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AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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11 May 2018

ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee will be held at **6.30 pm on Tuesday 22 May 2018** in **The Olympic Room, Aylesbury Vale District Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF**, when your attendance is requested.

Membership: Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors S Jenkins (Vice-Chairman), M Bateman, S Chapple, A Cole, S Cole, P Cooper, B Everitt, B Foster, T Hunter-Watts and R King

Contact Officer for meeting arrangements: Chris Ward; cward@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

Any changes will be reported at the meeting.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

4. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

5. MINUTES (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2018.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interests.

7. UPDATE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REGENERATION POLICY (Pages 9 - 26)

For Members to consider the attached report.

Contact Officer: Neil Green - 01296 585160



8. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT UPDATE (Pages 27 - 32)

For Members to consider the attached report.

Contact Officer: Henry Allmand - 01296 585320

9. WORK PROGRAMME

To consider the future work programme. Meetings are scheduled as follows:-

25 September 2018: Housing & Homelessness Strategy
Approval of Gambling Policy 2019-2022
Empty Homes Strategy
Street and Horticultural contract
Concessionary Transport Review

19 December 2018: No items as yet

Items previously mentioned by Committee include:

- Enforcement update once IT software has been embedded
- Aylesbury Garden Town
- Demand management relating to policing
- Arts Strategy including a live music venue (associated with the redevelopment of the Aylesbury Town Centre)
- VAHT update (late 2018/early 2019)

Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee

28 MARCH 2018

PRESENT: Councillor M Winn (Chairman); Councillors S Jenkins (Vice-Chairman), M Bateman, S Chapple, A Cole, S Cole, P Cooper, B Everitt, R King and B Russel (In place of B Foster). Councillors A Macpherson and Sir Beville Stanier attended also.

APOLOGIES: Councillors B Foster and T Hunter-Watts.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes from the meeting held on 13 February 2018 be approved as a correct record.

2. COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2018/19

The Committee received a report which informed Members of current crime levels, a summary of activity on the delivery of the Aylesbury Vale Community Safety Partnership (AVCSP) Plan and also updated on some of the recent and future changes taking place in connection with community safety. It was highlighted to Members that the crime figures were not finalised until the end of figures became available after 31 March 2018.

The draft Annual Plan for 2018/19 and the Community Safety Strategy 2017 – 2020 were included as appendices to the Committee report. The AVCSP had met on 15 March, 2018, and had amended the Annual Plan to include:-

- Expansion of the action around joint Night-time Economy activity with police and AVDC enforcement.
- Exploration of Civil injunctions in partnership with VAHT.
- Removal of Cyber Segmentation activity, pending further from the Home Office.
- Addition of supporting Community Warden schemes.
- Amendment to wording around Modern Slavery statements.
- Addition of action around communication of reporting methods in regards anti-social behaviour.

Crime had been generally falling in Aylesbury Vale over the past two years but there had been an increase in violent crime, thefts of pedal cycles and theft from motor vehicles, most notably theft of tools from unattended work vans. These had been a focus of AVDC and the partnership on the reduction of acquisitive crime, which included home burglary, through working with the community and supporting Crime Reduction events in rural and urban areas. Activities at the events included home safety and tool marking advice. The police had called a public meeting in response to concerns raised in Buckingham following theft from contractor vans. The result was that burglary rates remained lower than those in neighbouring areas and forces.

The Thames Valley Police Commander for Aylesbury Vale attended the meeting and provided Members with more information and context to the crime figures.

The Annual Plan 2018/19 was currently in draft and had been updated following the Community Safety Partnership Strategy Group on 15 March 2018. Highlights from the current Plan included the retention of Purple Flag status since 2010 which signified that Aylesbury Town Centre was a safe place for residents and visitors throughout the day, evening and night. A group called 'Night Moves' had been re-established to focus on supporting the 2018 Purple Flag assessment that was taking place on 6 April.

In November 2017, the Community Safety Partnership had commissioned a Locality Review focussed on County Lines drugs and exploitation, and involved wider partners from Social Care, Drug and Alcohol services, youth services and voluntary groups. This report had fed into the Safety Plan. Campaigns on a national level regarding security and personal safety had been supported in the plan and messages to the key demographics had been sent through social media. These national campaigns included the 'White Ribbon' campaign which aimed to reduce male violence against women and girls, as well as Thames Valley Police's 'Hidden Harm' campaign around modern slavery.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) was often a complicated issue within families and communities and had the potential to lead to homelessness if not resolved. 2017/18 had seen a 29% increase in ASB and reports had increased by 8% over the last three years. This trend had been reported in all Local Policing Areas across the Thames Valley aside from two. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 emphasised prevention through early support and intervention so the ASB Tactical Advisory Group worked with partners to offer earlier intervention and sign-post perpetrators to appropriate support agencies to reduce the risk of homelessness. It had been identified that private landlords may need advice and support on ASB so work would be undertaken on this. The Police and Crime Commissioner had provided funding to Youth Concern, Thames Valley Police and AVDC to run partnership youth projects to engage vulnerable young people. The projects would raise awareness of grooming and exploitation and would address social cohesion between BME and white communities. The practice of 'Stop and Search' was also discussed.

Members sought more information and were advised:

- (i) That there had been an increase in racial incidents reported, which was in line with national trends following the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. However, the increase was potentially due to people now being more likely to report incidents than they had in the past.
- (ii) That there had been a spike in thefts from motor vehicles, particularly around Buckingham, in October to December 2017. Resultantly, a number of people had been charged and a large amount of tools recovered.
- (iii) That the increase in violent crimes was partly due to County lines drug dealing issues, changes in police recording of crime and relating to some incidents at Aylesbury Prison. Members were informed that the Governor of Aylesbury Prison was currently an invited member of the AVCSP.
- (iv) That there had been a 34% increase in people detected carrying offensive weapons and a 104% increase in drug trafficking offences detected during the period, partly due to a more proactive approach taken by the police. The Committee was provided with details of some of the proactive work that had been done to detect and prosecute for drug dealing / trafficking.
- (v) That work on child sexual exploitation and modern slavery were a focus for the AVCSP. A Modern Slavery statement would be put onto AVDC's website in due course.

- (vi) On the prevention and other work being done regarding cyber crime (cyber enabled, phishing, cyber dependence via denial of service), including working done with Trading Standards.
- (vii) That Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) had identified that some issues that had previously been recorded as incidents should be recorded as crime figures, which had increased crime figures.

