 2022; the role is jointly funded with Hertfordshire County Council.
- 4.2 The HOPS officially launched in September 2022 which saw 400 people attend over the course of the day. A number of residents registered their interest in the Older Person's Network, one of which went on to attend the Older Person's Network event in November 2022.

4.3 The Older Person's Network relaunched in November 2022. A memorandum of understanding has been drafted and is currently being reviewed by the Network. The group have provisionally agreed to meet quarterly with Task and Finish groups meeting as often as is necessary. The group are currently agreeing on the membership of the group and vision for the network.

4.4 As part of the HOPS Action Plan a range of support activities were undertaken supported by Specialist Support Officers recruited during 2021. Achievement highlights are outlined below.

4.5 Highlights of health and wellbeing delivery:

- The return of coffee mornings following the reopening of the lounges in October 2021
- The Health and Wellbeing programme officer completed the second scheme-wide health and wellbeing survey. The results indicated issues around physical health, loneliness, anxiety and digital engagement post the Covid-19 pandemic. It also demonstrated a year-on-year improvement in residents' knowledge of activities taking place in the schemes, indicating a positive impact of the health and wellbeing programme.
- Free 12 week 'Love to Move' chair-based exercise classes in collaboration with Stevenage Leisure Limited.
- Delivered a digital inclusion pilot in collaboration with North Herts and Stevenage Centre for Voluntary Service (NHSCVS). Residents received one-to-one support with Digital Champions to support with smartphones, tablets and laptops. Activities are currently on hold but will commence once again in the near future once recruitment challenges are addressed.
- An Expression of Interest had been submitted to The National Lottery's Reaching Communities Fund to support the Health and Wellbeing programme. The expression of interest was submitted in November. An initial response is due back in 12 weeks. This programme will also link into the new SBC leisure contract and the Active Communities Service, aimed at delivering physical activity to groups who would not access traditional leisure facilities.

4.6 Highlights of accommodation and complex needs support:

- The Local Lettings Policy has been reviewed to make it easier for older people to access independent living and flexicare. It gives them more choice and makes the process smoother when downsizing.
- The number of voids in the specialist accommodation schemes has reduced by 60%. In April 2021, 80 voids were recorded and 21 (Independent Living and Flexicare ready to let voids) in December 2022
- The Void loss was reduced from £36,375 in April 2021 to £23,977 in July 2022
- From April 2021 to July 2022, the Accommodation and Complex Needs Officer let 94 properties.

- 4.7 A significant focus of the HOPS has been about developing the right housing provision to meet future needs of older people. This has included a number of measures to make effective use of existing Council housing stock and to work with partners to create new housing to better meet future needs.
- 4.8 A Downsizing Pilot was launched in September to further incentivise people who are under occupying to move into more appropriate accommodation. The pilot enables residents to have one additional bedroom more than their basic need, a change that will be adopted in the upcoming Allocations Policy review. The results of this pilot will inform the Under Occupation Policy review. Officers have contacted 132 residents via phone and email resulting in 80 registering their interest. Of those who have registered their interest, 18 are currently bidding on properties, and 5 have downsized into Specialist Accommodation. A number of properties have been returned including a 2 bed ground floor flat, 2 bed house and 2 x 3 bed houses. The Downsizing Officer has noted that the extra bedroom is proving to be an effective incentive to downsizing; however, challenges remain around the lack of two bed accommodation available. There are two bedroom accommodation available once the new Independent Living Scheme at Kenilworth has been built.

Active management of older person's housing

- 4.9 Some voids in sheltered housing are to be expected where the housing stock is particularly old and cannot be fundamentally renewed without demolition. In pursuit of delivering the Council's flagship Independent Living scheme at Kenilworth a decision was taken to demolish a failing and low demand scheme at Asquith Court so as to make space for the new development that transforms the accommodation offer available to older people. A number of other low demand, and economically unviable schemes, are being assessed for their long term suitability and the opportunity they afford to improve on the current accommodation offer. As such, as this work completes, a further report will be presented to Executive in the coming year to update members on decision areas that will require consideration. Central to this will be a customer focused approach that seeks to improve the accommodation offer for older people, as well as supporting them with a host of measures that makes moving to a new home a less disruptive experience.
- 4.10 Monthly meetings are scheduled with the Planning Team to ensure that the priorities identified in the HOPS are adopted into the Local Plan review. SBC and North Herts planning team have jointly commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). A Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLLA) is scheduled 2023 which will identify land opportunities for older persons housing. Once findings have been finalised it will be necessary to review the strategy to ensure it continues to meet the desired outcomes.

