

# Coventry Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2013-18



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### ***Supporting Documents:***

*Two supporting documents to the Strategy have been developed:*

- *The Coventry Context and Homelessness Review.*
- *Results of Consultation.*

*These are available on the Council website [www.coventry.gov.uk/housing](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/housing) or by contacting the Housing Strategy Team: [housing.strategy@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:housing.strategy@coventry.gov.uk).*

*An Equalities and Consultation Analysis has also been carried out.*

'Home Sweet Home'

What a way to express your feelings  
about the shelter that covers you at night,  
To keep you out of the rain  
whether it be heavy or light,  
The bricks to keep the wind and the cold  
from freezing up your toes,  
A roof to cover up the house,  
a perfect landing for the crows.

I love the place I live in,  
a place that understands,  
Just when I need happy things  
and when I'm feeling sad.  
I like to lie down on my bed  
and dream my world away,  
But I hate it when I leave this place  
to start another day.

This place is more than just a box  
to shelter me from harm,  
This place is something that is me,  
happy quiet and calm.

**By Kiah Cox**

**The Westwood School**

**Winner of the Housing Fair Poetry Competition**

## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018. The strategy sets out our themes, priorities and actions across all housing tenures in the City until 2018. Until now the Council has approached housing and homelessness through the delivery of separate strategies. This strategy is different - for the first time we have combined these strategies into a single document to ensure an integrated approach to homelessness and to provide clear direction for the partner organisations that we work with.

We have developed the strategy at a time of unprecedented change in national policy and continuing uncertainty within the public sector. This includes ongoing reductions in public expenditure and changes in national policy in areas such as planning policy, welfare reform and the reform of social housing. The strategy sets out how we will respond to the challenges ahead to deliver our ambition: *to ensure decent homes, housing choice and support for Coventry citizens.*

We believe that housing plays a crucial role in delivering the economic growth ambitions of the City; in terms of new development, job creation and improving the quality of existing homes and neighbourhoods. New homes will be needed for people across a range of income levels and provided in high quality developments, with appropriate infrastructure and services for communities to be sustainable in the long-term.

As well as the development of new homes, the Council will need to focus resources on ensuring that existing homes remain safe and energy-efficient places to live and have a positive impact on residents' health and well-being.

With high levels of housing need in the City the risk of homelessness is a reality for many people. We will need to use a variety of methods to support people to access appropriate housing and to prevent people from becoming homeless. The Council recognises that everyone's needs are different - we are committed to ensuring that housing and services meet specialist needs and continue to support the most vulnerable.

In such challenging circumstances, it will be imperative that the Council continues to make the best use of limited resources and that we continue to work with partners to deliver more together than we could ever do alone.

I would like to thank our partners for their assistance in producing this strategy.



**Councillor Ed Ruane**

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Action, Housing, Leisure & Culture.



## Setting the Scene

### Introduction

This Strategy replaces the Housing Strategy Update 2005 and Coventry in Context 2006. It sets out our vision, priorities and actions for meeting the housing needs of residents in Coventry now and over the next five years. Since the last strategy was produced, a Coalition Government was formed in 2010. This has been followed by the most radical shake-up of housing policy and investment for a generation. The Coalition has introduced different ideas about the way central and local government relate to each other, about giving greater control to local communities and has brought in a number of changes to housing and homelessness. In addition we have also recently undertaken a fundamental service review of the Housing Service. Therefore, it is now timely to consider the impact of these changes and incorporate them into the Council's next Housing Strategy.

### A new approach....

Until now the Council has approached homelessness through a separate strategy and plan. This Housing Strategy is different because we have combined our housing and homelessness strategies into a single document. This approach means that the Homelessness Strategy can be read as 'part of the bigger picture' within Coventry's wider Housing Strategy and is not seen in isolation from the range of other housing factors that influence homelessness. It also makes it easier for our customers and partner organisations to understand what we intend to do to address housing issues and tackle homelessness.

In tandem with the Housing Strategy the Council has also developed a Tenancy Strategy as required by the Localism Act 2011. Local authorities are required to set out in their Tenancy Strategy the matters to which Registered Providers (RPs) are to have regard when developing their Tenancy Policy, including:

- The kinds of tenancies they grant.
- The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind.
- The lengths of the terms, if Fixed Term Tenancies (FTTs) are granted.
- The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy when the existing tenancy comes to an end.

## Keeping you informed of progress

We want to ensure that partners and local communities can keep in touch with what we are doing and have the ongoing opportunity to comment and highlight issues as they arise. We will do this through regular bulletins which will be available on our website. This will allow partners to help us deliver our objectives and ensure our targets and priorities continue to reflect local priorities.

It is our intention to keep the Housing Strategy and Action Plan under review throughout the five year period to reflect progress achieved and to enable us to respond to further changes to legislation or policy.

## Our Housing Ambition, Themes & Priorities at a Glance

Our **ambition** for Coventry is:

*'To ensure decent homes, housing choice and support for Coventry citizens'*

The Housing Strategy is centred around four **key themes**. We will be focusing our activities and resources around the **priorities** identified within these themes over the next five years. Our key themes and priorities are set out below:

**Theme 1:** Increase the supply, choice and quality of new housing.

### Our Priorities:

- Optimise opportunities for increasing new affordable housing supply to ensure that the delivery of new affordable housing is at a level that supports the economic growth ambitions of the city.
- Promote balanced and sustainable communities by diversifying the size, type and tenure of new housing, particularly family sized housing.
- Develop new affordable housing to a high quality without compromising the deliverability and viability of new housing schemes.
- Support economic growth by developing high value, high quality housing to retain higher earners and attract new residents.

- Regenerate neighbourhoods where poor quality, low demand housing exists.
- Improve existing site provision to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

## **Theme 2: Prevent & tackle homelessness – Our Homelessness Strategy**

### **Our Priorities:**

- To deliver upon the challenges set out in the Government report 'Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness' (2012).
- Establish a revised process for the assessment, allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation.
- Re-commission external homelessness services which better align with homelessness priorities.
- Review the local social housing allocation system – Coventry Homefinder.

## **Theme 3: Strive for a healthier and more sustainable City by improving the quality and use of stock**

### **Our Priorities:**

- Improve energy efficiency and affordable warmth across all tenures.
- Improve property condition and management standards in the private rented sector.
- Make best use of existing housing by reducing the number of empty properties and addressing issues such as under-occupation.

## **Theme 4: Encourage balanced, stable and sustainable communities.**

### **Our Priorities:**

- Support independent living for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Improve housing choice for an ageing population.
- Improve the quality of our neighbourhoods to support safe, inclusive and cohesive communities.



## How we have developed the strategy

The themes and priorities have been developed with the participation of residents and our housing partners and therefore embody a real consensus about the challenges and direction for housing in the City. Our themes and priorities have also been aligned with and are built around a comprehensive evidence base. This is available in two supporting documents: The Coventry Context & Homelessness Review; and The Results of Consultation.

We consulted through a variety of means, in stages, over the last couple of years. This has enabled us to engage with various residents, organisations and groups. Our consultation and engagement was designed to be as innovative and creative as possible. We used traditional methods such as focus groups and round table discussions and we engaged with local people in the city centre using competitions, suggestion boxes, pin boards and video booths. We found that local people are proud of Coventry and the communities they live in and they want to give their opinion on future housing in the City.

Innovative partnership working remains integral to the delivery of our Housing Strategy and has become increasingly important with the reduction in resources we have to deliver our priorities.