Increases in crime figures over the last year for some crimes was due to a number of factors including crime figures being at a historic low, and greater reporting by people of issues including domestic violence, hate crimes, and for some historic crimes.
- (viii) That like other areas of the public sector, the Thames Valley Police would need to find savings of £14m in the next year. The police continued to look at ways in which they could work differently and smarter, which included the use of Crime Prevention Orders and work on cyber crime prevention. There were also occasions when it was necessary to prioritise how Officers were most effectively deployed. Policing budgets were published annually on their websites.
- (ix) That while a Public Space Protection Order had been issued for the town centre, it was not believed that any prosecutions had been made under it.
- (x) That the AVCSP and work of the Council community safety team was looking at ways to build the strength and resilience of communities, which was an excellent way to combat crime. Community cohesion in Aylesbury was good and efforts were being made to build on this through the Community Warden scheme and Inter-faith network.
- (xi) That CCTV was an excellent asset and assisted with detecting and reducing crime.
- (xii) On the demand management work that had been done with some partners to reduce the number of calls to the police, which had led to a 30% reduction in calls from Stoke Mandeville hospital and a 40% reduction in calls from the Whiteleaf Centre, Aylesbury.
- (xiii) That a rigorous assessment process had to be undertaken to keep the Purple Flag for the town centre. An appraisal on the benefits of continuing to keep it would be made in due course.
- (xiv) On the work that was being done, through 2 dedicated Schools Officers, and with Head Teachers, schools and students regarding anti-social behaviour occurring in the vicinity of secondary schools at the end of the school day.

The Committee considered comments that they wanted to be passed to Cabinet when they considered the item which were:

- (a) That while 50% of fraud was committed on-line, it was also important to educate people on issues such as door step cold calling (particularly for the elderly), fraud over the phone or via mail, and on courier fraud.
- (b) Aylesbury Town Centre – a number of Members expressed concerns on a range of Community Safety issues that were frequently occurring within the town centre including anti-social behaviour (particularly outside McDonalds), instances of

fighting/violence/threatening behaviour (both during the day and of an evening), thefts/shoplifting from shops (who did not employ security staff or have CCTV installed, or did not report some incidents to the police), motor vehicles threatening pedestrian safety when driving through the town centre or through unlawfully parking, . It was advocated that a higher police (PCSO) presence in the town centre, Traffic Wardens being more proactive and a greater emphasis on enforcement would all improve this situation.

Members were informed that the police were aware of hot spots in the town centre, and that it was important for all incidents to be reported. The Committee was provided with details of a police operation involving 12 Officers that had been conducted last weekend in the town centre. It was likely that the increase in shoplifting had links to drug addiction. Work had been undertaken regarding the anti-social problems and people loitering outside the McDonald premises in town that led to a 60% reduction in calls.

Members commented that the Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership should be asked to assist with developing measures to improve community safety in the town centre. This could include more actively engaging with businesses located in the town centre and looking at whether businesses had the appetite to introduce a Business Improvement District within the town centre. The Council was also currently reviewing the Parking Strategy which would be reported to scrutiny in due course.

- (c) That more work should be done by the AVCSP, AVDC and partners looking at how the demand for police services could be reduced through multi-agency working, i.e. by assisting partners to manage situations and, resultantly, reducing the number of calls for assistance made to the police.
- (d) That an assessment should be made on whether best use was being made of the Public Space Protection Order that had been made for the Aylesbury town centre.
- (e) That community leaders, in liaison with neighbourhood policing teams, had a role to play in both educating people on crime issues and helping to address people's fear of crime.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Thames Valley Police Commander for Aylesbury Vale be thanked for attending the meeting and providing Members with more information and context to the crime figures.
- (2) That the Scrutiny Committee's comments made at the meeting be referred to Cabinet.
- (3) That an agenda item be timetabled for the scrutiny work programme to discuss approaches to demand management / multi-agency working relating to community safety that can be actioned to reduce the demand for police services in the future. This could also look at the effectiveness of partnership working and whether any strategy might require pump prime funding.

3. MRF CONTRACT FOR MIXED RECYCLING

The Committee received an update on the new Mixed Recycling Facility (MRF) procurement undertaken regarding the materials recycling contract for Waste Services. AVDC had adopted a mixed recycling collection regime in 2012 which allowed residents

to place recyclable items into one recycling bin. The contract had been on a 3+3 year period and was due to expire on 3 September 2018 with no provision in place to extend the contract. The market had changed since 2012 when the materials recycling market was buoyant and AVDC had received an income of around £500,000 per year through recyclable materials sold at a fixed payment per tonne. By 2015, AVDC were required to renegotiate the fixed price per tonne fee which resulted in the income being halved to around £250,000 per annum. The market fluctuation had been a result of Chinese markets requiring less materials imported from recycling which therefore led to materials struggling to hold their value. This had resulted in a knock on effect down the supply chain and the market now was that Local Authorities were charged a fee for material to be processed.

AVDC had carried out a joint procurement exercise with Cherwell and South Northants District Councils in 2017. The tenders had now been returned and evaluated and a company based in Leicestershire called Casepack had won the contract. The contract was on a 3+3 year term as before.

The Committee sought additional information and were informed:

- (i) That the Council would need to continue efforts to educate people in relation to them not contaminating materials that were to be recycled. Work undertaken by the Council would include targeting higher contamination areas, more communications with residents, and training refuse collection crews in identify contamination.
- (ii) That the processing costs within the new contract would be reviewed annually. DEFRA would soon be publishing a 25 year plan regarding waste that would assist with future planning.
- (iii) That the costs of diverting waste to landfill were still very expensive so the option to offset the cost of some recycling via this means was not economical. The costs of diverting recyclates to EfW was also expensive.
- (iv) That legislation required the Council to collect 2 types of recyclates, although AVDC collected 8 types.
- (v) That while a joint procurement process had been used to put in place the contract, AVDC would not be impacted if one of the other Councils chose not to keep to their part of the deal.

Members requested that thanks be passed to refuse crews for all of their hard work over the winter period.

RESOLVED –

That Cabinet be recommended to approve the contractual arrangements for the Council's materials recycling facility, as contained in the confidential part of the Committee agenda.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

The agenda included items that were coming to Committee over the next three meetings. Members considered their Work Programme and saw merit in the following also coming to scrutiny:-

- (i) Demand management relating to policing (as discussed at the meeting).

- (ii) Arts Strategy including a live music venue (associated with the redevelopment of the Aylesbury Town Centre).
- (iii) VAHT Update (late 2018 / early 2019).

RESOLVED –

That the work programme, as discussed at the meeting, be approved.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Paragraph indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

6. MRF CONTRACT FOR MIXED RECYCLING

As part of the discussions at Minute 3, consideration was given to the MRF Contract for Mixed Recycling.

UPDATE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING REGENERATION POLICY

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy to launch a new 'Healthy Homes on Prescription Grant' and refine our Discretionary DFG offering to align the housing assistance measures with those provided by all District Councils in Buckinghamshire.

