

Housing & Communities Oct 2016

Priorities of the Portfolio

- More homes for local people
- Service outcomes for the community
- Living within our means
- Working with others to achieve more

Performance

The implementation of our new acquisition & development programme continues to progress with 32 properties purchased during 2015/16, bringing the total to 135 over the last 4 years. The development of 21 new homes on the North Milton estate has also started and is due for completion in 2017. Right to buy sales continue to be high, with sales of 26 during 2015/16.

Housing continues to work with our partner housing associations to provide additional affordable homes and 31 new homes were provided during 2015/16 which is an increase from last year. The number of properties under the private sector leasing scheme continues to be above the 100 target.

208 grants/loans were provided for disabled households to remain independent within their own homes, this is above the original target set.

The number of applicants on the Homesearch register continues to be reviewed and has reduced from 4287 to 3883 during the year. The number of households in temporary accommodation has increased to 395 at the end of the year but the households in bed & breakfast has reduced from 22 to 17 during the year.

Introductory and fixed term tenancies continue to be used which should ensure greater flexibilities in managing our tenancies and housing need.

98.7% of our housing & garage rents were collected during the year. This has been achieved despite the ongoing changes to welfare reform.

Close to 99% of our council-owned housing stock continues to meet the decent home standard, which ensures our properties meet a statutory minimum standard of repair.

Appletree Careline has successfully achieved accreditation with the industry regulator (TSA) demonstrating high performance on call response times, alarm equipment repairs and user satisfaction. Development of the service has also seen the introduction of a new Careline wristband that provides added safety outside of the home and increased promotion of the service to grow the customer base. Additionally the functionality of the community alarms system is being explored to enhance the safety arrangements for employees and negate the need for a specialist lone working system.

Between April and July 2016 355 crime related incidents were recorded by the CCTV team, 23 of which led to directed arrests on camera. The Police continue to view this service as a valuable deterrent for preventing crime and a very useful tool for assisting officers in tackling live incidents.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour have reduced by 2.9% across the New Forest, year on year. The Safer New Forest Partnership continues to address this, working together to maintain the reduction. The council is also taking the lead on raising awareness of domestic abuse; launching a media campaign, aimed at male and female victims, to include framed posters in 186 public conveniences, banners on refuse lorries and banner information on the Partnership website signposting available support.

Additionally we are now in phase 2 of the supporting families programme and on target to work with 111 families in the New Forest area.

Challenges

In 2016 the council's overall budget spending will have reduced by 15.8% since 2010 due to central government austerity measures. Over the next four years the government has indicated a level of central funding that will require a further 11.7% reduction in the budget from that in 2016. Any future plan must address this major challenge.

The delivery plan has identified a number of service reviews that each portfolio holder will be reviewing in key areas of budget spend and activity with the emphasis on reducing budget expenditure. The focus will remain on ensuring key frontline services to the community are prioritised (living within our means and working with others to achieve more).

To meet the demand for affordable housing, tackling homelessness and reducing the numbers of those in bed & breakfast, and their length of stay, continue to be significant challenges alongside the acquisition and development of new build council properties and maintaining a private sector leasing portfolio with the continuous change in the local housing market and benefit levels.

Other challenges include the implementation of new housing legislation e.g. pay to stay and sales of high value assets, especially with legislation yet to be communicated, and reductions in rents (1% each year until 19/20), as well as welfare reforms which impact on rent collection. Funding for our own council housing stock as well as grant reduction impacting across the service will require managing.

Welfare issues of 'supporting people' and 'better care' will need to be kept under review as will the need to responding to the 'community trigger' for nuisance complaints and the effect this will have on the service.

Corporate Requirements

- Undertake reviews and key activities as identified in the corporate plan (delivery plan) to improve services for our customers and meet the budget shortfall, including an increased focus on collaborative working.

Key Activities

- Seek to maximise opportunities for the delivery of affordable housing for local people through the planning process, with inclusion of appropriate policies in the local plan review 2016-2036
- Implement self-service functionality for tenants within the housing ICT systems
- Start the re-modelling of former sheltered housing schemes to increase housing capacity and undertake on-going refurbishments to the retained older persons' schemes
- Completion of 21 new homes on North Milton estate and provide a strategy for the future development and acquisition of new council housing stock.
- Maintain a supply of private sector leasing properties and bring in line with the management of our own housing stock.
- Complete major works programme to ensure decent home levels are maintained within our council housing stock.
- Delivery of pay to stay and the associated impact, including reviewing the allocations policy
- Review of service charges to reflect changes to provision and investment.
- Review the process for dealing with rent arrears and the proactive approach to arrears prevention in light of welfare reforms
- Consideration of new legislative tools for tenancy management and full review of the process and procedures for fixed term tenancies
- Undertake a review of our garage tenancy process and procedures
- Increase engagement and participation with tenants and stakeholders, including consultation for variation on tenancy conditions

Supporting Information

In support of this plan the following documents are available:

- 1) [The Portfolio's Performance Scorecard](#)
- 2) [Summary of Net Portfolio Spend](#)