### *The Coventry Housing Fair - engaging creatively with our citizens*

*Three very successful Housing Fairs attracted hundreds of people. Residents were able to access a wide range of housing related information and advice including crime prevention, low cost home ownership and energy saving initiatives. As well as this, the Fair enabled us to keep abreast of the housing priorities that were important to local people - this helped us to shape the new Strategy.*



*Partner stallholders have included Cassidy Group, Orbit Care & Repair, CAB, Housing Law Centre, various Registered Providers, West Midlands Fire Service, West Midlands Police and the Consortium of Social Landlords. Alongside the information and advice, the event featured a school poetry competition – the winning entry is featured in this Strategy.*

### **Why Housing Matters**

Housing is important. It is the foundation upon which we build our lives and is interrelated to a variety of other agendas that cut across the themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy (as set out in the Local Policy Drivers section). Improving housing options, conditions and neighbourhoods within the City via delivery of this strategy is essential for economic growth, educational attainment, health and wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Economic growth, in particular, is a key priority for the City. The delivery of the Housing Strategy will help to attract private investment, which in turn can deliver sustainable growth and establish an environment where viable businesses can grow and invest. The Strategy is also about taking advantage of investment opportunities as they become available by aligning our housing priorities with economic priorities.

## Building on our successes

Since the publication of the last strategy, we've been working with our partners and have made much progress in improving housing in the City – some of the key achievements are summarised below:

- ✓ Our average delivery rate for new affordable housing exceeded our target – over the last 5 years 1,674 new affordable homes have been developed, including 1,222 general needs housing and 452 supported or special needs housing units.
- ✓ The City attracted £43.6m investment from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) during the 2008-11 funding round.
- ✓ Over the last 5 years 705 long-term empty properties have been brought back into use following direct action by the Council.
- ✓ By the end of 2012, 2700 housing association properties and between 200 and 300 privately owned properties will have received energy efficiency improvements through the Community Energy Saving Programme.
- ✓ Between October 2011 and October 2012, over 1,000 free insulation measures were installed at private properties using Carbon Emission Reduction Target funding.
- ✓ 295 private households benefited from Warm Front heating and insulation measures in 2011/12.
- ✓ The Council has been awarded £120,000 from the Department of Health to continue its Keeping Coventry Warm initiative aimed at tackling excess winter deaths and other health impacts of excess cold.
- ✓ Over the last 5 years 1,840 properties have been adapted for disabled occupiers and £14m has been spent on Disabled Facilities Grants.
- ✓ Since Coventry Homefinder was launched in September 2007, over 12,500 properties have been let through the system.
- ✓ £340 million has been spent by Whitefriars Housing since 2000 to repair and improve its housing stock in the City.
- ✓ Orbit Care and Repair supported and gave practical help to 1,576 older and vulnerable people during 2011/12 to enable them to live more independently.

## Our Challenges

Although we are proud of our achievements the Council faces new challenges and opportunities in order to fulfil its strategic housing role. Since 2008, Britain has been experiencing a severe **economic downturn** which has had an impact on the housing market. Limited lending by banks has affected funding for new housing and the ability of householders to access mortgages and **finance to buy or improve homes**.

The economic downturn, together with **government spending plans and welfare reform** is likely to put further pressures on household incomes which will have a greater impact on vulnerable people. The cuts to public sector spending mean that our collective capacity to respond is also reducing. For example, there is no specific Government funding to support improvements in private sector housing conditions whereas in previous years funding has been available. The Council therefore has limited options in what it can spend and inevitably, our priorities will be targeted to those in greatest need.

Possibly linked to the state of the economy and housing market and the introduction of Homefinder in September 2007, the aspiration to secure suitable social housing is growing. The number of households on the social housing register increased from just under 6,500 in April 2006 (before the introduction of Homefinder), to a peak of over 25,700 in 2009. As at April 2012, the register stood at just over 22,700 and of these, 2,359 were in urgent or extremely urgent housing need (Bands 1 and 2). As there is **limited social affordable housing** available in the City it is clear that the private rented sector will need to play a greater role in meeting housing needs.

Over the coming years, government funding for public services in Coventry will be cut, year on year. The Council will have to find considerable savings while at the same time trying to protect a range of frontline services. The Council Budget Report 2013/14 forecasts a fall in resources of 11.6% in 2013/14 compared to 2010/11 and further falls of 13.9% in 2014/15 and 17.3% in 2015/16 respectively.

The challenging economic climate and cuts in public sector funding will require us to be innovative and creative if we are to turn our challenges into opportunities.

## **The Fundamental Service Review (FSR)**

In light of the financial pressures described above, a review was undertaken of the Housing Service during 2010-12 and implemented in April 2012. This saw a reduction in overall staffing numbers and a rationalisation and refocusing of resources towards the customer. A key strand of the FSR was to promote greater use of self – service and reduce avoidable contact levels through better information, guidance and support. In addition to these changes, the need to achieve value for money and maintain service improvement remains a constant aim throughout this strategy.

## **Policy Drivers**

### **The National Context**

#### **National Housing Strategy**

The national housing strategy is set out in Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England, published in November 2011. The national policy drivers for housing are to:

- Increase the number of houses available to buy and rent, including affordable housing.
- Improve the flexibility of social housing (increasing mobility and choice) and promote home ownership.
- Protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and supporting people to live independently.
- Make sure that homes are of high quality and sustainable.

#### **Localism**

The Localism Act 2011 sets out the Government's plans to shift power from central government back into the hands of communities and councils. In terms of housing, this includes greater flexibility around how social housing is allocated, changes that allow homeless families to be housed in the Private Rented Sector and the introduction of Fixed Term Tenancies.

## **Welfare Reform**

The Government have introduced a series of reforms to welfare and benefits, including the Welfare Reform Act which received Royal Assent on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The Act legislates for the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years and introduces a wide range of reforms designed to make the benefits and tax credits system fairer and simpler, improving financial incentives to work. The main challenges for landlords, tenants and the Council to consider include:

- Household caps on benefits and the introduction of Universal Credit, which will include a housing element and direct payments to tenants rather than landlords. Figures from the Department of Work and Pensions show approximately 470 households will be affected by the benefit cap in Coventry, all of them large families.
- Housing Benefit property size criteria for working age claimants deemed to be under-occupying in the social housing sector. The Council's Housing Benefit Team estimates that 3180 working aged tenants in the City may be affected.
- Changes to Local Housing Allowance, including an increased age threshold from 25 to 35 years under which single claimants are entitled only to the shared room rate. The Department for Work and Pensions impact assessment of the LHA changes estimated that approximately 9,000 claimants could be affected in Coventry.

## **Affordable Rent**

Registered Providers can now use a new type of tenancy where the rent is up to 80% of the market rent, known as 'Affordable Rent.' The additional money is used to help fund the development of new affordable homes. This is described further in Theme 1. The main issues for the Council to address in relation to Affordable Rents include:

- Ensuring the revenue raised is used to fund the delivery of new affordable housing in the City.
- Assessing the impact of potentially higher rents on affordability for local residents in housing need.

## **Green Deal**

The Green Deal, being introduced by the Government in 2012, intends to reduce carbon emissions by improving the energy efficiency of properties. It provides a



means for home owners and landlords to secure capital upfront for energy efficiency measures, which will be paid back by future savings through energy bills. This will mean:

- All households will be able to install energy saving measures without having to find upfront capital.
- An 'Energy Company Obligation' will offer further financial support for vulnerable households and hard to treat homes.

The Green Deal is described further in Theme 3.

### **Equality Act**

In April 2011, a new public sector Equality Duty was introduced under the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires public bodies to give 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in all areas of work including developing policy, delivering services and employing staff. To meet the duty, we will monitor whether the needs of people with protected characteristics are being met and that they have full access to our services. This assessment will be done using tools such as Equalities Impact Assessments, data collection and monitoring the use of and satisfaction with services.