2 Recommendations

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| 2.1 That the Environment and Living Scrutiny note the contents of the report and comment accordingly prior to approval by the relevant Cabinet Member. |
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3 Supporting Information

- 3.1 Aylesbury Vale, along with the rest of Buckinghamshire, has an aging population. At the last census in 2011 68,000 people in Buckinghamshire reported having a limiting long term illness or disability (an increase of 12.4% from the previous census). The number of people with long term health conditions is likely to continue to increase with the aging population in Buckinghamshire (Director of Public Health for Buckinghamshire Annual Report 2012/13). There is a significant link between housing quality and health. Factors such as damp and mould, overcrowding and excess cold are associated with long term conditions such as heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and mental illness, as well as an increased risk of mortality. People living in poor quality housing are more likely to suffer with poor health than those people living in good quality housing. Overcrowded households can encourage the spread of certain medical conditions, such as tuberculosis. Households without central, or other adequate heating, can suffer from damp and mould growth, which can lead to respiratory problems. Poorly heated households can suffer from excess cold, which in turn can increase the likelihood of premature mortality.
- 3.2 Both health and housing professionals recognise that addressing the hazards found in poor housing is better for the patient and more cost effective for the NHS than simply treating the symptoms of health without addressing the actual cause.
- 3.3 By aligning the housing assistance measures offered by AVDC with the other Buckinghamshire District Local Authorities we will create a fairer system with equality of access whereby Buckinghamshire residents have broadly similar assistance measures available to them, regardless of where they live.
- 3.4 Aligning the assistance measures will also help facilitate referrals from health and social care professionals no matter where they are discharging or referring a client from. Under the current arrangements it is difficult for health providers to interpret the various housing assistance offerings available in different Buckinghamshire Local Authority areas. This proposal should simplify the referral process and enable more residents to benefit.

4 Implications

- 4.1 Enforcement Officers are already trained to inspect houses and identify hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. It is expected that most referrals for the 'Healthy Homes on Prescription Grant' will require an officer to visit the clients home to identify hazards present and the measures required to address them.

- 4.2 The current policy already allows Officers flexibility with regard to the use of discretionary grant funding where it meets the aims of the Policy and benefits the required target groups and this will be sustained.

5 Housing assistance measures proposed

- 5.1 The housing assistance measures proposed are detailed in Appendix 1.
5.2 The amended private sector housing regeneration policy is attached in Appendix 2.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 If these recommendations are approved, Officers will engage with Health providers in the District to promote the scheme and provide the necessary instruction on how to make referrals. This will include local GP surgeries and Clinics, Citizens Advice Bureau and other partners.
- 6.2 The scheme will also be promoted to the community through our website and social media accounts. Information to be provided will include:
- The process for applying for assistance
 - Eligibility criteria
 - Conditions applying to the provision of assistance,
 - How conditions will be enforced and in what circumstances they can be waived
- 6.3 We will continue to work with the other District Councils and Buckinghamshire County Council to refine the Safer Homes Scheme and establish a service level agreement with a provider that can undertake the home visits and complete the minor adaptations.
- 6.4 Spend against budget allocation is monitored on a regular basis. The new grants will be reviewed to determine effectiveness, uptake and spend and if necessary will be adjusted following consultation with the Group Manager - Regulatory Services.
- 6.5 We will update and publish the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy on the website.
- 6.6 We will discontinue the Essential Repairs Grant currently promoted.

7 Reasons for Recommendation

- 7.1 To allow the Environment and Living Scrutiny the opportunity to consider the new assistance measures proposed and report their views.

Contact Officer: Neil Green, Principal Enforcement Officer (Private Sector Housing)
01296 585160

Background Documents: N/A

Appendix 1 – Table showing summary of Housing Assistance Measures Proposed

Tool	Key Outcome	Eligibility criteria	Eligible Works	Conditions	Max £/case	Notes	Annual Budget
Healthy Homes On Prescription	To provide small scale works to a person's home to help prevent emergency hospital admissions, hospital re-admissions and repeat GP appointments..	<p>Aged 18 or over and live in the property as their main residence</p> <p>Have a disability or long term health condition</p> <p>Are the owner or the tenant of the property (must have consent from the owner to carry out the work)</p> <p>Referred by a health professional/medical referral</p>	<p>Small scale adaptations, repairs or other improvements which are specifically required to enable hospital discharge or help reduce the likelihood of hospital admission or repeat GP appointments</p> <p>One off deep clean and/or clearance of clutter, specifically to enable hospital discharge</p>	<p>Non-repayable</p> <p>Payment on completion of works</p> <p>More than one application can be made but no more than £5000 will be paid out in any 5 year period</p>	£5,000	New package replacing the Essential Repairs Grant	<p>Amount available to be confirmed</p> <p>A fund of £5000 is available in 2018/19 for cleaning and clearance type works under this scheme as a pilot.</p>
Landlord Loan Scheme	To provide incentives for landlords to improve standards for tenants in privately rented	<p>Must be a landlord and the own property</p> <p>Property must be tenanted and let, or available to let, for a period of 5 years from the date of the</p>	Works to include fire protection, energy efficiency measures and works to address HHSRS category 1 and 2 hazards	<p>Repaid if the Council carries out works in default or prosecutes the landlord within 5 years from the date of the loan.</p> <p>Loan secured</p>	<p>£10,000</p> <p>Not more than £10,000 in any 10 year period</p>	No change from existing policy	£100,000 (2018/19)

	property.	loan		against the property. Loan with interest repayable within 5 years or when the property is sold (if sooner)			
Flexible Home Improvement Loan (FHIL)	<p>Over 60's home improvement loan for works to improve the safety, comfort and security of their property</p> <p>Empty Property Loans</p> <p>To enable owners of empty homes to undertake repairs and renovations and bring properties back into use</p>	<p>Owner Occupiers who are over 60 years old (in the case of joint occupiers one must be at least 60 and the second owner at least 55).</p> <p>There must be sufficient equity in the property</p> <p>The Council must be satisfied that the required works are appropriate</p>	<p>Repair or replacement works to the building structure</p> <p>Energy efficiency and heating improvements</p> <p>Works to improve security e.g. alarm installation</p> <p>Adaptations to enable a disabled person to continue to live in the property</p>	<p>Flexible repayment terms. Loan to be repaid in full at sale of property</p> <p>For Empty Home loans, Loan must be repaid within 5 years</p>	Variable depending on available funds which are allocated quarterly by the Flexible Home Improvement Loan Company	No change	Variable
Mandatory	To provide essential	Must be applicants	Need for adaptations	Interest free, local land charge placed	£30,000	No change	Dependant upon the

