

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

#### **HOUSING STRATEGY – PRIVATE SECTOR AND COUNCIL HOMES**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

To provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) with an overview of themes 2 and 3 of the Housing Strategy, and ask them to identify areas for more in-depth review.

##### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to consider the content of these themes of the Housing Strategy and identify the key areas of interest to OSC for future agenda items.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

###### **3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Housing Strategy supports the following Wellbeing Strategy priority:

- Housing

###### **3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes**

SBC's Housing Strategy is also a central element of the following Five Year Plan outcome:

- Our residents will live in good quality homes

##### **4. Other Implications**

###### **(a) Financial**

As the report covers work and proposals which have already been made, there are no financial implications attached to the compilation of this report.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
Depends on recommendations made in section 2				

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

Local authorities' housing policies are subject to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This and other relevant legislation (e.g. Equalities Act 2010) have been incorporated into the Housing Strategy.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Equalities considerations have been taken into account during the compilation of the Housing Strategy.

5. Supporting Information

**Theme 2 – Private Sector**

5.1 Slough's housing stock breakdown is comprised of 52% owner occupier, 28% Private Rented Sector(PRS) and 20% social housing of which 12% is council owned and 8% by other Social Housing (Housing Associations). This breakdown illustrates the importance of PRS to Slough which houses a third of Slough's population. Furthermore, it is not disputed that this will continuously and incrementally increase for the foreseeable future and the potential Heathrow expansion (Runway 3) will put further pressure on demand for housing.

5.2 **What we have done so far:**

- We have increased the staff resource in the Housing Regulation Team.
- Commissioned a review of Private Sector Housing through Building Research Establishment (BRE) to determine the breakdown and condition of the private sector stock in Slough.
- This will enable the team to develop proactive intervention going forward. The available data accurately and clearly maps out the areas with a disproportionate number of PRS which is impacting community cohesion as well as increasing ASB and environmental crime. This data will enable us to better target areas worse affected.
- We have reviewed the main Policies and Procedure to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- We engaged the internal Audit Team to carry out an independent audit of the service, processes and procedure with a view to accelerate and prioritise an improvement plan.
- We have put in place a process to issue civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution to deter Rough Landlords. This further demonstrates zero tolerance for unscrupulous Landlords who exploit some of the most vulnerable residents in Slough.

- We have developed an excellent and effective partnership with Thames Valley Police (TVP), Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS) and the Home Office to deal with criminal activities, ASB and tackle exploitation of vulnerable residents in PRS.
- Our partnership work with RBFRS has become a particularly significant post Grenfell and as a result of policy and legislative changes introduced by the government as a consequence of the tragic fire. The new Guidance has identified Housing Regulation Services and the use of the HA 2004 as the most appropriate vehicle to enforce the removal of ACM cladding in relation to private sector buildings. This together with fire safety review /audit of all high-rise buildings in Slough has put tremendous pressure on the council's Housing Regulation Team.
- We have established and delivered an effective and successful empty property strategy to deal with derelict abandoned long term empty properties. The Table in **Appendix A** provides updates in respect to progress made to date.

#### **5.4 What we plan to do :**

- Complete the process of mapping and development of policies and procedures.
- We have commenced the evidence gathering preparatory works for introducing a borough wide Licensing Scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) regardless of size or number of occupants. The initial evidence based report will be taken to Cabinet in September 2018.
- To formalise / develop proactive intervention rather than the current reactive approach. We intend to proactively identify and tackle rogue landlords who continuously break the law and exploit the most vulnerable. This will be developed and delivered in parallel with the Additional HMO Licensing Scheme.
- Carry out the feasibility of introducing a Landlords Accreditation Scheme to support good Landlords.
- Develop outcome based performance monitoring

The effectiveness of our approach and actions will be monitored through regular Neighbourhood Management Team meetings and the Housing Strategy Monitoring Board.

#### **Theme 3 – Council Homes**

#### **5.5 The Council owns over 7,000 tenanted and leasehold homes. They are its most valuable physical asset and play an increasingly significant role in the town in providing accommodation for people on low or modest incomes.**

#### **5.6 What we have done so far:**

- Major investment plans are in place which will mean neighborhood services programming £100m spend on existing homes over the next 7 years and subject to planning, Osborne Property Services Ltd are capable of building 500 new homes over the next 3 years. The presentation at **Appendix B** provides details of the HRA Asset Management Strategy.
- Osborne Property Services Limited (Osborne), appointed in June 2017, with contract commencement from December 2017, and formal contract performance from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Service improvements for this year of £17 million for repairs, maintenance and investment contract are underway.

- Undertaken a complete review of compliance issues in respect to gas, water, electrical, asbestos and fire risks. We have committed £500k to survey to establish asbestos and fire risk assessments. Have committed to demolishing Tower House & Ashbourne House high rise blocks due to risk. £3m of work related to fire risk assessment recommendations are in progress at Broom House & Poplar House high rise blocks.
- The garage issues within the strategy' have been implemented with 27 of the 165 garage compounds' identified by residents, ward members, Thames Valley Police and the neighborhood enforcement team as high risk due to ASB, fly tipping and with no demand for use in their current condition are being cleared and in the process of refurbishment.
- A further 24 garage compounds previously designated as non-viable for development have been re-evaluated with 329 of the 500 new homes (see above) which may be built in the next 2 years.
- In collaboration with residents the Council has undertaken a major Options Appraisal to look at the future of the Council's homes over the next 20 years. Whilst the HRA Business Plan enables the required investment for existing Council Homes to be of a level that can ensure sustainable repairs and services, we are actively reviewing the options to gain funding to provide new homes which includes institutional financing, slough shared ownership, use of Right-to-Buy receipts, bids to central government and partnerships inclusive of working with social providers.

### **5.7 What we plan to do :**

- The Government have announced £500m fund for new build for which we intend to bid by the 7<sup>th</sup> September deadline with proposals for new homes that can be constructed in Slough over the next 2 years.
- Ensure the contractual commitments for repairs, maintenance and investment service are honoured by Osborne and demonstrate a marked improvement in service.
- Review and implement a more effective neighbourhood housing management structure that can complement the Osborne commitments to enhanced customer service and community engagement. This will include working with the DSO on environmental estate management, liaising with the Neighbourhood Resilience & Enforcement Team and Thames Valley Police for an effective response to antisocial behaviour, creating more effective community and resident engagement through working with community teams and establishing credible neighbourhood forums.
- Create a 'Trading Partnership' with Osbornes so as to offer leaseholders, private landlords and residents maintenance and refurbishment services. These will include gas servicing, repairs, refurbishments such as kitchens, bathrooms, extensions and new build on small sites. This is intended to offer residents choice and assured quality, it is also offered to enable colleagues in Adult Social Care Services, Children's and Health Trusts to readily commission works to enable homes to be suitable and fit for use.

### **6. Comments of Other Committees**

This report has not been considered by any other committees at SBC.

**7. Conclusion**

The objectives and the resulting actions demonstrate the Council's commitment to improve homes across all tenure and in particular the PRS to ensure our residents live in safe and decent homes.

We would welcome Members' comments and suggestions to improve the process and our approach to achieve better outcomes

**8. Appendices Attached**

- 'A' - Derelict, abandoned long term empty properties.
- 'B' - HRA Asset Management Strategy

**9. Background Papers**

None.