

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

FIVE YEAR PLAN – OUTCOME 4

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report updates the Scrutiny Panel on progress of the Outcome 4 work stream of the Council's Five Year Plan.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

That the Panel considers and comments on the progress of the Outcome 4 Action Plan.

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

The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA

3.1 Housing is one of the key priorities of Slough's Joint Wellbeing Strategy (SJWS). It contributes to reducing inequalities in health through access to high quality housing. There are clear links between housing and the JSNA priorities around improving health conditions, particularly mental health and protecting vulnerable children.

3.2 **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 4 of Slough's Five Year Plan 2017-2021 states: "Our residents will have access to good quality homes". This outcome recognises the critical links between improved health and wellbeing and affordable good quality housing.

3.3 The group, meeting to discuss Outcome 4 are drawn from across the Council but feature staff from Strategic Housing, Neighbourhoods, Planning, Policy and Performance. The group devised an action plan to address the issues of Outcome 4 and the action plan can be found at Appendix 1 with an update on the actions.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, indirectly there are very significant financial implications for the Council given the rising numbers of homeless households residing in expensive temporary accommodation. A number of measures are being taken to address the situation and some of these will be highlighted in the body of the report.

(b) Risk Management

There are no direct risk management implications arising from this report, although the report addresses some compliance issues in the Council's managed housing stock.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no direct human rights implications arising from this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment is not necessary for the Outcome 4 Action Plan.

5. **Background Information**

5.1 The Outcome 4 Group interpreted the Five Year Plan 2017-2021, Outcome 4 "Our residents will have access to good quality Homes" into six actions: -

- 1) Increase the number of Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings being built and ensure existing stock is maintained and adapted where necessary;
- 2) Robust regulation of the private rented sector to ensure health and safety standards are met;
- 3) Make best use of existing public sector housing stock;
- 4) Use our enabling powers to influence development across all tenures and with a diverse range of partners for local people;
- 5) Prevent homelessness where possible through early intervention and using a range of housing options and
- 6) The Council will actively promote a new garden suburb in an area to the north of Slough.

5.2 The Action Plan at Appendix 1 shows a brief summary of the updated position of where officers are, in relation to progress. However, below is a more detailed summary of the position.

6 **Summary**

6.1 Increase the number of Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings being built and ensure existing stock is maintained and adapted where necessary

6.1.1 Full implementation depends on adoption of the new Local Plan. Partial implementation can progress sooner through adoption, by Planning Committee, of non statutory planning guidance on what is required from developers (as part of the Developers Guide). Both will require gathering of evidence of need.

Adoption of a new Local Plan will depend on the timescale for the Heathrow third runway decision on the forthcoming Development Consent Order. Final submission of the Order is due sometime in 2020.

6.1.2 Cabinet approved a housing revenue asset management strategy in April that delegated the neighbourhood service lead to implement. The strategy outlined the key priorities to not only ensure existing stock is maintained, a process to establish if properties or parts of an estate such as garage sites, the tower blocks meet the needs of the future. The outcome to date has established potential for 500 new homes, demolition of two tower blocks and feasibility for adapting 164 bedsit bungalows to increase their design to create up to date accommodation.

6.2 Robust regulation of the private rented sector to ensure health and safety standards are met

6.2.1 A report will be presented to Cabinet on 17th September 2018, which will recommend a licensing scheme; however, the details are still being finalised. The Cabinet report is to seek approval to carry out the required consultation. If Cabinet approve the recommendations, there will start a ninety day statutory consultation in October 2018, which will end in early January 2019. A final report, with the detail of the scheme will be presented to Cabinet, possibly in February 2019 with possible implementation of the scheme in April 2019.

6.2.2 A pilot Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme was introduced in Chalvey a few years ago, where approximately 43 Landlords registered. However, the scheme was not sustainable in the format it was developed in and therefore did not continue.

6.3 Make best use of existing public sector housing stock

6.3.1 The Option Appraisals work, looking across all of the Council owned housing stock, has offered a number of opportunities for potential development. Although this work is not complete, a number of opportunities are being explored to add extensions and loft conversions to properties where this is possible.