The Housing Strategy will be tested through an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the adoption process. We acknowledge that the Housing Strategy is a high level strategic document, which sets out the overall focus of our work. Therefore, individual policy changes and practices will need to be tested for their impact on different sections of the community.

### **The Sub-Regional Context**

Coventry is part of the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region's **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**. The LEP brings together private and public sectors along with academic representatives, to expand the economy, create jobs and grow wealth in the region. Housing has a crucial role to play in developing the City's economy and to contributing to sub-regional investment. The LEP's five year strategy sets out its future plans and is driven by the following vision for the Coventry and Warwickshire economy:

*“By 2016, through strong private-public sector collaboration, Coventry and Warwickshire will be regarded as one of the best and easiest places in the country to establish, run and grow strong and successful businesses; generating significant new employment and skills opportunities in the area.”*

The LEP has been awarded £12.8m from the Government's Growing Places fund – designed to kick-start developments and other infrastructure projects. This will help to facilitate the delivery of jobs and economic growth as quickly as possible.

Coventry City, Solihull Metropolitan Borough and Warwickshire County Councils have also signed a **Memorandum of Collaboration**. This statement of intention sets out the principles by which the participating authorities will work together to deliver or commission services. The aim of this is to better deliver efficiency savings and reduce costs whilst building resilience across the participating authorities.

### **The Local Context**

The **Sustainable Community Strategy** (Coventry: the next 20 years) was produced by the Coventry Partnership in 2011. It sets out a vision for Coventry to be 'a growing, accessible City where people choose to live, work and be educated and where businesses choose to invest.' The Strategy sets out nine key themes to achieve this vision – 'housing' is included as one of the themes, with the aim of creating:

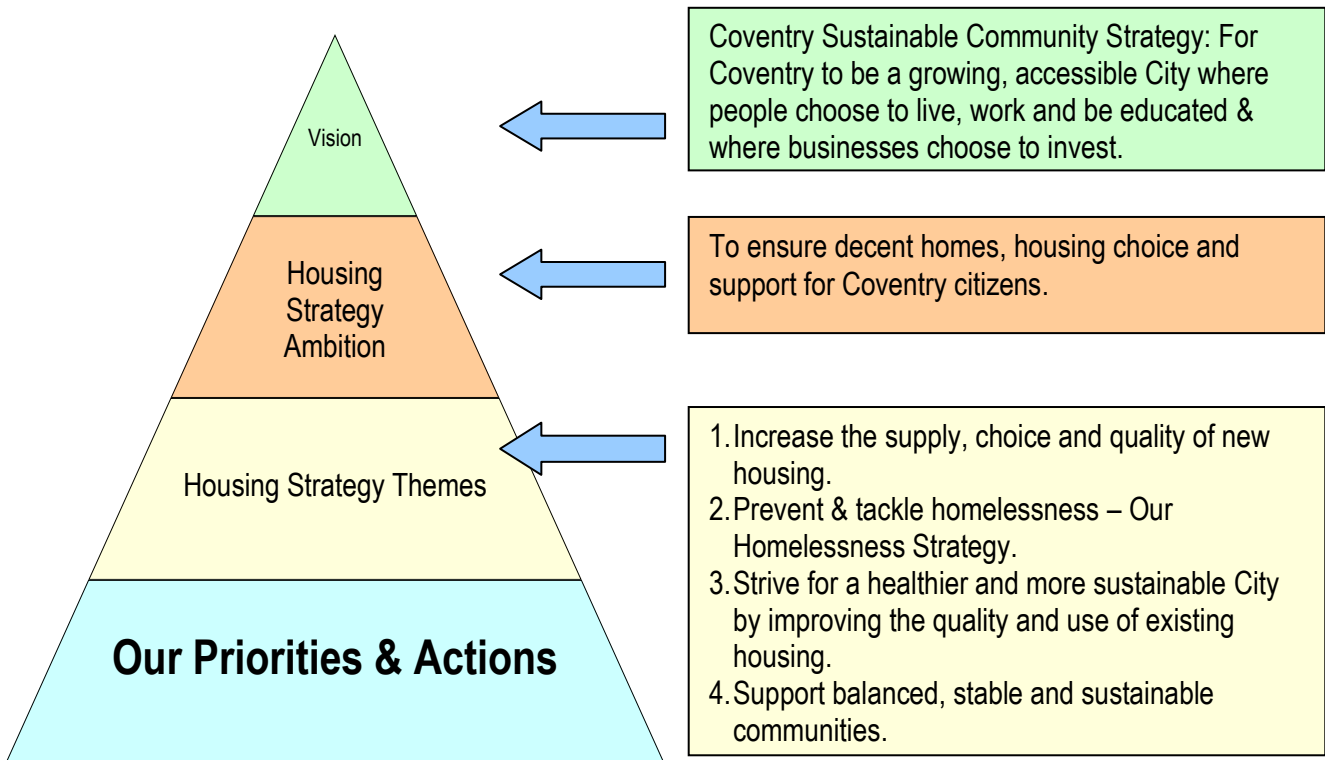
- A good choice of housing to meet the needs and the aspirations of the people of Coventry.

Through the Action Plan our Housing Strategy sets out how the housing sector contributes to the cross-cutting themes of the Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy.

It is vital when thinking about the Housing Strategy for 2013-2018, that we also consider the impact and influence of housing on other plans and strategies. Key relationships include the **Corporate Plan, Local Development Framework, Coventry Jobs Strategy, Coventry Economic Development Strategy, Coventry Local Investment Plan, Coventry Climate Change Strategy, Health Inequalities Strategy for Coventry,**

Coventry Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Draft Joint Health & Well Being Strategy, Community Cohesion Strategy and Community Safety Strategic Assessment. Rather than duplicate what is in these plans and strategies, the Housing Strategy will refer to them as appropriate throughout this document.

**How the Housing Strategy contributes to the Vision for Coventry**



## Format of the Housing Strategy

Themes 1, 3 and 4 of the Housing Strategy are set out under the headings detailed below. Theme 2 (the Homelessness Strategy) follows a different approach and structure in order to comply with Homelessness legislation.

### *Our Priorities*

This section summarises the main focus of our work and the key items to be delivered over the period of the strategy.

### *What do we Know?*

This section presents the key information, drawn from various national and local data, to build a picture of local needs and help explain why this objective has been agreed as a priority for housing in Coventry.

### *The Issues*

This section provides further background information, including the challenges and issues faced in order to address our priorities.

### *What do we need to do next?*

This section states what we will do in order to address our priorities. It highlights the available resources and any particular financial issues or opportunities that may affect how the priorities are addressed.

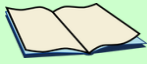
The Housing Strategy also incorporates three core values that set out the principles of how we will work to deliver our priorities, they are:

- Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do.
- Providing value for money - to make sure that we make the best use of limited resources.
- Innovative partnership working – to strengthen our ability to deliver our priorities and provide the best possible outcomes for residents.

Where appropriate these have been described in more detail under each theme.

### *Action Plan*

The Housing & Homelessness Strategy includes an action plan (pg 76) which explains in more detail how we will deliver the Strategy and contribute towards the themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.



*The strategy contains a number of terms which may be unfamiliar to the reader. These terms are explained in the glossary on page 89*

#### **What we will do – summary**

- Monitor customer satisfaction and equality to ensure that we continually improve our services, eliminate discrimination and promote equality.
- Maintain a robust evidence and research base to inform policy and decisions.
- Work with our partners to evaluate and mitigate the impact of welfare reforms in the City.

