

DRAFT HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2014-2017

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To seek the views of Members for the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017, attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

2 Recommendations

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | That Members endorse the approach taken to develop the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy. |
| 2.2 | That Members provide comments on the draft Strategy for consideration by the Director in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Community Matters. |

3 Supporting information

- 3.1 The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 sets out how the council aims to meet housing needs in the district. It derives from the following statutory provisions:
- **Section 8 Housing Act 1985** - duty to consider the housing conditions and housing needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation
 - **Sections 1 to 3 Homelessness Act 2002** - duty to implement a homelessness strategy and to take the homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of all its functions. The duty requires a review of the housing strategy at least every five years.
- 3.2 Key successes from the current Strategy include the following:
- almost 2,000 new affordable homes enabled between April 2008 and March 2013
 - Griffin Place (self-contained accommodation with support, to homeless households) completed
 - Bearbrook Place (supported accommodation for single vulnerable homeless people) opened
 - 1,156 households prevented from becoming homeless during the period April 2008 to March 2013
- 3.3 The current strategy is due to expire this year and a working group has been set up by council officers to work on a new strategy. The working group includes external organisations: Aylesbury Vale Homeless Action Group and Bromford Housing Group.
- 3.4 The new Housing and Homelessness Strategy spanning 2014-2017, has four main strategic aims:
1. Maximise the supply of affordable housing
 2. Prevent and reduce homelessness
 3. Maximise the use of private sector homes
 4. Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms

- 3.5 The main part of the strategy is the action plan, which sets out how we are going to achieve these aims and this will be monitored regularly by the Homelessness Prevention Group, the Director and Cabinet Member.
- 3.6 The draft strategy is currently going through a robust and thorough consultation process. This began in June and will end in November. It includes 3 key stages, which are:
- Stage 1** – we conducted interviews with housing clients face-to-face and by phone. These clients have used a variety of services including Homelessness, Housing Advice, Bucks Home Choice, the Private Rent Scheme, drop-in services at the HUB (which is part of the Aylesbury Homeless Action Group) and residents of Griffin Place.
- Stage 2** – we held a successful stakeholder event on 9th July, which included Registered Providers, voluntary groups, statutory agencies, Members, Parish Councillors, and representatives from the private sector, such as the National Landlords Association and private landlords. It was centred around a series of themed workshops which formed the four strategic aims of the strategy.
- Stage 3** – we are carrying out wider public consultation on the draft strategy document, which will be published on the AVDC website for six weeks, ending on 27th November. Further actions include emailing all stakeholders, Members and Parish Councils to inform them of this consultation and issue a press release to reach the wider public.
- 3.7 Once the consultation responses have been evaluated and a final strategy agreed upon by the working group, the Strategy will be considered firstly by the Cabinet on 17th December, and then reported to Council on 5th February 2014 for approval. The Strategy will then be added to the Council's policy framework.
- 3.8 The Strategy must be completed and published early in 2014.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure an agreed Housing and Homelessness Strategy is published early in 2014.

5 Resource implications

- 5.1 There are no additional resource requirements identified at the present time associated with the delivery of the Strategy that are not currently budgeted for.

6 Response to Key Aims and Objectives

- 6.1 The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017 is linked to the AVDC Corporate Plan 2011-2015 within the Priority theme "Protecting and improving the living experience in the Vale".

Contact Officer Khyati Vaughan - 01296 585881
Background Documents Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017

Draft **Housing** and **Homelessness** Strategy



2014-2017

Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Strategic Aim 1: Maximise the supply of affordable housing	Page 6
Strategic Aim 2: Prevent and reduce homelessness	Page 9
Strategic Aim 3: Maximise the use of private sector homes	Page 12
Strategic Aim 4: Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms	Page 14
Action Plan	Page 16



October 2013.

Details correct at time of publication.

Introduction

Key achievements for 2008-2013

- ✓ Griffin Place: Total units 105: including 24 long stay, 60 family flats, 21 single flats (completed 2008)
- ✓ Bearbrook Place: 36 bed spaces for single vulnerable homeless people (opened 2011)
- ✓ 1,997 affordable homes enabled
- ✓ 12/13 3 successful Winter Warmth schemes opened
- ✓ Bucks Home Choice implemented in 2009
- ✓ Prevented 1,156 households from becoming homeless
- ✓ Creation of the Homelessness Prevention Group
- ✓ Publication of a housing information pack for young people
- ✓ 479 households housed through the Private Rent Scheme
- ✓ Landlord Accreditation Scheme launched
- ✓ Completed 43 mortgage rescue cases

The council strives to make Aylesbury Vale the best possible place to live, work and visit. All residents should have access to a home of a good standard which they can afford and are able to sustain and maintain. The council's emerging local plan will help to address the issues around the supply of housing in the district in the long term, including the provision of new affordable housing. This strategy sets out the council's approach to meeting the housing needs of those residents who are unable to afford or access a decent home.