DFG	adaptations to the homes of disabled people	permanent home Must meet the eligibility conditions in Appendix 2	identified by an Occupational Therapist from Bucks County Council Examples include ramps, stair lifts, wet rooms	on property equivalent to level of assistance provided, repayment, repayable within 10 years (in some cases) or when the property is sold (if sooner)			level of funding awarded by DCLG each year.
Discretionary DFG	Discretionary grant available for a range of measures including: -To top up a Mandatory DFG -Financial assistance for disabled people towards the costs of relocation to a more suitable home -Minor works DFG (Fast track option for simple	Must be eligible for a mandatory DFG Where applicant is a child one parent must be in receipt of a means tested benefit. For relocation assistance there must be an OT report confirming that new home is suitable to meet the persons needs. We must deem rehousing as the most suitable and cost effective solution For Minor Works Grant applicant must	Eligible works may include: Top up of up to £20,000 to cover additional costs for recipient of a Mandatory DFG (which is currently limited to £30,000) For Minor works DFG – simple adaptations such as stairlifts, ramps and wet rooms where the cost of works is less than £10,000 Relocation costs including Estate Agent fees, Conveyancing fees and removal costs	Interest free, local land charge placed on property equivalent to level of assistance provided, repayment, repayable within 10 years (in some cases) or when the property is sold (if sooner) Cost/benefit analysis of options available including relocation to a more suitable property Property must be occupied on a permanent basis by applicant unless hospital OT advises appropriate to	£20,000 (£10,000 for Minor Works DFG)	New measure which combines the previous Hospital discharge Urgent Adaptations Grant, Relocation Grant and DFG Top – up Grant	Dependant upon the level of funding awarded by DCLG each year.

	adaptations)	be in receipt of Council Tax support	Discretionary works outside the scope of a Mandatory DFG when agreed by the Group Manager-Regulatory Services	discharge to another property (Minor Works Grant is not repayable)			
Better Homes Better Health Grant	Grant available following referral from health professional for energy/heating improvements	Must be an owner occupier Referred by a health professional/medical referral	Works may include; Heating improvements Insulation Works to remedy Damp and mould	Non-repayable Required measures to be confirmed by Housing Enforcement Officer	£2500	Note this scheme is administered by the National Energy Foundation	£25,000 2018/19 only
Scheme currently in development							
Safer Homes Scheme	Minor adaptations	Any tenure Over 65 Disabled (any age) Referred by health professional	May include: Security measures, moving bedroom to ground floor and smoke alarms	Non repayable Measures identified and supplied through service provider	£50 tbc	Scheme still in development	TBC

Note: Full details are provided in the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy. This information is an illustrative guide only and may be subject to change following legal consultation and prior to the production of procedural documents for the individual grants and loans

Appendix 2 - Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy – Aylesbury Vale

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy document is to assist officers of the Council with the interpretation and implementation of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, Housing Act 2004 and Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 so far as it relates to the improvement of private sector housing stock in Aylesbury Vale.

2. The Policy in Context

- 2.1 National, regional and local policies and objectives provide AVDC and its partners with a broad strategic framework to work within. The key policies and objectives that have informed the draft of this policy are detailed below:

2.2 Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011

This document provides a clear directive from Government on its approach and priorities on housing policy, focusing on the development of a thriving, active and stable housing market that supports choice, flexibility and affordable housing. The strategy outlines the link between housing and economic growth as well as health and well-being and states that the private rented sector is continuing to grow in both size and importance. The Government supports growth and investment in the private sector housing market and considers this key to increased choice, access and better standards in the sector. Alongside this it also supports tough enforcement against rogue landlords who do not provide adequate housing for their tenants.

2.3 The Private Rented Sector – CLG Select Committee Report 2013

This Select Committee report states that it is important that the private rented sector is seen as an attractive alternative to owner occupation and recommends a number of measures to support the growth and development of the private rented sector including:

- Simplify regulation – the provision of a more straightforward regulatory framework for the sector
- Raise standards – provide Councils with the flexibility required to enforce the law and raise standards particularly with regard to the licensing of landlords
- Regulate agencies – develop new regulation to deal with abuses by letting agents
- Longer tenancies – ensure that the market offers longer tenancies to those that need them, particularly families
- Increase supply – across all housing tenure types.

2.4 Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Act sets out a number of fundamental reforms to welfare provision which will impact on some households living in the private rented sector (see AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy)

2.5 Localism Act 2011

This Act enables Local Authorities to discharge their homelessness duty through an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector (see AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy)

2.5 The Energy Act 2011

The Energy Act places an obligation on energy companies to help the poorest and most vulnerable households with saving energy. A range of energy efficiency measures are also introduced by the Act including smart meters, energy performance certificates and clearer energy bills (see Buckinghamshire County Fuel Poverty Strategy which aims to enable residents in Buckinghamshire to achieve affordable warmth). Aylesbury Vale District Council work with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) to provide an affordable warmth service (known as Better Housing Better Health) for residents in the Vale.

2.6 The Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act introduced powers to improve the management of the private rented sector through licensing, the return to use of long-term empty homes and to improve the health and safety of occupants in dwellings. Measures include:

The Housing Health & Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS)

The HHSRS is a risk rating tool used to assess the potential risks to the health and safety of occupants, potential occupants and visitors to a residential property. The system assesses 29 prescribed hazards within a property which are scored as either Category 1 (serious) hazards or Category 2 (less serious) hazards. Where a Category 1 hazard is identified in a property the Council has a legal duty to take action. The Council has discretion to take action on Category 2 hazards where appropriate to do so.

Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

The licensing of HMOs aims to raise standards in some of the highest risk residential properties where tenants are often most vulnerable. The two schemes in operation in Aylesbury Vale are:

- Mandatory licensing scheme – this is a national mandatory licensing scheme for some types of HMO.
- Additional licensing scheme – in 2015 an additional HMO licensing scheme was introduced in Aylesbury Vale which means that all houses in multiple occupation with 3 or more occupants require a licence from the Council. The scheme aims to improve standards across the private rented sector in the Vale and to ensure a supply of good quality, affordable housing in this tenure type.
- From October 2018 the definition of a Mandatory HMO is changing to include all properties with 5 or more occupants from more than 2 households (some exemptions

apply). Although many of these properties will already be licensed in Aylesbury, it is likely that there will be an increase in HMO applications.

Empty Homes

This enables the Council to bring privately owned properties that have been empty long-term (over 6 months) back into use via enforcement measures such as Compulsory Purchase, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Improvement Notices.

A new Empty Homes strategy for Aylesbury Vale is currently in development

2.7 Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Housing and Planning Act introduces changes to both housing and planning law which come into force through 2017 and 2018. From a Housing perspective the main changes seek to provide additional protection to tenants and additional enforcement options designed to drive rogue landlords out of the sector. These include:

Civil Penalties

Civil penalties came into force on the 1st April 2017 and provide powers for housing authorities to issue financial penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to a prosecution in respect of specified housing offences:

Banning Orders

The Act introduces a power for local authorities to apply for a banning order from the First-tier Tribunal for any person (e.g. landlord, letting agent, property manager) or corporate body who has been convicted of a banning order offence. The ban must be for at least 12 months and prevents a landlord or property agent from being involved in letting and/or management of property.