## Theme 1 – Increase the supply, choice and quality of new housing

### **Our priorities:**

- Optimise opportunities for increasing new affordable housing supply.
- Promote balanced and sustainable communities by diversifying the size, type and tenure of new affordable housing, particularly family sized housing.
- Develop new affordable housing to a high quality.
- Support economic growth by developing high value, high quality housing to retain higher earners and attract new residents.
- Regenerate neighbourhoods where poor quality, low demand housing exists.
- Improve existing site provision to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

### What do we know?

#### **Affordable Housing Need & Provision**

- The population of Coventry has grown from 300,848 in 2001 to 316,960 in 2011 and is projected to grow to 334,500 by 2028 (based on a level of economic growth that is expected for Coventry).
- There is a substantial shortage of affordable housing – Coventry requires 1,949 extra affordable homes between 2011 and 2016 (in addition to 1,296 in the development pipeline).
- The amount of capital investment available nationally for new affordable housing has been reduced significantly, from £8.4bn to £4.5bn.
- Over the last 12 years, the list of those seeking social housing has increased by around 300% whilst the social housing stock has declined by around 8% (over 1,400 affordable homes) as a result of the demolition of obsolete stock and tenants exercising their Right to Buy.
- There is a need for all types and sizes of housing in Coventry, however the most acute need is for larger family housing – an estimated 61% of overall housing need and demand is for three and four bedroom properties.



- Despite the recession an average of 335 new affordable homes per year have been delivered over the last five years, although there is uncertainty over the future rate of affordable housing delivery.
- There is an identified need to refurbish or remodel the Council owned Gypsy and Traveller site.

### Affordability

- The average property price in Coventry is £137,792 and the average entry level property costs £97,500 (housing associated with First Time Buyers).
- The average (median) income in the City during 2011 was estimated at £25,984 – this means around 45% of households have insufficient income to afford entry level market housing.
- The difficulty in accessing mortgage finance coupled with the requirement for larger deposits has led to an inability for many potential First Time Buyers to purchase properties.

### Housing Stock & Resident Workforce Imbalance

- 47% of homes in Coventry are terraced - of the 354 local authorities in England, only 15 local authority areas have a higher proportion of terraced homes.
- 71% of homes in the City are within the lower value Council Tax bands A and B, compared to only 56% across the West Midlands and 45% nationally.
- Average house prices are comparatively much lower in the City (at £137,792) compared to Rugby (£187,975) and Warwick (£248,175).
- Resident-based earnings are around 12% lower than workplace-based earnings - this suggests there is a workforce who earn higher wages working within Coventry that don't live in the City.
- On average around 3,800 people move each year from Coventry to Rugby, Nuneaton and Bedworth or Warwick.

## The Issues

### Background

The Council is committed to delivering jobs-led economic growth. As housing growth contributes to delivering this vision it is essential that economic priorities and housing investment are aligned. Various factors have an impact on the supply of housing: the availability of land and finance to develop it, the buoyancy of the market, the amount buyers are prepared to pay, density levels, and planning policies. Against the background of continuing housing market uncertainty and constrained grant funding for new affordable housing, the Council will need to take a more proactive and innovative approach to deliver homes of different sizes and types, for a range of incomes. This means working within the context of current market conditions to ensure the continuing supply of housing across all sectors.

### Affordability

The tightening of lending criteria by many banks and building societies has had a significant impact on the affordability of market housing. First Time Buyers are particularly affected as they are more reliant on flexible lending criteria and often have insufficient savings for a deposit. There are several Government schemes designed to give First Time Buyers a route into home ownership. The Council through its affordable housing policy has been able to assist aspiring home owners, who cannot afford to buy market housing, to gain access to various intermediate housing options. A growing number of authorities are also now using their financial assistance powers to support mortgage provision, either individually or in collaboration with banks and building societies.

### Demand for Affordable Housing

The 2012 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates that an additional 649 affordable housing units are required annually. This includes 1,296 units (259 annually) that have received planning permission but have not yet been built. An extra 1,949 affordable homes are required from 2011 to 2016 (390 annually) to ensure we meet current and future need. The level of affordable housing need represents an increase of approximately 30% on the level of need identified in the 2008 SHMA study and highlights the growing pressure on affordable housing in Coventry. This is

supported by evidence from the Homefinder Register. In April 2012, there were 22,718 households on the housing register, of which 2,359 were in urgent or extremely urgent need, but only 2,299 properties became available for letting in 2011/12. This demonstrates that the demand for affordable housing vastly outweighs the supply.

Although there is a need for all types and sizes of affordable housing in the City, there is an acute need for more larger family homes. This is because there is an under-supply of larger family homes within the existing stock and these do not often become available for re-let. In terms of the type of social housing properties that became available through Homefinder during 2011/12, 68% were flats or maisonettes. In terms of the size of social housing properties that became available during the same period, 48% were studio or one-bedroom properties suitable for one or two occupants only and only 16% of properties had three or more bedrooms. This imbalance of flats and smaller properties means that in general larger families have to wait longer for a suitable home to become available.

The SHMA estimates that 61% of overall housing need and demand in the City is for family housing (3 bedrooms and larger). This is further evidenced by the Homefinder Register, which shows that in April 2012, 3,549 households were registered as requiring family housing of 3 or more bedrooms whereas only 372 family homes of 3 bedrooms or larger were advertised in 2011/12. Of the 3,549 households, 730 (21%) were registered as being in urgent housing need. The SHMA estimates that it would currently take around seven years to meet the current level of urgent need for housing of four or more bedrooms based on the turnover of social housing stock.

Applicants needing large family homes also have difficulty in being able to afford suitably sized larger properties in the private rented sector. This is likely to be exacerbated by the reductions in Local Housing Allowance rates under the Government's programme of welfare reforms.

### **Affordable Housing Funding**

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) grant (for 2011- 2015) which has been allocated for affordable housing on identified sites in the City is £5.8m, compared to

£44m during the previous three year period. Funding has also been allocated to bring 47 empty properties back into use (see Theme 3); to partly remodel the site for Gypsies and Travellers (covered later in this section); and to develop a new homelessness centre of around 65 units to replace 'The Chace' homeless hostel (through Homelessness Change funding). At this stage, it is unclear what the Government's funding plans for the post-2015 period will be.

The Affordable Homes Programme 2011-2015 will enable Registered Providers to deliver 251 new affordable homes across the City over the lifetime of the programme compared to 1,114 units funded by the 2008-11 programme.

The Government has introduced a new tenure called 'Affordable Rent,' with the aim of sustaining development despite the sharp reduction in capital grant funding. Registered Providers are now able to charge up to 80% of market rents on new developments and a proportion of their re-let housing. The additional income can then be used to enable affordable housing development. The HCA's new approach to investment means there is a presumption against grant funding from central government for social rented housing (apart from exceptional cases) – the HCA programme will now mostly only fund 'Affordable Rent' properties and intermediate housing.

The Council prepared a Local Investment Plan (LIP) for Coventry in 2010 in conjunction with the HCA. This sets out the agreed spatial and thematic priorities for regeneration and housing investment priorities for 2011-2015. The priorities have been determined to ensure that Coventry can take advantage of its economic potential and enable the City to accommodate economic growth.

### **Local Planning**

The Council is currently preparing the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the City and the Core Strategy is the primary strategic document in the Local Development Framework. The emerging Core strategy, scheduled for adoption mid 2013, considers the number and location of additional homes (market and affordable), in addition to the development of infrastructure and economic growth, within the City up to 2028. Taking into account the requirements of the National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF), the recommendations of the SHMA, the responses to public consultation and the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal, the Council consider the requirement of 11,373 new homes (both market and affordable housing) between 2011 and 2028 to be achievable and in keeping with the overarching principles of this Core Strategy.