The strategy builds on the achievements of its predecessor and fulfils the council's duty to implement a Homelessness Strategy under Sections 1-3 of the Homelessness Act 2002. It sets out how the council will deal with continuing themes and new challenges facing the Vale through four strategic aims. The action plan identifies the key actions which will deliver those strategic aims and is therefore, the crucial part of this strategy. The involvement and support of our partners will be instrumental in delivering this plan.

The four Strategic Aims for Housing:

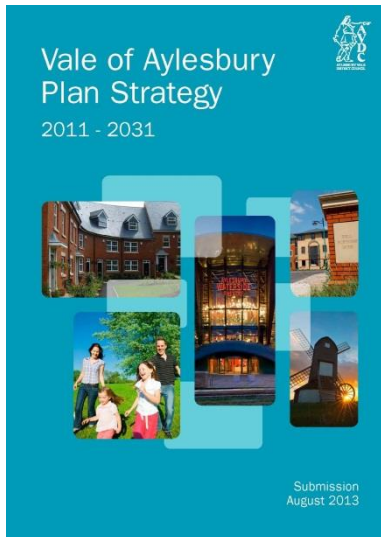
1. Maximise the supply of affordable housing
2. Prevent and reduce homelessness
3. Maximise the use of private sector homes
4. Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms

Overview of Aylesbury Vale

Aylesbury Vale is a large district, with a resident population of 174,137 (2011 Census), a 5% (8,377 people) increase since the 2001 Census and an estimated 74,897 homes. Around 40% of the population live in the main town of Aylesbury. The other largest settlements are Buckingham, Haddenham, Wendover, and Winslow. There are a large number of smaller settlements dispersed across the rural parts of the district. The district continues to grow in terms of population and dwellings.

According to the headline results of the 2011 Census:

- 90% (156,079) of residents belonged to the White ethnic group in 2011, decreasing from 94% of the population in 2001
- 10% (18,058) of residents belong to the Non-white ethnic group in 2011, an increase of 83% since 2001
- 10% (6,862) of households had household members of different ethnic groups, a 51% increase since 2001
- 72% (50,302) of households owned their own home in 2011, either with a mortgage or loan, or outright. This is an increase of 3% since 2001, bucking the national trend (a 4% decrease)
- 28% (19,104) of households rent their home (including those living rent free), increasing by 22% from 15,662 households in 2001



- Households who owned their own home as a percentage of the total number of households has fallen from 76% in 2001 to 72% in 2011

Policy Context

Planning

Historically Aylesbury Vale was identified as part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands growth area in the South East Plan. The Aylesbury Vale Local Development Framework (LDF) proposed Core Strategy sought to deliver the housing numbers, including the affordable housing percentages, set out in the South East Plan. This Core Strategy was withdrawn in October 2010. The revocation of the South East Plan, the introduction of the Localism Act, and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), have all fundamentally shifted the approach that local authorities should take to planning for housing and delivering affordable housing.

The Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP) will seek to deliver the jobs and homes needed for the District for the Plan period to 2031. It will be an important role of VAP to help deliver affordable housing across the Vale.

The VAP Strategy will set out new strategic planning policies for the District. In formulating the VAP Strategy, it was necessary to consider existing provision of, and the future need for affordable housing.

Legislative changes

The introduction of the Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities new powers to discharge homelessness duties into the private sector, a new duty to introduce a Tenancy Strategy, and new flexibilities to determine housing allocations and qualification criteria. It also introduced reforms to social housing tenure which enables social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Affordable Homes Programme introduced Affordable Rent, a new form of social housing and the main type of new housing supply. Housing providers can let a property at an Affordable Rent (inclusive of service charges, where applicable) of up to 80% of the gross market rent reflective of the property size and location. Affordable Rent will also be used to support funding for future delivery.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 makes the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. It introduces a wide range of reforms which aim to make the benefits system simpler. The main elements of the welfare reform are:

- Universal Credit
- Benefits Cap
- Personal Independent Payment
- Council tax benefit
- Housing Benefit

Further details are on pages 14 and 15.



Strategic context

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017 is one of a number of strategies which will deliver the Aylesbury Vale District Council corporate plan 2011-2015. It will directly support a key priority for the council – Build better communities by: working with individuals to prevent homelessness; meeting targets for housing the homeless; providing an effective Bucks Home Choice service, and working with partners to provide sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs of our growing communities.

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy will be supported by and sit alongside the following council strategies and policies:

- Emerging Local Plan (affordable housing policies within this and associated documents)
- Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy
- Aylesbury Vale Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026
- Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy
- AVDC Shared Ownership Policy
- AVDC Local Lettings Policy

Consultation

This strategy has been through a robust and thorough consultation process from June to November 2013. Consultation methods used included one-to-one interviews with service users, a Homelessness Service Providers questionnaire (via the Homelessness Review), a consultation event including workshops, and public consultation.