Database of Rogue Landlords and Agents

The government has established a database of rogue landlords. It contains details of any landlord who has received a banning order, or who has received at least two financial penalties in 12 months for banning order offences.

Rent Repayment Orders

The First Tier Tribunal may issue a rent repayment order to any landlord who has been convicted of specified housing offences:

2.8 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

This Act provides for grants from local housing authorities to be made towards the cost of works required for the provision of facilities for disabled people.

2.9 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) England and Wales Order 2002

The Order provides powers to Local Authorities to provide assistance to any person in their area for the purposes of acquiring living accommodation and adapting repairing or improving living accommodation.

3. Local Context

The Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy sits within a corporate framework and below the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. It contributes towards meeting the objectives outlined within the strategy predominantly by maximising the use of private sector housing.

Corporate objectives	AVDC Housing and Homelessness Strategy objectives	Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy objectives
To secure the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Vale.	<p>Maximise the supply of affordable housing</p> <p>Prevent and reduce homelessness</p> <p>Maximise the use of private sector homes</p> <p>Respond to the challenges of welfare reforms</p>	<p>Improve the quality of the private housing stock in the Vale</p> <p>Positively impact the health and wellbeing of those living in non-decent private dwellings</p> <p>Enable disabled people to live independent, healthy lives for longer</p> <p>Reduce the number of long term empty properties in the Vale</p> <p>Actively tackle rogue landlords</p>

4. Housing Profile

4.1 Private sector housing stock includes houses in private ownership and occupation as well as privately rented properties. The private housing sector plays a valuable role in the housing market in the Vale with the majority of properties in owner occupation. Generally housing conditions in the Vale compare favourably to the national picture.

4.2 Aylesbury Vale, along with the rest of Buckinghamshire, has an aging population. At the last census in 2011 68,000 people in Buckinghamshire reported having a limiting long term illness or disability (an increase of 12.4% from the previous census). The

number of people with long term health conditions is likely to continue to increase with the aging population in Buckinghamshire (Director of Public Health for Buckinghamshire Annual Report 2012/13). There is a significant link between housing quality and health. Factors such as damp and mould, overcrowding and excess cold are associated with long term conditions such as heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and mental illness, as well as an increased risk of mortality. People living in poor quality housing are more likely to suffer with poor health than those people living in good quality housing. Overcrowded households can encourage the spread of certain medical conditions, such as tuberculosis. Households without central, or other adequate heating, can suffer from damp and mould growth, which can lead to respiratory problems. Poorly heated households can suffer from excess cold, which in turn can increase the likelihood of premature mortality ('a ward level analysis of the housing and health profiles of Aylesbury Vale', Feb 2015).

4.3 Periodically the Council carries out a stock condition survey of private sector housing stock. The last Private Sector Housing Condition Survey was carried out in 2007 and at this time private sector housing stock in the Vale numbered 61,500 dwellings (the total number of dwellings in the Vale as of 31/03/2015 was 77,000).

4.4 Of these 16.8% (10,355 dwellings) did not meet satisfactory of 'decent' standards (Category 1 HHSRS hazards, failure to be in reasonable repair, failure to provide reasonable modern amenities, failure to provide effective insulation and/or efficient heating all are considered to be indicators of non-decent housing). Although this figure is well below the national average (37.5%) there remains a need to improve standards in this area

4.5 The Survey indicated that poor housing conditions in the Vale are associated with households in social and economic disadvantage. This affects the ability of households to repair and improve their dwellings. At the time of the Survey 25.6% of all households living in non-decent housing were elderly. Economically vulnerable households accounted for 33.8% of all households living in non-decent housing. In the private rented sector 39% of vulnerable households were living in non-decent housing.

4.6 At the time of the Survey 6,317 (10.9%) private sector households were living in fuel poverty (the equivalent national average at the time was 11.1%). However rates were above average in some areas of the Vale, particularly in the private rented sector (14.4%) and for inter-war housing (21.2%).

5. Housing Assistance

5.1 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

This Act places a mandatory duty on the Local Housing Authority to provide grants to be made towards the cost of works required for the provision of facilities for disabled people. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are provided to adapt a home environment

to restore or enable independent living for individuals with a disability. The maximum amount of grant funding that can be awarded under a mandatory DFG is currently £30,000.

5.2 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) England and Wales Order 2002

The Order provides powers to Local Authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal to any person in their area for the purposes of acquiring living accommodation and adapting repairing or improving living accommodation.

In order to use these powers the Local Authority must adopt and publish a policy setting out how the powers will be used. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Regeneration Policy fulfil this obligation. The Order contains important protections relating to the giving of assistance, whether it is given as a grant, loan or another form of help. It requires that:

- authorities set out in writing the terms and conditions under which assistance is being given; and
- before giving any assistance the authority must be satisfied that the person has received appropriate advice or information about the extent and nature of any obligation (financial or otherwise) that they will be taking on; and
- before making a loan, or requiring repayment of a loan or grant, the authority must have regard to the person's ability to afford to make a contribution or repayment.

The discretionary spending powers within the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 can be used alongside the mandatory DFG framework to top up mandatory grants or to facilitate solutions that enable flexibility, quality and choice for the applicant to meet their specific needs.

5.3 Policy Priorities: Target groups

Information from sources such as the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2007 and Public Health Buckinghamshire provide an evidence base for targeting housing assistance to particular groups within the community in Aylesbury Vale:

- Older people - older people are more likely to live in substandard and poorly heated homes, and can be vulnerable to home accidents including slips, trips and falls.
- Disabled people – discretionary housing assistance can provide a package of additional assistance measures outside of the mandatory DFG system which allows more flexibility based on the disabled persons needs
- Vulnerable groups – those on low incomes may not be able to carry out essential repairs to their properties resulting in impacts on their health and wellbeing. The HHSRS can be used to risk rate hazards in dwellings to determine where repairs are required to improve health outcomes.
- Landlords – housing assistance for landlords can be provided to help kick start improvements in standards in privately rented properties, benefitting vulnerable individuals and families.

5.4 Working in Partnership

AVDC currently operate a Staying Put service which assists DFG grant applicants with the spend of the grant by coordinating building works and assisting with the sourcing of contractors to carry out works. This is an optional service that a grant applicant can choose to take from AVDC. A fee of 15% of the total grant is charged for the Staying Put service. The benefit of this service is that applicants who may otherwise have struggled to organise works, benefit from timely adaptations made to their properties. The uptake of the Staying Put service in AVDC is high with 68% of grant applicants taking up the service in 2013/14 generating an income of £48,000- towards the cost of providing the service during this period.