As economic growth is an important issue within the Core Strategy, we need to give careful consideration to any housing that comes forward as part of future developments in terms of the location, design, type and tenure mix. We also need to consider the demographic changes and identified local need, in particular the **housing needs of vulnerable or marginalised groups and specifically the need for older persons and specialist housing – this is covered in Theme Four.**

Until the Core Strategy is adopted, the Coventry Development Plan (2001) will continue to set out the current planning policy for the City. On private development sites above a certain threshold size, the developer is expected to provide affordable housing through a Section 106 agreement. The current planning requirement is for 20% or 25% of the development to be affordable housing on developments of 25 or more dwellings (depending on which area of the City). The draft Core Strategy proposes alternative options through planning gain, which may result in changes to the percentages and thresholds to 25% in the mid – low value areas of the City and 35% in the higher value areas, on sites of more than 20 dwellings.

### **Aspirational Housing**

There is a lack of choice of homes for higher-earners and potential high earners such as graduates in Coventry. These are commonly referred to as ‘aspirational homes’. Aspirational homes are important in order to attract a balanced socio-economic population to Coventry, which in turn is required to support the economic growth of the City. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows flexibility for councils to support housing developments of a size and type that better reflects local characteristics and the economic priorities of the Council. Furthermore the development of aspirational housing is supported by the NPPF as it encourages sustainable communities as well as a mix of residents.

Overall the housing offer in Coventry is unbalanced and biased towards lower value properties across all housing types compared to the housing offer in neighbouring districts such as Rugby and Warwick. This is reflected by the lower house prices, the predominance of certain property types and the proportion of properties in the lower value Council Tax bands in Coventry.

The City's stock imbalance is also mirrored by the disproportionately low numbers of high earners living and working in the City and the migration patterns to neighbouring areas. Resident-based earnings in the City are around 12% lower than workplace-based earnings. This suggests that people are more likely to commute into the City from other areas to take up higher paid jobs (i.e. there is a workforce who earn higher wages within Coventry that don't live in the City) and local residents are more likely to have lower paid jobs.

Similarly an average of 3,800 people move each year from Coventry to Rugby, Nuneaton and Bedworth or Warwick. The evidence suggests that this is likely to be partly influenced by differences in the housing offer, with a greater representation of larger (and more expensive) family housing in attractive neighbourhoods, particularly in Warwick and Rugby.

By increasing the quality and choice of housing in the City, this could provide an opportunity for high-earners to move to the City and encourage existing residents to remain. However new housing alone will not raise Coventry's profile outside of the City and overcome perceptions which currently exist, especially those held by people who live outside but work in the City. The objectives of this Strategy to increase housing choice will also need continuing investment in infrastructure, good quality shops, transport improvements and leisure facilities to raise Coventry's total offer.

### **Development Land**

The Council's updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2012 (SHLAA) establishes the most up to date position in terms of land available for housing development. This identifies a supply of land that could accommodate 15,063 dwellings, of which 85% are on brownfield land. Of the total land identified within the SHLAA, 6,589 are considered deliverable within the next five years (2012-2017), this



is more than twice the level required by the draft Core Strategy and represents a flexible land supply position.

Since the credit crunch, land and sales values have inhibited speculative development in the City, although contrary to trends elsewhere a number of stalled major residential development sites have re-started within the last two years or so. This has seen a growth in net completions year on year since 2009 with the number of net completions in 2011/12 being the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest annual completion rate in the last 20 years. This suggests that development viability is improving and that the volatile market experienced since 2008 may be stabilising. The challenge for this Housing Strategy and the Council's wider planning policy is to provide sufficient flexibility to allow developments to progress and deliver appropriate types and tenures of housing that respond to changing housing needs, housing market conditions and site constraints. This is important to avoid undermining site viability that may otherwise prevent sites coming forward and stifling new development.

### **Design of New Housing**

New housing is increasingly being built to higher standards especially as a result of changes in Building Regulations and targets for implementing renewable energy source and Green Deal objectives. It is also important that new housing is suitably designed to cater for the everyday living needs of the occupants and provide flexibility for future changes in family size and circumstances, without the need for them to move unnecessarily, thus contributing to long term sustainability.

Standards that are important include Lifetime Homes, Building for Life, Secured by Design and the Code for Sustainable Homes. It is generally accepted that we need to 'future proof' housing built in Coventry. However, it is also recognised that at a time of reduced public sector funding, we need to carefully consider our role in promoting higher standards particularly where the cost of higher standards may compromise the deliverability of new housing.

### *Pioneering new homes at Sampson Close - Passivhaus development*



*Orbit has invested £3m to build 23 new affordable homes at Sampson Close, which also received funding from the HCA. This was the UK's largest Passivhaus development and was the first social housing scheme in the Midlands to be Passivhaus certified. Orbit is working with Coventry University to monitor the effectiveness of the pioneering new homes. The environmentally friendly homes built using innovative energy efficient technologies will reduce residents' energy consumption and therefore their fuel bills.*

### **New Homes Bonus**

Introduced in April 2011, funding from the New Homes Bonus provides an incentive for councils to provide new homes. For each new home delivered or empty property brought back into use, councils receive the national average of Council Tax for that property per annum over a period of six years. In addition, there is a flat rate of £350 per annum payable over six years for each additional affordable home delivered.

### **Regeneration**

In areas of the City such as Wood End, Henley Green, Manor Farm, Hillfields, Stoke Aldermoor, Canley and Willenhall weaker housing markets are evident and characterised by high levels of deprivation, tenure imbalances and obsolete stock. New housing is an essential part of wider regeneration programmes aimed at meeting the needs and aspirations of differing households and is vital to creating mixed, stable and sustainable communities. This requires a move away from mono-tenure housing provision towards a more diverse housing offer in terms of the type and tenure of housing. Ongoing programmes have already been successful in providing greater

tenure diversification, re-balancing housing markets and reducing vacancy rates within the social sector. Demolition programmes of obsolete and low demand properties have supported this and together with regeneration work to date, have assisted in driving a 45% reduction in long-term vacant dwellings between 2004 and 2011.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Provision**

The Housing Act 2004 included a statutory requirement to undertake an assessment of the needs of Gypsies and Travellers known as a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. The National Planning Policy for Traveller sites (March 2012), which supplements the NPPF, provides guidance on planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites.

The Council owns and manages one site in the City which did provide 22 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers. A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was completed in 2008 and recommended that as the site is in a poor state of repair there is a need to remodel the site. The study acknowledges that many Gypsy and Travellers in the City meet their accommodation needs in permanent (bricks and mortar) housing and that there is no additional requirement for pitches between 2007 and 2017 as long as the improvements are undertaken on the existing site.

### **What we will do next?**

#### **Affordable Housing Supply**

The Housing Strategy fully supports the Local Development Framework and we will continue to work closely with planning colleagues to deliver affordable housing. There are planning permissions in place for 1,296 additional affordable homes in the City which could be developed over the next 5 years by both developers and Registered Providers. Several sites are either now being developed or are expected to commence within the next two years where RPs have HCA grant available. In addition developers are building on major brownfield sites (including Bannerbrook Park, the Brown's Lane former Jaguar site, New Century Park, New Stoke Village and the WEHM regeneration area). The delivery of affordable homes will largely be reliant on when the developers concerned are able to commence building work taking into account market conditions.

We have set an annual housing target of 649 additional affordable homes based on the findings of the SHMA and what can be realistically achieved without constraining the overall delivery of housing in the City. This target includes the 1,296 in the development pipeline. The private rented sector will also play a much greater role in the provision of affordable housing to meet our target – this is described in more detail in Theme 2.