Equality and diversity

We aim to ensure that no one faces unfair or unlawful discrimination and that all residents have fair and equal access to housing services. We will monitor this through the Equalities of the Housing Needs and Advice Service report and the Equalities Impact Assessments. We will work to remove the barriers some households face in accessing particular types of housing and provide the advice, information and support needed to make informed housing choices.

Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

Given the challenging policy and financial climate it is important to regularly review the priorities set out in this strategy, in particular the action plan, to ensure they remain current and relevant. The strategy will be reviewed by independent stakeholders and partners as part of our Homelessness Prevention Group. It will also be monitored by the service Director and Cabinet Member.

Strategic Aim 1:

Maximise the supply of affordable housing

Affordable housing, as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework document, includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market, and who cannot afford to enter the market.

We have established an excellent track record for enabling affordable housing development across the district; having helped to deliver approximately 2000 new homes over the last 5 years.

Strong working relationships with our Registered Provider partners and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) coupled with the strategic use of the AVDC housing capital programme, meant that we were able to kick start slow or stalled schemes to achieve our targets during the worst of the economic downturn.

However, the demand for decent affordable homes still remains high and delivery is now more challenging. Our capital programme is severely constrained and HCA grant is currently not available on S106 sites, which in our district supply the majority of new homes. Scheme viability is also a key factor in development and more schemes are being delivered below the 35% (as of September 2013) affordable housing planning requirement threshold.

As part of the evidence base for the development of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan, AVDC commissioned a Housing and Economic Growth Assessment prepared by G L Hearn, which was published in

September 2011. Part 1 of the report outlines the need for affordable housing in 4 main housing sub-markets: Aylesbury, Rural South, Rural North and Buckingham. Taking into account the development of homes already in the pipeline the estimated annual need for affordable housing, between 2011 and 2016, is 588 units. Excluding the housing pipeline, the figure is 851 per year.

The Vale of Aylesbury Plan Strategy will be accompanied by a number of draft topic papers that provide a wider context and reasoning for the proposed policy approach. The Affordable Housing Topic Paper, dated April 2013, contains two main affordable housing policies, VS9 and VS10.

Policy VS9 Affordable housing

This sets out requirements for the provision of affordable housing or financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision, on residential developments of different sizes and takes into account the viability of the development proposed and principles for negotiation. An extract of the policy is set out below:-

- a) Residential developments of 15 or more dwellings gross should include at least 35% of dwellings as affordable onsite;
- b) Residential developments of between 5 and 14 dwellings gross should include at least 20% of dwellings as affordable. Or where onsite provision is impractical, developments should provide a financial



contribution equivalent to 25% on-site provision to facilitate off-site provision of affordable homes;

c) Residential developments of below 5 dwellings gross should provide a financial contribution equivalent to 20% on-site provision to facilitate off-site provision of affordable homes.

Policy VS10 Affordable housing on rural exception sites

Smaller rural communities with populations of fewer than 3,000 are eligible for Rural Exception Site (RES) status, in which planning restrictions can be waived to meet the need for affordable housing in the local community. This policy provides for small-scale developments of affordable housing to meet identified local housing needs in rural areas and they must meet certain defined criteria including design, mix and price.

We recognise that there are specific barriers to the development of these sites and so the new policy, if adopted, will allow an element of market housing of no more than 30% if 100% affordable housing cannot be delivered.

Rural housing

Provision of affordable housing in rural areas is important because of the largely rural nature of the district.

We support the development of affordable rural housing in the following ways:

- Use of planning policy to encourage the development of RES for rural settlements with a population under 3,000
- Use of S106 planning agreements to limit allocations in RES areas to people with a local residential, family or employment connection
- Encouragement of sustainable homes in RES areas e.g. new affordable homes in Marsh Gibbon and Tingewick which were built to Code Level 4 to help reduce fuel poverty
- Provision of grant support to the Bucks Rural Housing Enabler who is employed by Community Impact Bucks. The RHE has helped to significantly increase the Rural Exceptions Scheme programme for new affordable homes in the district
- AVDC membership of the Bucks Rural Housing Partnership which promotes the development of affordable housing in rural areas
- Some limited AVDC capital grant support where required for the development of new affordable homes in rural areas

Housing and support

In partnership with Bucks County Council we aim to help meet the housing needs of the following client groups:-

- Learning Disability



- Physical and Sensory Disability
- Mental Health
- Older People
- People at risk of homelessness

We will continue to support our RP partners in developing homes that are accessible for these groups of people.

Other forms of affordable housing

High house prices mean we must continue to provide access to alternative tenure options, such as low cost home ownership and flexible tenure that enable people to buy their own home. As the demand for owner occupation rises, we will explore different types of shared equity models to enable more people to access low cost home ownership.