Staying Put Officers also administer Flexible Home Improvement Loans and Essential Repairs Grants, providing financial advice and assistance to applicants.

AVDC jointly fund the National Energy Foundation to provide advice and assistance to residents in the Vale on energy efficiency measures and schemes available to residents, including those in fuel poverty. AVDC promote this through our website and via Officers who come into contact with residents in need of assistance in these areas.

AVDC are members of the Buckinghamshire Joint Housing Adaptations Group which brings together the District Councils, County Council (including adult and children services) and representatives from the Registered providers who operate in the Vale including VAHT.

6. Types of assistance offered

Summary of housing assistance measures available to private owners and tenants within the Vale:

Tool	Key Outcome	Eligibility criteria	Eligible Works	Conditions	Max £/case	Notes	Annual Budget
Healthy Homes On Prescription	To provide small scale works to a person's home to help prevent emergency hospital admissions, hospital re-admissions and repeat GP appointments..	<p>Aged 18 or over and live in the property as their main residence</p> <p>Have a disability or long term health condition</p> <p>Are the owner or the tenant of the property (must have consent from the owner to carry out the work)</p> <p>Referred by a health professional/medical referral</p>	<p>Small scale adaptations, repairs or other improvements which are specifically required to enable hospital discharge or help reduce the likelihood of hospital admission or repeat GP appointments</p> <p>One off deep clean and/or clearance of clutter, specifically to enable hospital discharge</p>	<p>Non-repayable</p> <p>Payment on completion of works</p> <p>More than one application can be made but no more than £5000 will be paid out in any 5 year period</p>	£5,000	Replaces the Essential Repairs Grant	A fund of £5000 is available in 2018/19 for cleaning and clearance type works under this scheme as a pilot.
Landlord Loan Scheme	To provide incentives for landlords to improve standards for tenants in	<p>Must be a landlord and the own property</p> <p>Property must be tenanted and let, or</p>	Works to include fire protection, energy efficiency measures and works to address HHSRS category 1 and 2	Repaid if the Council carries out works in default or prosecutes the landlord within 5 years from the date	<p>£10,000</p> <p>Not more than £10,000 in any 10 year period</p>	No change from 2015 policy	£100,000 (2018/19)

	privately rented property.	available to let, for a period of 5 years from the date of the loan	hazards	of the loan. Loan secured against the property. Loan with interest repayable within 5 years or when the property is sold (if sooner)			
Flexible Home Improvement Loan (FHIL)	Over 60's home improvement loan for works to improve the safety, comfort and security of their property Empty Property Loans To enable owners of empty homes to undertake repairs and renovations and bring	Owner Occupiers who are over 60 years old (in the case of joint occupiers one must be at least 60 and the second owner at least 55). There must be sufficient equity in the property The Council must be satisfied that the required works are appropriate	Repair or replacement works to the building structure Energy efficiency and heating improvements Works to improve security e.g. alarm installation Adaptations to enable a disabled person to continue to live in the property	Flexible repayment terms. Loan to be repaid in full at sale of property For Empty Home loans, Loan must be repaid within 5 years	Variable depending on available funds which are allocated quarterly by the Flexible Home Improvement Loan Company	No change from 2015 policy	Variable

	properties back into use						
Mandatory DFG	To provide essential adaptations to the homes of disabled people	Must be applicants permanent home Must meet the eligibility conditions in Appendix 2	Need for adaptations identified by an Occupational Therapist from Bucks County Council Examples include ramps, stairlifts, wet rooms	Interest free, local land charge placed on property equivalent to level of assistance provided, repayment, repayable within 10 years (in some cases) or when the property is sold (if sooner)	£30,000	No change from 2015 policy	Dependant upon the level of funding awarded by DCLG each year.
Discretionary DFG	Discretionary grant available for a range of measures including: -To top up a Mandatory DFG -Financial assistance for disabled people towards the costs of relocation to a	Must be eligible for a mandatory DFG Where applicant is a child one parent must be in receipt of a means tested benefit. For relocation assistance there must be an OT report confirming that new home is suitable to meet the persons needs. We must deem	Eligible works may include: Top up of up to £20,000 to cover additional costs for recipient of a Mandatory DFG (which is currently limited to £30,000) For Minor works DFG – simple adaptations such as stairlifts, ramps and wet rooms where the cost of works is less than £10,000	Interest free, local land charge placed on property equivalent to level of assistance provided, repayment, repayable within 10 years (in some cases) or when the property is sold (if sooner) Cost/benefit analysis of options available including relocation to a more suitable property	£20,000 (£10,000 for Minor Works DFG)	Combines the previous Hospital discharge Urgent Adaptations Grant, Relocation Grant and DFG Top – up Grant	Dependant upon the level of funding awarded by DCLG each year.

	<p>more suitable home</p> <p>-Minor works DFG (Fast track option for simple adaptations)</p>	<p>rehousing as the most suitable and cost effective solution</p> <p>For Minor Works Grant applicant must be in receipt of Council Tax support</p>	<p>Relocation costs including Estate Agent fees, Conveyancing fees and removal costs</p> <p>Discretionary works outside the scope of a Mandatory DFG when agreed by the Group Manager-Regulatory Services</p>	<p>Property must be occupied on a permanent basis by applicant unless hospital OT advises appropriate to discharge to another property</p> <p>(Minor Works Grant is not repayable)</p>			
Better Homes Better Health Grant	Grant available following referral from health professional for energy/heating improvements	<p>Must be an owner occupier</p> <p>Referred by a health professional/medical referral</p>	<p>Works may include;</p> <p>Heating improvements</p> <p>Insulation</p> <p>Works to remedy Damp and mould</p>	<p>Non-repayable</p> <p>Required measures to be confirmed by Housing Enforcement Officer</p>	£2500	Note this scheme is administered by the National Energy Foundation	£25,000 2018/19 only

Note: This information is an illustrative guide only and may be subject to change following legal consultation and prior to the production of procedural documents for the individual grants and loans

7. Publicity

Information on private sector housing grant and loan assistance is provided via our website including information on how to apply for a grant or loan. Information provided includes:

- the process to be used to apply for assistance, including any preliminary enquiry system;
- how persons can obtain access to the process of applying for assistance;
- details of conditions that will apply to the provision of assistance, how conditions will be enforced and in what circumstances they may be waived;
- advice that is available, including financial advice, to assist persons wishing to enquire about, and apply for, assistance;

8. Implementation

If approved the grants and loans specified within this policy would be implemented in the 2018/19 period following legal consultation and the draft of procedural documents.

9. Monitoring and review

Spend against budget allocation is monitored on a monthly basis. There will be a need to review the implementation of all new grants and loans in terms of effectiveness, uptake and spend. However particular regard will need to be given to the Healthy Homes on Prescription and Discretionary DFG Schemes within the first year of implementation in order to consider and determine appropriate funding levels for the following year in relation to demand and outcomes.

UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Tracey Aldworth

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on the progress of the Council's Development Management service following the Committee request for further information on 13 February 2018 regarding staffing levels, recruitment activity, workload analysis and additional work anticipated as a result of the HS2 major infrastructure project.

2 Recommendations/for decision

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| 2.1 That the Environment & Living Scrutiny Committee consider the contents of the report and associated presentation and provide recommendations if appropriate for the Development Management Committee. |
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3 Supporting information

Aylesbury Vale is growing in both housing and economic terms. There has therefore been a regular and significant increase in the workload of the Development Management team over the last few years as this growth manifests in planning applications and associated workloads. Development Management planners sit within the Commercial & Built Environment Service (C&BES) Group, and are responsible for handling the caseload of planning applications. For clarity, they are not directly involved in the investigation of planning enforcement complaints, and although they have some involvement in strategic planning, this is also not part of the responsibility of the group. Development Management is typically referred to as 'planning', and in this report, the terms are used interchangeably, although it should be noted that the report does not examine any workloads or staffing levels for either planning enforcement or strategic planning (Local Plan, Neighbourhood Planning).

- 3.1 The increasing workload for Development Management is perhaps best illustrated by the large number of major applications that the Council has to decide. These have more than doubled since 2013 and the category of applications that AVDC receives are often for large numbers of houses or high investment retail developments.
- 3.2 There are also significant issues with recruitment and resourcing suitable planning staff for this busy and demanding environment.
- 3.3 Despite the challenges, AVDC continues to be one of the best performing Councils in terms of deciding planning applications on time, far exceeding both current and proposed Government targets.
- 3.4 A new computer system – called "Built Environment" – is being introduced to the service in 2018 to provide an up to date back office system combined with a flexible web-based enquiry system that representatives of the parishes will be involved in developing. Members will shortly receive an invitation to a workshop on this new application to see early demonstrations of the software and to discuss how they can make best use of it when it is introduced.

4 Staffing Levels & Recruitment

- 4.1 There is a nationally-acknowledged shortage of experienced planning officers, and the impact of this has been felt significantly at AVDC.

- 4.2 Although a wide range of innovative, non- traditional recruitment arrangements have been piloted within the service, recruitment into senior planning roles has been slow. As a consequence, the service has continued to make a reduced, but still significant, use of planning consultants and agency staff to support our slowly increasing number of permanent planners. Where gaps in service provision are identified, AVDC has committed finances to fill these with contractors.
- 4.3 The current staffing structure within the development management service contains a number of planning roles, currently at salary grades 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. The table below sets of the number of posts and those currently vacant at each level.

4.4 **Table 1 – Development Management Permanent Posts**

Post	Total Posts (FTE)	In post, with delegation	Vacancies (FTE)
Graduate Planner (G2)	3	0	1
Technical Caseworker	3	n/a	1
Planner (G3)	5	1	0
Planner (G4)	5	2	2
Senior Planner (G5)	6	2	3.5
Principal Planner (G6)	4	1	2*
Associate Planner (G7)**	1 – tbc	n/a	1 – tbc
Corporate Planner (G8)	1	1	0

- 4.5 * Two principal planners have been interviewed and have been offered (and accepted) roles, so it is anticipated in 2 months, there will be zero vacancies at this level.
- 4.6 ** The role of the Associate Planner has not been approved yet. It is a current proposal by the C&BES Group to remain competitive with the private sector and to ensure a continuous career path for our planning officers which will support staff retention and professional development. The assumption is this post will replace one of the Principal Planner posts, which will reduce to 3, mirroring the number of teams in the Group containing development management planners, although staffing levels at each grade are under constant review by the management team.
- 4.7 A slide showing the current structure in C&BES will be shown during the verbal presentation to the Committee.
- 4.8 All vacancies in the structure are covered by interim contractors, so there is no shortfall numerically in terms of staffing. However interim staff represent

different challenges and these are covered in part 5 of this report, 'Development Management Workloads' and specifically under the point on delegated authority.

- 4.9 A wide range of recruitment activity has been taking place since September 2017 when the organisation-wide freeze on recruitment was lifted that was in place during the internal restructuring that affected all departments and service areas.
- 4.10 This activity includes: engaging recruitment agencies to headhunt suitable planning staff; regular activity on the LinkedIn social media platform; paying internal staff a £500 introduction bonus for recommendations of suitable candidates; pay external individuals £250 for recommendations of suitable candidates; offering 'golden handshakes' to qualified planners; starting a Built Environment Graduate Programme; engaging an in-house recruiter to work within the C&BES Group; paying for advertising space with national industry publications; holding weekly diary slots for 'open days' for interested candidates to visit the department; and successfully applying for national awards to showcase AVDC as a destination of choice for planning candidates.
- 4.11 This recruitment activity has resulted in 9 new officers being recruited into development management (external appointments), and a further 2 candidates have accepted positions in the team and are working their notice periods with their current organisations.
- 4.12 C&BES have on-going recruitment to the existing vacancies and the management team (and technical officers) are shortlisting and interviewing as and when suitable candidates apply.
- 4.13 The C&BES management team (for development management/planning purposes) consists of 3 generalist Team Managers and 1 Group Manager. As expected of a generalist manager, the role profiles for each of these roles has a heavy emphasis on people management, including resourcing. Each of the managers in the section is under instruction that recruitment activity is the absolute priority for the Group and that they are responsible for ensuring staffing levels are adequate to meet demand, either in the short term through contractors or in the long term through permanent appointments. There are 3 hours of recruitment-specific meetings in each managers diary every week, in addition to the activity each manager undertakes related to the examples given at point 4.10 above.
- 4.14 In addition to the resource identified above, there has been a temporary in-house officer in post for the past 12 months, who has been involved in setting up many of the activities highlighted in point 4.10. This post has now been deleted as per the corporate objective to remove all temporary personnel that are in addition to the structure agreed during the organisation-wide restructure. All associated tasks are now sitting with the management team in C&BES with support from our dedicated HR Business Partner and other HR personnel.

5 Development Management Workloads

- 5.1 For workload analysis, the calendar year 2017 has been used (Q4 2016/17 to Q3 2017/18 inclusive). In this time period, there were 3,720 total applications received. Of these, 51 were withdrawn, leaving a total application workload of 3,669 requiring allocation to officers.