Once the new Core Strategy has been adopted we will be working with planning colleagues to develop further guidance around the policies and rationale for affordable housing in the City in an updated *Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document*.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

The Council is currently examining the potential of introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy, which will secure funding for key infrastructure requirements across the City. Over the coming years this is expected to largely replace traditional Section 106 (S106) contributions for infrastructure, although S106 agreements will remain in place to secure affordable housing. If introduced in Coventry, the impact on development viability will need to be closely monitored to ensure it does not compromise affordable housing provision. Under planning regulations new affordable housing will not be required to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy.

### **Maximising Funding Sources & Other Resources for Affordable Housing**

We remain committed to delivering new affordable housing in the City to meet our housing needs and will be exploring innovative and creative methods to supplement provision through the current Affordable Rent programme and Section 106 agreements. This is vital if we are to rise to the challenge of developing ways to increase the affordable housing supply at a difficult time of reduced public sector funding. We will, therefore, explore a range of funding sources and methods including:

- Planning Policy – affordable housing secured through planning conditions and Section 106 agreements.
- Recycling grant funds held by Registered Providers, including grants recycled through the sale of shared ownership properties.

- Local authority funding, e.g. cash receipts collected on an exceptional basis in lieu of affordable housing being provided on site.
- Funds raised by Registered Providers under the new Affordable Rent programme.
- Making best use of council land and assets.
- Assisting groups interested in self-build and custom-build in line with national housing policy, where people purchase land to build or commission their own homes.
- Maximising the number of empty properties brought back into use as affordable housing.

## Diversifying the size and tenure of Affordable Housing

### *Tenure mix*

In terms of the tenure mix, the SHMA recommends a 50:50 tenure split between social or Affordable Rented housing and intermediate housing. We will set out guidance on the preferred tenure mix of affordable housing through the new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document mentioned earlier.

### *Size mix*

For affordable housing to be built on major new residential development sites (whether through grant funding or Section 106 agreements), we will set out guidance on preferred unit sizes of affordable housing through the new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

Based on the SHMA recommendations for a mix of affordable housing required to meet need and address imbalances in the overall stock, we will propose that development schemes will include the following affordable housing target mixes (expressed as a percentage of the total number of affordable dwellings in a scheme):

- 1 bedroom - 15%
- 2 bedroom - 30%
- 3 bedroom - 35%
- 4 bedroom - 20%

Due to the imbalance of apartments in the social sector described earlier, further apartment provision in that sector in areas of existing over supply will be discouraged. The exception will be where a small number of purpose designed apartments are required to meet identified strategic priorities for supported housing or disability needs.

### **Increasing the Choice of Aspirational Housing**

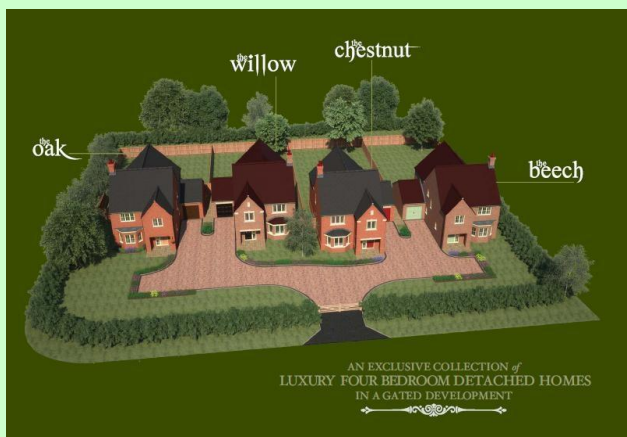
As well as increasing the supply and range of affordable housing, this Strategy supports the delivery of good quality, sustainable development proposals aimed at diversifying the City's overall housing mix. This is necessary in order to retain and achieve an in-migration of high-earners and professional households, thereby creating a more balanced socio-economic population, a thriving local economy and a sustainable City.

To achieve this further work will be required to establish a clear local definition of aspirational housing that should provide further clarification for developers. We will explore the market for aspirational housing in the City to ensure that valuable land is used most effectively.

The Housing & Homelessness Strategy supports the emerging Core strategy by taking a flexible approach to the development of housing and by making the most effective use of land. This should take into account prevailing market conditions, the characteristics of the development site and its local context in both design and market terms. The City's land capacity includes several 'urban village' sites which provide opportunities to deliver aspirational family housing; this will be explored further.

### ***Providing aspirational homes at Westwood Heath***

*Replacing a former derelict cottage, these high quality aspirational homes on the semi-rural southern border of Coventry, will provide much-needed open-market housing choice for high earners and professional households. The innovative scheme is provided by Signature New Homes, the company that has been set up by WM Housing Group to develop these homes. The profit from sales of the properties will be re-invested in the Group's affordable housing programme, thereby helping to increase the supply of new affordable housing at a time of constrained government funding.*



### **Working in Partnership**

We will examine new ways of working with our partners including neighbouring Councils, Registered Providers, the HCA, voluntary groups, private developers and lenders. This is important to demonstrate the investment potential of Coventry. It will also strengthen our understanding of the needs of private developers and their development finance providers, as well as the barriers they experience when developing new housing. In turn this will help to identify new solutions to increase the housing supply.

### **Design quality**

We will strive to improve standards of design in new housing especially in relation to space and ergonomic use of dwellings as well as to provide for long term sustainability and flexibility in use. In a period of reduced funding we will need to take a balanced



approach to the cost and quality of new homes where this affects the viability and deliverability of new housing schemes.

We will, however, require all new homes to achieve design standards that comply with the emerging Core Strategy Building Standards. We will also encourage all new rented homes in the social sector to be designed to Lifetime Homes Standards where this is viable. This is essential to long-term sustainability so that a home can be adapted to suit the changing needs of a household over time. Housing designed to Lifetime Homes Standards can cater for both shorter term mobility difficulties and permanent disabilities without the household necessarily having to move.

Furthermore to supplement Building Regulation requirements for all new homes to be wheelchair accessible, we will promote the development of purpose designed wheelchair homes – this is discussed further in Theme 4.

Improved standards are expected to form part of new Supplementary Planning Documents issued under the Core Strategy when it is adopted.

### **Gypsies and Travellers**

Our 2008 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment concluded that there was no requirement for additional pitches in Coventry. We will remodel the only Council owned site to provide fewer but larger pitches, better meeting modern design standards.

### **Development Land**

The Core Strategy will form the basis for leading new residential developments over the course of the plan period. It will also be supported by a Site Allocations Development Plan Document and City Centre Area Action Plan. Together these documents will add certainty for the development industry and help provide a solid base for future development in the City. To help support continued residential development the Council is committed to regularly updating the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and will maintain a robust and credible housing land supply.



## Regenerating Priority Areas

In line with the priorities identified in the Local Investment Plan (LIP), we will continue to prioritise the provision of new housing in identified regeneration areas in the City Centre, WEHM, Canley, Stoke Aldermoor and Foleshill. This will provide a projected 9,530 properties including an estimated 2,300 affordable homes. The continuation of these regeneration programmes is essential to deliver Core Strategy objectives. This is to re-vitalise these areas by strengthening housing markets, providing an improved housing base to support jobs led growth, addressing deprivation and broadening housing choice through a greater mix of dwelling types and tenure diversification.