Reducing housing tenancy fraud

At a time when demand for social housing is far exceeding supply, it is estimated that up to 50,000 homes may be unlawfully sublet, which equates to more than 1 in 100 housing association and council homes across England. With temporary accommodation for homeless families costing around £18,000 per family, per year, there is a significant cost to the public purse. We will work with Registered Providers to explore various options for tackling tenancy fraud.



Strategic Aim 2:

Prevent and reduce homelessness

Homelessness legislation requires Aylesbury Vale District Council to secure accommodation for households who are deemed to be statutorily homeless and provide advice and assistance to those in housing need. There is an immediate duty on the local authority to provide interim accommodation for anyone they have reason to believe may be homeless and in priority need whilst they investigate the individual's circumstances.

To access assistance under the homelessness legislation the council has a duty to those who meet the following criteria:

- eligible for assistance – which will not apply to certain people who have lived abroad
- legally classed as homeless – by having no accommodation that is available and reasonable to occupy, anywhere in the UK or abroad
- in priority need – applying to all households that include a pregnant woman or are responsible for dependent children; to some households consisting of a 16-17 year old or a care leaver aged 18-21 years old; or where someone in the household is vulnerable, e.g. because of old age, mental or physical health problems; or by being in prison, care or the armed forces
- unintentionally homeless – those who have not deliberately done, or failed to do, something that caused them to become homeless, such as failing to make rent or mortgage payments when they could have afforded to do so.

The legislation also requires us to take steps to prevent homelessness. The prevention of homelessness is a key priority for us. The number of people presenting as homeless has increased over time.

The main causes of homelessness in Aylesbury Vale in 2012/13 in order of priority are as follows:

- Loss of rented or tied accommodation
- Parents no longer able or willing to accommodate
- Domestic violence (mainly referrals from outside the district)

Wherever possible we aim to help people stay in their own homes, if that is the most suitable option. We offer a range of services to help with prevention, including mediation with families and landlords, facilitating mortgage rescue finance, and tenancy advice.

Another cornerstone of our service is the Housing Debt Advice Service. Our advisors intervene to help people manage the type of multiple debt which can lead to eviction from both owner occupied and private or social rented accommodation.

For those people who are homeless, we offer good quality temporary accommodation and only use bed and breakfast accommodation in emergency situations. We manage a private rent scheme which offers a deposit guarantee as well as an inventory and pre-tenancy inspection service.



Over the next few years we face a number of challenges in our efforts to reduce homelessness. The introduction of the government's welfare reforms and the continuing economic uncertainty may lead to an increase in the numbers of homeless people approaching us for assistance.

Part of our focus on improving our service will be to participate in a government scheme to achieve Gold Standard status. This peer-led scheme will provide training, support and an online toolkit to help councils identify areas for improvement and help to make services run more efficiently. We need to meet 10 key commitments in order to achieve this status; these are outlined in the Action Plan on pages 16-27.

In the preparation of this strategy we have undertaken a comprehensive review of our homelessness service. The aim of the Aylesbury Vale District Council Homelessness Review 2013 was to ascertain the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in the district and the services available to deal with and prevent homelessness. The information gathered has helped to shape the direction of this strategy and the council's homelessness services. The key themes from the review are as follows:

- **Impact of welfare reforms** - concern was expressed from many stakeholders as to the potential impact of the welfare reforms of the last few years on levels of homelessness. The affordability of housing locally in both the social

and private sector will need to be monitored and AVDC will need to continue to work closely with their partners in the area to respond to emerging issues.

- **Private Rent Sector** - use of the private rent sector to address homelessness problems locally provides both challenges and opportunities. The Localism Act 2011 enables local authorities to use private rented accommodation in order to discharge their homelessness duties but the welfare reforms are making landlords more hesitant to accept households in receipt of benefits as tenants. AVDC will need to continue to develop its relationship with local landlords in order to ensure that the private sector is a viable option as a homelessness solution.
- **Enhancing AVDC's Housing and Homelessness Services** - the consultation with stakeholders and service users showed that AVDC's housing and homelessness services were generally considered good. However, suggestions were made for improvement, for example, making more information available on housing options and homelessness services in the district, and 'signposting' those in need of assistance to organisations and agencies that could help. AVDC's commitment to working to achieve the Gold Standard in homelessness services will help to deliver an enhanced service.

- **Improving joint working between statutory and voluntary agencies and organisations** - this issue is one that is often identified as requiring constant review and improvement. No one organisation can solve homelessness and it can only be tackled through a joined up, multi-agency approach. Problems identified were a lack of sufficient awareness between agencies and organisations of each others' services and issues over sharing information on vulnerable clients.
- **Improving access to temporary accommodation for single non-priority homeless** - the lack of a direct access hostel in the district is an on-going issue and needs to be addressed. AVDC will continue to work with local partners to try to develop suitable direct access accommodation, which prevents the need for homeless individuals having to be referred out of the district for hostel accommodation.