- 5.2 There has been a significant increase in the numbers of major applications received in recent years. In 2013 AVDC received 48 major applications, this had risen to almost 100 'major' planning applications received in a 12 month period. This is expected to even out and then start to slowly reduce following the adoption of VALP later in the year Major applications are categorised as over 10 residential units or significant commercial development. For the purposes of this analysis, major applications are not assessed and are discussed separately due to the complexity of the cases and different consideration and expertise that this type of application needs, although they have not been removed from the total figure for the calculation of workloads.
- 5.3 As seen in the 'Staffing and Recruitment' section above, there are 23 posts in the current structure intended to carry an application caseload, ranging in experience from a graduate planner to a principal planner.
- 5.4 There are a potential 253 working days in the year per officer, discounting weekends and public holidays. An allowance of 35 days per officer has been made, taking account of annual leave and sickness, leaving 218 working days in the year, or 43.6 working weeks (218/5).
- 5.5 Therefore there are 3,669 applications that need allocation during a calendar year using the last available figures. Looking at the 23 planning posts available to allocate this work to if fully resourced, and the working weeks in the year, this equates to 3.6 applications per week or 159 per annum for each officer.
- 5.6 It should also be noted that there are additional, smaller pieces of work that planning officers are required to undertake that are auxiliary to the planning process that are not counted within the 3,669 figure. This work is typically brief and less complex than simple planning applications.
- 5.7 There is though a significant range in the complexity and time resource required to process the range of planning application types received by AVDC throughout the year. The range of case officers from graduate to principal is considered to be sufficient to manage this varied caseload.
- 5.8 It is also acknowledged that there will be a significant differential in the time taken to process the different types of planning application.
- 5.9 Considering now the nature of major applications, these are such that they are often complex and controversial, with both developers and objectors likely to be very vocal where actions of the Development Management team are perceived to not be to their advantage. This creates a challenging working environment where actions of planning officers are subject to intense scrutiny from all sides and decisions are often challenged both informally and formally.
- 5.10 Particularly high profile and contentious applications represent a significant resource investment from development management officers. These sites are difficult to anticipate and are challenging from a demand management perspective; they often require weeks of dedicated resource and this can come at the expense of other workloads. In instances such as this, it is often helpful to have the flexibility to consider using contractor resource, and the intention is that this will continue even after all vacancies have been filled.
- 5.11 Considering AVDC now receives in the region of 100 'major' planning applications a year, it is appropriate to have distinct planning posts at grades 5 & 6 who will primarily assess these cases, alongside a further caseload of the more complex 'minor' applications (typically 4-9 residential units or small scale commercial/other applications). The potential addition of the Associate

Planner role may impact on the number, but the financial investment in staffing resource will remain the same.

- 5.12 It should be noted that the resource required for these major applications needs to be considered *in addition* to the 3.6 applications each of the 23 officers are required to determine each week, but that this resource can only come from the 10 FTE 'senior' posts currently in the structure. The nature of major planning applications as highlighted previously means that a degree of flexibility will always be required when dealing with these case, and even with a fully resourced team, it will be necessary to bring in temporary (often specialist) staff to work on complex cases.
- 5.13 The most significant obstacle to delivering all application types on time is delegated authority. As shown in table 1, the number of officers with delegated authority within the service area is currently 7 (including the Corporate Planner). For the structure to work efficiently, all posts must be filled, and importantly, all officers need the level of delegation appropriate to their grade and experience.
- 5.14 The scheme of delegation is crucial to the smooth running of the service and in the quality of decisions that officers are making. Officers submit their initial reports to officers with delegation at the appropriate level and this experienced officer makes comments and changes before a decision is issued. This level of quality control is vital in ensuring decisions are correct. It does however come with strict knowledge and experience criteria that our current staff do not all possess and can only be gained through a training programme. As we have had many new starters into the service, they must all be assessed appropriately by the Corporate Planner for their suitability for the level of delegation required.
- 5.15 Consultants and contractors cannot hold delegated authority, in spite of their often excellent skills and substantial experience. This means that although they are able to write reports and make determination recommendations, a permanent officer with appropriate delegation needs to ensure this is correct. This system ensures appropriate checks and balances are in place and that due diligence on the work of temporary staff is thorough.
- 5.16 The consequence of having several temporary staff covering vacancies, and several inexperienced, junior staff in post, is that applications can be delayed during the sign off/review process, and that more work is required of those staff with delegated authority as they sign off more reports than would normally be expected of them.
- 5.17 The solution to this issue is to a) recruit more permanent members of staff and b) ensure that a thorough training programme is in place to pass delegated authority to new and existing members of staff. Part a) is discussed in section 4 of this report. Part b) is in place now – both managers and senior officers are working towards staff being measured against a competency framework that includes evidence of professional development and achievement of key skills. The expected timeframe of this training programme is 6-9 months and the impact of ensuring that all new officers receive a level of delegation appropriate to their grade will be hugely positive.
- 5.18 The overall assessment of senior management is that the current structure is sufficient to handle the existing and expected workload, providing delegated authority is continuously rolled out to new officers and that continued on-going recruitment efforts are fruitful. A fully staffed structure (shown during presentation), with all appropriate delegations in place would provide the

capacity to manage the demand and expected demand on the service effectively. However it is acknowledged that it is not sustainable to continue without the correct number of planning officers and with the current levels of delegation.

6 National Infrastructure Projects

- 6.1 The responsibility for the HS2 development management caseload will sit outside of the normal day to day operations of C&BES, so it is anticipated that the impact on the core function of the service will be minimal. The Corporate Planner will be responsible for the oversight of applications associated with HS2 at AVDC, alongside the overall strategic delivery of the project in the Vale, and working within regional and national partnerships.
- 6.2 The number of technical caseworkers (who validate planning applications) has recently been increased to three, in part to better manage resilience of this core function and also to ensure there is additional support available to validate HS2 applications as they come in.
- 6.3 The Corporate Planner post was created during the restructure with a significant focus on the delivery of major strategic projects in the area. As a major national infrastructure project, HS2 was certainly a key consideration in the creation of this role. Therefore the preparation for ensuring that workloads associated with HS2 were delivered with minimal impact on the day to day running of the development management service began in late 2016 as the job description was drafted.
- 6.4 In terms of the current preparations, there is a Service Level Agreement with HS2 Ltd which covers the additional workload demands expected of the authority in areas like development management, ecology and heritage. There is a forward-funding agreement in place on an 'as and when' basis for staff in these areas, with the SLA covering the funding required. There is therefore no anticipated impact on the normal functioning of the development management service. Current plans are for one consultant post and one forward-funded post, both contractors, paid for by HS2 Ltd, therefore not impacting on the financial resources of the service.
- 6.5 Although we have yet to receive full details of the potential impact on the vale of east-west rail or the NIC, we are very alive to the potential impact in future years and are accelerating our planning graduate scheme to ensure we have trained planners in place within the next 2/3 years.

7 Options considered

- 7.1 None

8. Reasons for Recommendation

- 8.1 Development Management is a high profile service and will continue to be so in the coming years.

9. Resource Implications

- 9.1 None

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