- 4.11 A joint professionals' network is currently being formulated to further drive this work. The group will consist of professionals across Adult Care Service, Health, Housing and Development. The network will implement strategic plans and identify areas for collaboration and more effective working. Work to develop design standards has also commenced. The HOPS Project Manager has conducted a public consultation and continues to meet with staff across teams to gather the aspirations for future housing designs. The Housing Development Team will further progress this work to consider inclusion into future schemes along with any additional resourcing requirements.
- 4.12 The HOPS feeds into the work of the Stevenage Supported Housing Strategic Board which is jointly organised between HCC and SBC with a view to understanding and helping to address housing demand for people who draw on care and support or may need it in future. This extends beyond older people support and is a useful forum for supported housing related projects.
- 4.13 Officers are involved in a number of work streams with HCC. These are outlined below:
- HCC planning and ACS commissioned the Older Persons and Adult Disability Care Housing Need Model report. This research will help to determine the future demand for specialist accommodation across the county.
 - SBC officers will be involved in the early development work for a new care home in Stevenage
 - Supporting the feasibility of creating Enablement flats to support HCC's Discharge to Assess work.
 - A comprehensive response from across Council services had been submitted to HCC's Extra Care Consultation. The consultation identifies HCC's projected demand for Extra Care accommodation and the appetite for collaboration.

Summary and Forward Plan

- 4.14 There were 14 short to medium term actions identified in the action plan, 13 of which have commenced. Of those that have started, 4 are near completion and 2 have been completed. A further 4 medium to long term actions were identified in the action plan. Work has started on 3 of these actions with 1 nearing completion (see Appendix 1).
- 4.15 Whilst good progress has been made against the initial objectives set out in the HOPS, the changing nature of local government financing, community needs and service demands will mean that the strategy will need to continue to evolve. Following completion of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in Quarter 4 2023/24, a further review of the strategy will be undertaken and proposed changes reported back to Executive accordingly.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 SBC has been successful in securing funding from Hertfordshire County Council for 17 hours of the Health and Wellbeing Officer role. The service is currently pursuing additional funding from the National Lottery Fund's Reach Communities grant to continue this work over the next 3 years. If successful, the bid will also support the Community Support Service, Hoarding Support Scheme and accommodation and complex needs support initiatives.
- 5.1.2 The costs of remodelling of planned schemes and making the stock fit for purpose is within the HRA Asset Management Strategy and has an allocated budget already identified in the HRA business plan.
- 5.1.3 To review the Private Stock Condition, as stated in the action plan, a new survey would need to be commissioned. This would be a one-off cost of approximately £12,000, this work will commence this work in 2023/24.
- 5.1.4 SBC's Housing and Planning are jointly funding the upcoming SHMA. £5,000 was ring-fenced to update the SHMA in the adopted HOPS. The first draft is currently being reviewed and we expect the final report to be ready in Quarter 4 2022/23.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The HOPS was adopted by SBC and HCC in December 2020. The project team held public and professional consultations to ensure that the strategy considered the future housing and support needs of the Town. The HOPS also takes into consideration the:
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Care Act 2014

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 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.
- 5.3.4 There is a risk that external partners and service providers do not or stop engaging with SBC to deliver some of the actions identified in the action plan

5.4 Policy Implications

- 5.4.1 The strategy is impacted by a number of SBC's housing policies such as the Allocation Policy. The HOPS Project Manager is also involved in the Local Plan review to ensure that the needs of older people are included in future planning.

5.4.2 HCC policies/strategies that the HOPS links into are:

- Connected Lived model for social care
- Hertfordshire's Ten Year Supported Accommodation Strategy 2017-27
- Hertfordshire's Extra Care Housing Strategic Business Case
- Hertfordshire's 2017 Cabinet decision on the Future Development of Care Homes in
- Hertfordshire (Decision 17032)
- Market Position Statement

5.5 Climate Change Implications

5.5.1 As part of the Council's commitment to tackling climate change new housing provision is considered with regards to the environmental impact of that development. The design guide will address efficiency as a key area for consideration for new development, drawing on both industry best practice guidance and new regulatory requirements.

5.6 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

5.6.1 The HOPS Project Manager is currently managing the delivery of the strategy.

5.6.2 If the Council is unsuccessful in the Reaching Communities bid there will be a need to review the Health and Wellbeing post, as 20 hours is in the establishment whilst the remaining 17 hours is reliant on external funding. The current post is due to end in March 2023. If the Council does not secure extra funding it is likely this post will cease and there will be associated redundancy costs. The Council will also need to look at whether it can deliver some of the other projects detailed in the bid in a different way or it will have to reduce its commitment to the strategy accordingly.

5.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.7.1 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the 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.

5.7.2 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;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5.7.3 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.

5.7.4 An updated EqIA will be submitted alongside the revised HOPS in 2023 following changes in relevant legislation.

5.8 **Service Delivery Implications**

5.8.1 The HOPS and its Key Performance Indicators will be reviewed following the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Land Availability Assessment, which will help identify the future demand for specialist accommodation in the town.

6. **Background documents**

6.1 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 Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030

7. **Appendices**

Appendix A – HOPS Action Plan