The Strategy Action Plan will be externally monitored by the AVDC Homelessness Prevention Group; a multi-agency group chaired by AVDC which meets on a quarterly basis.



Strategic Aim 3:

Maximise the use of private sector homes

According to the 2011 Census, there are 19,104 households in the district living in rented accommodation (including those living rent free), which is a 22% increase since 2001. 13% of households live in the private rented sector within the Vale, which is slightly below the national average (16.5%). It is a growing part of the housing market and the government is encouraging a wider range of investors to build houses for private rent. There are a significant number of people making long term family homes in the private sector and we must ensure that they are living in safe housing conditions managed by decent landlords.

With the national slowdown in new housing supply and the increasing challenges we face with the delivery of new affordable homes, focussing solely on building new homes will not meet the demand for affordable housing. More and more people are moving into the private rented sector and according to government figures, the number of households living in private rented accommodation has risen to the same level as those in social housing.

The AVDC Private Sector Housing Regeneration Strategy outlines our priorities in greater detail. We will review this strategy to ensure it remains focused on the current issues.

Improving standards in the private rented sector

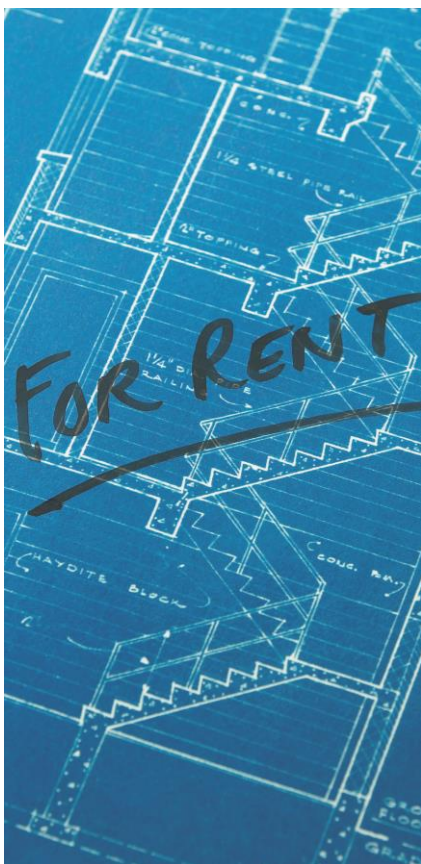
We have an active landlords' forum and host regular meetings to give landlords and agents the

opportunity to network and share information. The forum also enables us to provide updates on changes in legislation and reinforce landlords' responsibilities. Industry professionals deliver presentations on key issues affecting landlords. We host both daytime and evening events to encourage participation from letting agents and over the last year, we have seen an increase in participation. We strive to continuously improve the attendance of the forum through publicity and building on our relationships with local landlords and agents. We believe the launch of the National Landlords Association's Accreditation Scheme in June 2013 will help landlords to provide a more professional service to their tenants.

We work with landlords to improve management and property standards in the district; however where landlords refuse to comply with the legal requirements, we must be ready to use our enforcement powers.

Raising the profile of the AVDC Private Rent Scheme

We have been working in partnership with landlords, letting agents and tenants on the Private Rent Scheme for over ten years and between 2008-2013 we helped 479 households to find a suitable home. Despite changes over the past few years in the way that housing benefit is paid i.e. directly to tenants rather than landlords, the scheme is still popular. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find



landlords who will join the scheme and this is likely to worsen after Universal Credit is launched in the Vale. To try and mitigate this, we are working with the local Credit Union on a scheme for landlords whereby they would get rent paid directly to them. This should encourage more landlords to sign up to the scheme.

We have built strong links with local letting agents and we aim to develop our relationships with them in order to increase the number of landlords on the scheme.

Developing a strategy for dealing with illegal evictions or harassment

The majority of private landlords in the district operate in a law-abiding and professional manner; however, there are a few rogue landlords who give the private rented sector a bad name. We intend to deal with these landlords in a number of ways, including ensuring tenants are informed of their rights and responsibilities, and supporting them through the court system. We have recently submitted a funding bid to tackle rogue landlords which we hope we can use to support private tenants experiencing harassment.

Tackling long-term empty properties

As of August 2013 there were 140 long-term empty properties in the district (i.e. empty for two or more years). Some of these are vacant for good reasons, such as awaiting probate or subject to on-going

work. Whilst the level of empty properties in the Vale is a proportionately small part of the housing stock, we continue to encourage owners to bring properties back in to use.

The Affordable Housing Loans Scheme was set up in partnership with a Registered Provider, to assist owners of empty properties in bringing them back into use as affordable housing for a specified length of time. We will explore the potential for more schemes like this.