6.3.2 This has been added to the £14m of investment being spent on the Council's housing stock, which is under way, with the RMI Contractor, Osbornes. There is also a programme of compliance work taking place on the council's housing stock. This work is ongoing but to date work on policy, procedures and programmes including gas compliance checks have been completed. A gap analysis of data is currently being undertaken for Fire Risk Assessments, Asbestos, Legionella and electrical testing.

6.3.3 A number of garage sites are being considered for further phases of the small sites council homes programme as well as modular construction. Garrick House is also being considered for remodeling to provide additional extra care homes.

6.3.4 The Council recently reviewed and agreed a new incentives scheme for Council tenants trading down from 3 bedrooms to 1 bedroom, for example. There are currently 51 Council tenants and 9 Housing Association tenants registered for downsizing. Last year 24 households were housed through this route. Since April 2018, 6 Council tenants have downsized, releasing 17 'unoccupied' bedrooms.

6.3.5 Officers are looking at how to make the existing mutual exchange scheme more

effective as well as discussing the introduction of a Multiple Exchange Transfer Scheme, which will be considered for tenants who are subject to the bedroom tax.

6.4 Use our enabling powers to influence development across all tenures and with a diverse range of partners for local people

6.4.1 There are approximately 600 homes planned and under construction in private sector developments, to be delivered in 2018/19. A proportion of these will be affordable. There is also due to be 43 new build affordable housing completions this year.

6.4.2 The Council has identified approximately 500 housing units, on council owned land, that it is currently working up into a bid for resources to government, to build. These sites are a combination of garage and other sites. These proposals if accepted would see these homes developed over three years from 2019.

6.4.3 A number of meetings have taken place with Housing Associations to discuss with them their approach to development in the borough as this has been a valuable source of affordable housing in the past. Housing Associations generally feel that they are disenfranchised from developing in Slough. They feel that a number of developments are hand-picked for our main partners and that because the Council are building housing themselves, they feel that there are no potential opportunities to buy land at discounted rates or at all.

6.4.4 They also feel that the current grant rates are far from fair and does not take into account the rising prices in Slough and that essentially Slough display many of the London attributes and feel that grant rates haven't kept pace. The Council undertook to discuss the grant rate issues with Homes England to see if there is any flexibility in their approach.

6.5 Prevent homelessness where possible through early intervention and using a range of housing options

6.5.1 A draft of the emerging homelessness strategy is currently being consulted on with our partners, but the deadline for its completion has been revised due to a number of reasons: -

6.5.1.1 The homelessness situation in the borough has worsened since the last time this was discussed at this scrutiny meeting. The number of homeless households in all forms of temporary accommodation has increased to 470 as at the end of July 2018. The temporary accommodation budget is currently projected to be £2.1m overspent.

6.5.1.2 Campbell Tickell Consultancy have been commissioned to review the homelessness service, looking at the method of working and this work will bring learning from across the country so that we can adopt more effective working practices, if this is an issue. This will be a root and branch review as we need to ensure that we are not accepting homeless households who do not meet the necessary criteria. However, since the new Homeless Reduction Act was implemented on 3rd April 2018, homeless households approaching the Council has risen sharply. The review work will also inform the homelessness strategy of any approaches, which we need to adopt.

6.6 The Council will actively promote a new garden suburb in an area to the north of Slough

6.6.1 The Council considers that it cannot meet its housing need in full within the Borough boundary. It has put forward a proposal for some need to be met by a northern expansion of Slough substantially within South Bucks district. It is seeking the cooperation of South Bucks District Council to assist with meeting the towns needs and will make representations to the forthcoming South Bucks Local Plan Inquiry during 2019. The Council's current northern expansion scheme suggests between 5,000 and 10,000 homes.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The Outcome 4 Action Plan 2018/19 drew outstanding actions from the Housing Strategy. A new Housing Strategy needs to be commissioned at some point in the near future as it is likely that successful completion of the Outcome 4 actions will deliver the remaining actions from the Housing Strategy. The action plan covers a broad range of housing issues and will continue to be monitored until completion.

8. Appendices

'A' - Update on Progress

9. Background Papers

Minutes of Outcome 4 meetings.