

### Housing & Communities Oct 2017

#### 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 cost of this Portfolio is £17.11 (10.5%) of the £163.36 annual Band D Council Tax. The two largest services within the Portfolio are Homeless Assistance and the provision of CCTV.

The number of applicants on the Homesearch register continues to be reviewed and has reduced from 3883 to 3307 during the year. The number of households in temporary accommodation has increased to 401 at the end of the year and 128 households were placed into Bed and Breakfast.

Introductory and fixed term tenancies continue to be used. This should ensure greater flexibility in managing our tenancies and housing need. We dealt with 244 cases of anti-social behavior.

The implementation of our acquisition and development programme continues to progress. We have reached our initial target of acquiring 100 properties and achieved a total of 154 across the district at the end of 2016/17. Right to buy sales continue to be high, with sales of 31 during 2016/17. The number of properties under the private sector leasing scheme continues to be above the 100 target.

200 grants/loans were provided for disabled households to maintain their independence and remain in their own homes.

98.7% of our housing & garage rents were collected during the year. This has been achieved despite the ongoing changes to welfare reform. Garage rents income has increased due to improved processes resulting in a reduction in vacancies, void times and the waiting list. Opportunities are also being developed to support tenants with self-service functionality via the website.

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 introduced a wristband service in October 2016 which has been taken up by over 600 customers up to August 2017 and the CCTV service continues to be highly valued by the Police and our partners. Proposals are being made to relocate the control room to further support and enhance service delivery.

The taxi driver knowledge test has been revised to include a compulsory safeguarding element, and to update the geographical knowledge section. This test is compulsory for all new applicants for a driver's licence, to ensure the Licensing Authority is satisfied they are fit

and proper persons to hold such a licence. NFDC has led on designing the safeguarding training as an e-learning package and in future will be rolling it out to existing drivers and operators. The training and been presented to the Hampshire Safeguarding Children's Board to support and encourage the take-up of the package by other Local Authorities across Hampshire.

#### Challenges

The Council once again had to identify significant savings in setting the 2017/18 budget to help mitigate a £1.8m reduction in government determined funding in comparison to 2016/17. A further reduction in funding of £1.7m is expected in just 2 years to 2019/20, whilst cost increases over the same period based on a 1% pay award are forecast at another £1.7m. The Council's future plans must address this major financial challenge and ensure the Council's strategic objectives are aligned to resources available.

The most significant risk of the portfolio is the ability to maintain a supply of affordable homes to help meet the needs of the district's residents. Opportunities to develop new affordable homes on Council owned land are limited and through the development of its Housing Strategy the Council will explore ways in which it can further assist in addressing local housing needs. Links between the work on the Housing Strategy and the Local Plan Review will aim to secure an increase in the availability of affordable housing in the district, particularly as part of the new housing site allocations which will be made in the Local Plan. The Council will continue with a programme to improve and maintain its own housing through the remodelling of existing stock, stock acquisition and a new build programme. Partnership working with others, such as registered providers and the National Park Authority, is key to delivering additional affordable homes in the district.

Tackling homelessness and reducing the numbers of those in bed & breakfast continue to be significant challenges. The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act will have an impact on workloads and resources. This is 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. extended HMO licensing and sales of high value assets, especially with reductions in rents (1% each year until 19/20), as well as welfare reforms which will 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 respond to the 'community trigger' for nuisance complaints and the effect this will have on the portfolio.

## 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
- Continue with the re-modelling of former sheltered housing schemes to increase housing capacity and undertake on-going refurbishments to the retained older persons' schemes
- Continue with the new programme of upgrading our communal lounges and associated areas
- 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
- Implement the new financial assistance policy for disabled facility grants/loans and repair grants/loans

- Review Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing requirements and prepare new policy
- Review of service charges to reflect changes to provision and investment
- Business development and growth of the community alarms service through dedicated resources.
- Pursue the relocation of the CCTV team to provide an improved working environment for Operators and a layout to enable efficient and effective performance. Control room changes will future proof the system and allow for any future expansion. The small scale of NFDC's camera network allows for additional monitoring of other CCTV systems without employing additional Operators.
- To implement the Homeless Reduction Act and review the impact on resources
- Review the allocations policy to consider increasing demand, welfare reforms, suitability and resources along with a review of the process for dealing with rent arrears, homelessness and those in temporary accommodation.

## Supporting Information

In support of this plan the following documents are available:

- 1) The Portfolio's Performance Scorecard
- 2) Summary of Net Portfolio Spend