Encourage the development of a Build to Rent scheme

The Build to Rent Fund was launched by the government in December 2012. The 2013 government's budget provided £1bn in funding to help increase the supply of new private rented housing and to provide opportunities for new institutional investment in the sector. We will explore the potential for developing or supporting a Build to Rent scheme in the district and will take advantage of any opportunities should they arise.

Strategic Aim 4:

Respond to the challenges of the welfare reforms

Significant changes to the nature of the welfare system have been introduced by the government with the stated aim of making people better off in employment, and reducing the dependency of households on state assistance. The reforms to the welfare system have created many new challenges in housing provision and homelessness prevention. The risk of homelessness for those households with housing benefit reductions has increased, which makes the best use of available social housing stock a priority.

The welfare reforms encompass a large number of changes. Alongside Universal Credit, the overall Benefit Cap and the new size criteria, there are also reforms to the Council Tax Benefit and the disability benefit systems.

Assist clients in the delivery of Universal Credit

As the reforms become established we need to keep updated and informed about any increased demand on our service provision. We will monitor these changes and take action where appropriate to assist residents with these changes.

Continue to monitor the effects of the new size criteria and take action to ensure residents are assisted as far as possible

The new size criteria for social rent properties stipulates that children of different genders must

share a room up to the age of ten, while children of the same gender must share a room up to the age of fifteen. Those tenants who are deemed to have an excess bedroom(s) for their needs will have their housing benefit payments reduced. We will monitor the on-going effects of the new size criteria and work with Registered Providers to help residents who are under-occupying to downsize to smaller homes.

This will also increase the demand for one and two bedroomed properties (which are already in short supply) and will influence the type of affordable housing that is delivered in the future.

Ensure that families are helped to cope with the overall Benefit Cap

The overall Benefit Cap limits the amount of benefit a household can receive to: £26,000 (as of September 2013) per annum (£500 per week) for a family/couple, and £18,200 (£350 per week) for a single person. The Cap will reduce the weekly housing benefit entitlement to ensure that households are under this capped limit. The number of households affected by the Cap in the Vale is fewer than the new size criteria, but the effects will be greater. Lone parent households with large numbers of children will be the worst affected, with a small number of households losing over £150 per week in housing benefit. Supporting these families is important as they will be at high risk of rent

arrears and homelessness. We have offered one-to-one interviews with all households affected by the Cap to advise them of their options and how to best access the housing services available to them. There are also plans underway, in conjunction with Children's Services at Bucks County Council, to offer a work programme to those affected by the Cap. Qualifying for working tax credit is a method of avoiding the Cap and also ties in with the wider aim of the reforms, of assisting residents with finding work and reducing dependency on state welfare.

Assist clients in the delivery of Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the new benefit payment which applies to people who are in or out of work; combining out-of-work benefits, child benefit/tax credits, housing benefit and most other state support, into one single, monthly payment.

We will explore how AVDC can assist in the implementation of Universal Credit in partnership with relevant agencies, through the Local Support Services Framework.



Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2014 - 2017

Strategic Aim 1: Maximise the supply of affordable housing

Objective	Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
1.1	<p>Increase the supply of new affordable homes</p> <p>Develop 35% affordable homes on new sites with 15 or more dwellings (subject to new Vale of Aylesbury plan)</p> <p>Enable additional affordable rural housing</p> <p>Completions reported quarterly for AVDC Corporate Plan update</p> <p>2014/15 2015/16 2016/17 } TBC</p> <p>Source alternative funding streams for the provision of affordable housing</p> <p>Investigate alternative shared equity models</p> <p>Assess the potential for alternative tenure options</p>	<p>Limited AVDC capital funding programme in place</p> <p>Homes & Communities Agency grant funding not available on S106 sites</p> <p>RP funding</p>	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: Housing Development Team (HDT)</p> <p>AVDC Planning Division</p> <p>AVDC Legal Team</p> <p>Registered Providers (RPs)</p> <p>Homes & Communities Agency (HCA)</p> <p>Rural Housing Enabler</p> <p>Private developers</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
1.2	Work with partners to enable provision of housing for people with additional needs	<p>Accommodation for people with a disability</p> <p>A proportion of new affordable homes to be mobility levels 1-3</p> <p>Support the provision of flats for single vulnerable homeless</p>	<p>Limited AVDC capital funding programme in place</p> <p>HCA</p> <p>RP funding</p> <p>Bucks County Council (BCC)</p>	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: HDT</p> <p>BCC</p> <p>HCA</p> <p>RPs</p> <p>Private developers</p>	BCC undertaking projections of housing need for elderly, mental health problems, physical disability, learning disability
1.3	Contribute to the drafting of an affordable housing supporting policy document as part of the new Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP)	<p>Liaise with Planning colleagues on the preparation of more detailed guidance on affordable housing</p> <p>The adoption of an affordable housing SPD as part of the VAP</p>	Existing	December 2014	<p>AVDC lead: HDT</p> <p>AVDC Forward Plans Team</p>	
1.4	Consider options for helping to reduce social housing tenancy fraud	<p>Look at RPs actions on tackling social tenancy fraud</p> <p>Monitor the CLG's social housing fraud funding</p>	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC Revenues and Benefits</p> <p>RPs</p>	