### What we will do – summary

- To support economic growth we will aim to meet our affordable housing target and keep the target under review.
- Explore alternative funding sources and methods to enable affordable housing developments.
- Contribute to diversifying the housing stock and meeting housing needs by achieving the right tenure, size and proportion of affordable housing on new developments.
- Negotiate to improve the percentage of larger family homes delivered as part of the Affordable Housing Requirement.
- Identify the market for aspirational housing and promote future housing sites where aspirational housing could be suitable.
- Explore a new partnership model for investment in housing development.
- Continue to support regeneration programmes in the City.
- Take a balanced approach to improving the design of new housing.
- Identify opportunities to assist First Time Buyers.
- Remodel the Siskin Drive Gypsy & Traveller site.
- Work with Planning to develop a new Supplementary Planning Document setting out guidance on affordable housing in the City.

## Theme 2: Prevent & Tackle Homelessness

### – Our Homelessness Strategy

#### Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all authorities to periodically develop a strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness, based on a review of the homelessness situation in the area.

This is Coventry's third Homelessness Strategy. This Strategy will allow us to meet our duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Code of Guidance on Homelessness 2006, which is to review homelessness in the area and produce a strategy for addressing homelessness. The Homelessness Review is available as a supporting document to the Strategy.

For the first time our Homelessness Strategy has been included as a specific theme within the broader Housing Strategy instead of being developed as a separate document. This approach means that the Homelessness Strategy can be read as 'part of the bigger picture' within Coventry's wider Housing Strategy and is not seen in isolation from the range of other housing factors that influence homelessness. It also allows the aims and priorities to be aligned with other key plans and strategies that influence both the Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy (as described earlier in 'Setting the Scene').

We recognise the detrimental effects that homelessness can have on someone's life; it can affect their health, employment, learning and overall well being. Given the adverse effects of homelessness, it is preferable that services are provided to prevent homelessness wherever this is possible. There is also a significant monetary cost for households and for the Council via its statutory duties.

Therefore, it is of key importance that Coventry has a robust strategy that works to develop services to prevent homelessness and assist those who are in housing need. The Council has legal duties towards certain groups of homeless households, but the

scope of this strategy is to cover all forms of homelessness, and importantly to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

## **Policy Context**

The Government has embarked on a programme of reforms to housing policy and welfare that will have an impact on homelessness and housing need. This national context in relation to homelessness is summarised below, and is covered in more detail in the Homelessness Review.

One of the biggest challenges which must be addressed in this Homelessness Strategy is how we deal with the effects of these reforms and the expected increase in the risk of and level of homelessness that may result. This is in the context of reduced public spending and the wider impacts of the recession.

## **National Context**

### **Welfare Reform**

The impact of welfare reform is on a household's income and therefore their ability to meet housing costs. The housing related reforms that may have a direct impact on homelessness include:

- Changes to Local Housing Allowance.
- Introduction of size criteria for working age social tenants who require Housing Benefit to meet the costs of their rent.
- Overall benefit cap of £500pw for families and £350pw for single adults.
- The introduction of Universal Credit.

### **Localism Act 2011**

Key measures with regards to homelessness and housing include:

- The option for local authorities to discharge the main homelessness duties with the offer of private rented sector housing, without the agreement of the homeless household. In doing so local authorities must be satisfied with the suitability of the accommodation in terms of affordability, property condition and household circumstances, alongside the requirement for a minimum 12-month tenancy.

- The introduction of new Fixed Term Tenancies enabling social housing landlords to offer shorter tenancies (minimum of five years fixed term, or two years in exceptional circumstances. For Registered Providers, this has been implemented through changes to the Regulatory Standards).
- A duty for local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy to provide a framework for Registered Providers to develop their own Tenancy Policies (described previously in 'Setting the Scene'). A key issue for homelessness is the manner in which Fixed Term Tenancies are brought to an end. The Tenancy Strategy has been developed in tandem with our Housing Strategy and will be available on our website.
- Greater flexibilities to set social housing allocations policies that are appropriate to the local area.

## Local Context

### **Housing Fundamental Service Review**

As detailed in the section 'Setting the Scene', a Fundamental Service Review (FSR) of the Housing Service was undertaken during 2010-12 and implemented in April 2012. With particular relevance to homelessness, this involved restructuring the Housing Options Team to enable resources to be refocused towards the customer together with a greater emphasis on the customer being self-sufficient. Roles were redefined to provide: initial expert advice and assistance (First Response); homelessness prevention & assessment; and assistance to households in need to enable them to access the Private Rented Sector.

### **Access to Private Rented Properties (APRP)**

As part of the Fundamental Service Review a new team of three officers has been set up to enable people in housing need, including those that are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to access the private rented sector. The team will administer the Access to Private Rented Properties (APRP) scheme which provides a non-cash rent deposit guarantee on behalf of the tenant to replace the usual deposit required by private landlords. The team will also provide advice and support to the tenant and the landlord, a property inspection service, mediation where necessary, and liaise with the Housing Benefit Team.

## **Homelessness Commissioning**

As well as providing direct provision of homelessness services through its Public Safety & Housing Department, the Council commissions a significant homelessness services programme from external third sector organisations. This programme includes a rough sleeper outreach service, direct access hostels, support for homeless households in temporary accommodation, a bond scheme, support for homeless individuals (males & females) and move-on support. These services include both accommodation-based and floating support services. Seven third sector providers have been commissioned through thirteen separate contracts to provide the external homelessness commissioned services programme.

The external homelessness commissioned services programme is funded from former Supporting People funding. Although this funding is no longer 'ring-fenced', the Council has currently committed to continuing to fund the external programme and maintain the priority given to this area of work. The programme is currently being reviewed and will be re-commissioned when the current contracts come to an end.

## **Tenancy Strategy**

The Coventry Tenancy Strategy has been developed in tandem with the Housing & Homelessness Strategy. The Tenancy Strategy states that the Council intends to use the opportunity presented in the Localism Act 2011 to discharge its main homelessness duty using an offer of a suitable private rented sector property, without requiring the consent of the applicant.

## **How we have developed the Homelessness Strategy**

In developing this Homelessness Strategy, we have looked at local and national data on homelessness, good practice from around the country and worked in collaboration with regional partners and homelessness service providers.

We have consulted a wide range of stakeholders on the Strategy, including Registered Providers, third sector organisations working with people in housing need, internal council departments and service users.

## What do we know – A Summary of the Homelessness Review

The Homelessness Review provides up to date information about:

- The current and potential future levels of homelessness.
- The needs of homeless and potentially homeless households.
- The services that are provided and activities that are carried out to tackle and prevent homelessness, including gaps in provision.
- The resources available to the Council and its partners to deliver these services.

This information has informed the production of the Homelessness Strategy. Key issues arising from the Homelessness Review include:

### Needs Mapping

- During 2011/12, 1146 households approached the Council for assistance and completed a homelessness application. Following assessment, 576 were found to be homeless, eligible, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (known as 'Statutorily Homeless' and owed the main homelessness duty).
- The majority (67%) of these were households containing dependent children.
- There has been an increase in the number of households made homeless when a private tenancy (assured shorthold tenancy) comes to an end.
- 523 households required temporary accommodation.
- During 2011/12, 1603 clients accessed homelessness services commissioned by the Council and provided by external organisations.

### Service & Resource Mapping

- The Council provides advice and assistance, carries out homelessness assessments, provides temporary accommodation when necessary, assists in accessing the private rented sector and operates the Coventry Homefinder choice based lettings system.
- The external homelessness commissioned services programme is funded from former Supporting People funding. The programme currently provides 230 units of accommodation and 263 units of floating support.

## Internal & External Consultation

Consultation with service users and providers of homelessness services identified that:

- There is a need for a single point of access to homelessness services.
- There is a need for homelessness services to be delivered in a more co-ordinated, joined-up way.
- A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for all client groups.

## Identification of Service Improvements & New Service Provision

Several gaps in services were identified, particularly:

- Services for women.
- Services for clients with high/complex needs.
- Support for households placed in temporary accommodation.