Strategic Aim 2: Prevent and reduce homelessness

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
2.1	Achieve the key outcomes as set out in the ten local challenges in DCLG's "Making Every contact count" as outlined below:	<p>Work towards a homelessness prevention service accreditation to achieve the government's Gold Standard</p> <p>Set up a local authority peer group (2/3) for assessment</p>		On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC Housing Advice Team (HAT)</p> <p>Peer authority/ies</p>	
	1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services	<p>Data and information sharing protocol between all partners</p> <p>Review working practices with Bucks County Council in relation to vulnerable homeless clients</p> <p>Improve referral mechanisms and feedback between agencies</p> <p>Investigate the feasibility of a multi-agency referral form</p>	<p>Existing</p> <p>Discretionary Housing Pot</p> <p>BCC</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Grant</p>	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC HAT</p> <p>AVDC Environmental Health Team</p> <p>BCC</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Group</p>	
	2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs	Actively engage with Voluntary and Statutory agencies	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: HAT</p> <p>AVDC SHT</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Group</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
		<p>Work with partners to produce a comprehensive information pack for homeless people</p> <p>Engage with the local Job Centre Plus and investigate the feasibility of drop in advice sessions</p>			<p>Job Centre Plus</p> <p>RP's</p> <p>Aylesbury College</p>	
	3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients	<p>Monitor the issuing of letters outlining advice previously given</p> <p>Audit of related homelessness services in the district</p> <p>Review Homelessness Directory to make more user-friendly</p>	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: Housing Options Team (HOT)</p> <p>AVDC SHT</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Group</p>	
	4. To adopt a <i>No Second Night Out</i> model or an effective local alternative	<p>Review "crash pad" facility under No Second Night Out and secure the provision of short term emergency accommodation for rough sleepers</p> <p>Help facilitate move-on accommodation</p>	Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Single Homeless (BOSH) funding ceases in April 2014	April 2014	<p>AVDC Lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC HAT</p> <p>BOSH Group</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
	5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support	<p>Investigate the feasibility of providing a direct access hostel for non-priority single homeless people</p> <p>Support tenancy sustainment initiatives and pre-tenancy training</p> <p>Implement changes to Bucks Home Choice Transfers & Allocations Policy including training for staff and partner agencies</p>	No revenue or capital funding identified at present	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC HAT and HOT</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Group</p> <p>RPs Bucks Floating Support The Hub CAB BCC</p> <p>Bucks Home Choice Practitioners Group</p>	
	6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords	<p>Develop and implement a policy for discharging our homeless duty, including a proportion of intentionally homeless applicants, to the private rented sector</p> <p>Further support partner organisations to access the private rented sector</p> <p>Strengthen Housing advice activities to effectively tackle issues such as illegal evictions, harassment, disrepair etc.</p>	Additional training for Housing Advice staff	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC HAT</p> <p>Private landlords and letting agents</p> <p>AVDC HAT AVDC Legal</p> <p>AVDC HAT</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
		Expand AVDC's Private Rent Scheme to include non-priority applicants				
	7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme	<p>Work with lenders to ensure that homeowners threatened with repossession continue to be referred to AVDC</p> <p>Continue to monitor the government's mortgage repossession protocol</p> <p>Source funding to ensure continuation of the scheme</p>		On-going	<p>AVDC lead: Budget Advice Team</p> <p>AVDC HDT</p> <p>CAB</p>	
	8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs	<p>Review the role of Homelessness Prevention Group to encourage participation in the Strategy Action Plan outcomes, and strengthen partnership action</p> <p>Strengthen working relationships with both voluntary and statutory agencies to help prevent homelessness</p> <p>To annually update core statistics in the homelessness review</p>	Existing	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC HAT</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Group</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
	9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation	Encourage sign up and implementation of 16 & 17 year olds protocol by the relevant authorities Sustain the non- placement of 16 & 17 year olds in Bed and Breakfast accommodation		2014 On-going	AVDC lead: HAT BCC Bucks district councils	Draft protocol for referrals with BCC prepared
	10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks	Sustain the non-placement of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation		On-going	AVDC lead: HAT	
2.2	All residents have fair and equal access to housing services	Produce equalities report on the housing needs and advice service Ensure Equalities Impact Assessments are up-to-date Evaluate relevant statistical information and ensure consistency and accuracy Continue to monitor the government's Rent Protocol for social landlords	Existing	Annually 2014 On-going	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Information Performance and Statistics Team AVDC HAT	

Strategic Aim 3: Maximise the use of private sector homes

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
3.1	Improve standards in the Private Rented Sector	<p>Publicise and promote Landlords' Forum to landlords and agents</p> <p>Promote National Landlords Association's accreditation scheme</p> <p>Review and update the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy</p> <p>Take appropriate enforcement action to achieve minimum property standards</p>	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC Environmental Health Team</p> <p>Landlords' Forum Members</p> <p>National Landlords' Association</p>	
3.2	Raise the profile of the AVDC Private Rent Scheme	<p>Increase the number of private landlords within the scheme</p> <p>Build relationships with letting agents and negotiate preferential referencing terms with preferred letting agents for our clients</p> <p>Promote scheme at Landlords' Forum and RP Development Forum</p>	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: HAT</p> <p>AVDC SHT</p> <p>AVDC Environmental Health Team</p> <p>Landlords and Letting Agents</p> <p>RPs</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
		<p>Promote and publicise successes of the scheme</p> <p>Access market rented properties offered by Registered Providers</p> <p>Draft and implement an AVDC Rent in Advance policy</p> <p>Investigate the potential for developing a rent rescue fund</p> <p>Work with the Credit Union to establish a rent service scheme for landlords</p>		On-going	<p>CAB</p> <p>Aylesbury Vale Credit Union</p>	
3.3	Develop a strategy for dealing with illegal evictions or harassment and providing support to private tenants	<p>Establish an agreement with CAB regarding Court representation</p> <p>Provide information relating to 'what to do if you are a victim' on AVDC website</p> <p>Review and update current information leaflets</p> <p>Work to tackle rogue landlords</p> <p>Investigate the feasibility of the provision of a tenancy relations service</p>	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: HAT</p> <p>AVDC SHT</p> <p>AVDC Private Sector Housing Team</p> <p>AVDC Legal Team</p> <p>Citizens Advice Bureau</p>	

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
3.4	Tackle long-term empty properties	<p>A decrease in long-term empties by a factor of 10 per year by promoting the following schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty Home Loans Schemes • Private Sector Leasing Scheme <p>Investigate the potential for additional schemes to bring empties back into use</p> <p>Take appropriate enforcement action against landlords unwilling to utilise long-term empty properties</p> <p>Review and update the Empty Homes Strategy</p>	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: Private Sector Housing Team	
3.5	Regulate all Houses in Multiple Occupation	Investigate the potential for additional licensing for HMOs	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: Private Sector Housing Team	
3.6	Explore the potential for developing or supporting a Build to Rent scheme	<p>Investigate whether RP partners are interested in developing a Build to Rent scheme</p> <p>Monitor future Build to Rent bidding rounds and support bids in the district</p>	Existing	On-going	AVDC lead: SHT HCA RPs Private developers	

Strategic Aim 4: Respond to the challenges of the Welfare Reforms

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
4.1	Continue to review the overall impact of the Welfare Reforms on Aylesbury Vale	<p>Gain an understanding of the local impact of reforms and tailor relevant services accordingly</p> <p>Identify potential service changes</p>	Existing	On-going	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>AVDC Revenues and Benefits</p> <p>RPs</p>	
4.2	Continue to monitor the effects of the new size criteria and take action to ensure residents are assisted as far as possible	<p>Review all statistics issued by the DWP</p> <p>Host a home swapping event to help tenants wishing to downsize</p> <p>Conduct a mapping exercise to ascertain how RP's are helping tenants to downsize</p> <p>Work closely with Registered Providers to ensure tenants are given support</p>	Existing	March 2014	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>RPs</p> <p>DWP</p>	
4.3	Ensure that families are helped to cope with the overall Benefit Cap	<p>Limit the effects of the cap on families by working closely with BCC Children's Services</p> <p>Offer direct support to families where possible</p>	Existing	March 2014	<p>AVDC lead: SHT</p> <p>DWP</p> <p>Bucks CC (Children's Services)</p>	<p>Working with BCC Children's Services to establish an into work programme for the benefit cap – early stages</p> <p>£30k DHP funding secured for PRS tenants for Rent in Advance</p>

Objective		Key outcomes and actions	Resources	Target date	Partnerships	Progress to date
		Offer 'Rent in Advance' payments to suitable tenants on the AVDC private rent scheme			Bucks 'Task and Finish Group'	
4.4	Assist Clients in the delivery of Universal Credit (UC)	Maintain strong communications with the DWP Ensure all AVDC Housing staff are fully informed about the details of UC	Existing Potential for IT training / resources	UC rollout date in Aylesbury Vale	AVDC lead: SHT AVDC Revenues and Benefits DWP	

If you would like this information in an accessible format (for example in large print or by email) or another language please phone: 01296 585360 or email: housingneeds@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk



Housing and Communities
Aylesbury Vale District Council
The Gateway Gatehouse Road Aylesbury Bucks HP19 8FF
Tel: 01296 585360 Email: housingneeds@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk
www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/housing/housing-services/strategic-housing