In addition, the range of homelessness prevention measures used could be improved in line with the particular emphasis on prevention in *Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness* (Aug 2012).

The Homelessness Review is available as a supporting document to the Housing & Homelessness Strategy (details on Contents page).

## Our priorities

On the basis of the findings of our review of homelessness in the City and taking into account national policy guidelines, the Homelessness Strategy focuses on four major priorities.

### **Our Homelessness Priorities:**

#### **Overarching Priority**

To deliver upon the challenges set out in the Government report 'Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness' (2012).

#### **Local Priorities**

- To establish a revised process for the assessment, allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation.
- To re-commission external homelessness services which better align with homelessness priorities.
- To review the local social housing allocation system – Coventry Homefinder.

Developing and implementing a Coventry Homelessness Action Plan in response to the Government's preventing homelessness challenges will be the key priority for the City for the next 5 years. However, in addition to the ten key national Homelessness challenges, a further three local priorities have emerged as a result of the Homelessness Review and through consultation with our stakeholders and customers.

The provision of proactive services to help households avoid homelessness altogether, or minimise the detrimental affects should homelessness be unavoidable, remain at the heart of what the Council aims to achieve.



## Priority Issues & What We Will Do

### Priority 1

To deliver upon the challenges set out in the Government report 'Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness' (2012).

In August 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government, following a Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness, produced a report entitled – *'Making Every Contact Count : A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness'*. The vision for the report is simple but bold – there is no place for homelessness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The key to delivering that vision is prevention – agencies working together to support those at risk of homelessness.

The report provides a framework of ten key challenges for local homelessness teams working with their partners to deliver a gold standard service.

The ten challenges are to:

- adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
- actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.
- offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients.
- adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative.
- have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support.
- develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords.
- actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- have a Homelessness Strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is renewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs.

- not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- not place any families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks.

### **What are the issues/challenges?**

The key issues identified by the Homelessness Review and consultation with partners, stakeholders and customers will be addressed by meeting the homelessness service standards set out in the 'Making Every Contact Count' Government report.

The Homelessness Review and the local context information gathered in the supporting documents highlight the potential increases in homelessness as a result of: welfare reform changes; the continuing slow down in the economy; the inability of potential house purchasers to raise a sufficient deposit or obtain housing finance; the slow down in the development of new affordable housing; and difficulties in gaining access to the private rented sector.

The Homelessness Review describes the nature and scale of homelessness issues in the City. This requires a comprehensive, coherent and joined up approach to tackle the issues raised. The Review highlights that there should be a particular emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. This will include partnership working to address issues within welfare reform.

### **What we will do**

The Council will lead on developing a new Coventry Homelessness Action Plan that will include responses to the ten preventing homelessness challenges set out by Government. A strategic working group involving both internal and external partners will be formed to develop the Action Plan, which will be reviewed annually to monitor progress and ensure our actions continue to reflect local priorities on homelessness.

## Priority 2

### **To establish a revised process for the assessment, allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation**

It has been well documented that the use of temporary accommodation, particularly Bed & Breakfast accommodation, has a detrimental effect on family life and the well-being of households. Specifically, the use of temporary accommodation can have a negative impact on children's schooling, mental health, employment/training opportunities, social wellbeing and the ability of households to get on with their lives.

The aim of this priority is to provide the most efficient and rapid assessment of those that may require temporary accommodation. This is to ensure that:

- The temporary accommodation is suitable to meet the household's needs.
- Households are supported whilst in temporary accommodation.
- Households are housed in suitable permanent accommodation as quickly as possible.

### **What are the issues/challenges?**

The Homelessness Review has highlighted the significant numbers of households that the Council has housed in temporary accommodation, including Bed & Breakfast provision.

The procurement and use of temporary accommodation is currently administered separately by the Council's Housing Options Team, as well as the Adult Social Care Team and the Children Learning and Young People's Directorate. Each section uses temporary accommodation to fulfil their own particular statutory duties and responsibilities.

A review of temporary accommodation provision has identified:

- A duplication of assessments for temporary accommodation by different sections of the Council.
- A duplication of procurement processes in the acquisition of temporary accommodation from private sector providers.
- Different charging rates.

- Inconsistency in the quality of accommodation/services for temporary accommodation.

As well as the detrimental effects to households in temporary accommodation, there is a significant financial cost to the Council in continuing to use this provision in this way.

### What we will do

We will work with partners to establish a revised process for the assessment, allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation across different Council Directorates and Teams and provide support to households requiring this service.

We will reduce the need for temporary accommodation through an improved approach to preventing homelessness.

#### ***Homeless Families Project – Providing temporary accommodation with Whitefriars Housing Group***

*The homeless families' project set up with Whitefriars Housing Group provides 10 properties for temporary accommodation, as an alternative to Bed & Breakfast. These offer a more suitable and affordable solution by providing temporary accommodation in Whitefriars properties with the added benefits to families of support and home provisions such as their own cooking facilities.*

*Support provided includes: working with families to overcome difficulties which affect their housing situation and may result in future homelessness; working with other agencies to ensure that families continue to be supported after leaving the service; assisting in the development of skills to enable families to maintain future tenancies; and applying for funding to help tenants clear former arrears and over-come barriers to finding move-on accommodation.*

### **Priority 3**

**To re-commission external homelessness services which better align with homelessness priorities**

The Council commissions external organisations to provide additional homelessness support services. These commissioned homelessness services are paid for by former Supporting People funding which is no longer ring-fenced. These services are an essential addition to the services provided by the Council's Housing Options Team.

#### **What are the issues/challenges?**

Currently, seven commissioned homelessness organisations provide these additional services through 13 separate contracts. Each contract is administered separately with its own assessment system, client record keeping and monitoring processes.

Consultation with homelessness providers and their clients has identified a duplication of processes, assessments and administration between the various contracts. In particular, the providers have differing assessment criteria and client records are unable to be shared between services. Homeless clients have talked of a 'revolving door' process between services, where they have experienced moving between commissioned services and have ended up back at the original starting point. As each customer is presently only able to be supported under one contract, this can often mean that not all individual needs can be fully met.

The Homelessness Review identified key gaps in services particularly around support for those in temporary accommodation, people with complex needs and insufficient provision for women. Further work has also highlighted the links and opportunities to combine the external homelessness services with housing support provided to ex-offenders.

The homelessness commissioned services will be reviewed and re-commissioned when the current contracts come to an end.

#### **What we will do**

Through consultation with current homeless providers, stakeholders and clients, we will re-commission external homelessness services, alongside housing support

services for ex-offenders, when the current contracts come to an end. This will be informed by the findings of the Homelessness Review and further consultation with current providers, stakeholders and clients.

#### **Priority 4**

##### **To review the local social housing allocation system – Coventry Homefinder**

Coventry Homefinder is the choice based social housing allocation system established in 2007 by the Council and its social housing partners. The system is used to fulfil the Council's duties under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. It is also the system by which the Council discharges its duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (this is explained further in the Homelessness Review).

The Coventry Homefinder Nominations and Lettings Policy aims to ensure that customers in housing need are provided with a level of reasonable preference to access appropriate housing. As a Choice Based Lettings system, it provides customers with the opportunity to 'bid on' (express an interest in) social housing properties that are advertised and generates a short list based on priority need and registration date.

#### **What are the issues/challenges?**

Demand for social housing through Coventry Homefinder is high. In April 2012, there were 22,718 applicants registered. Of these, 2,359 had an urgent or very urgent housing need (priority bands 1A to 2C). During the year 2011/12 only 2,299 properties were advertised and let through Homefinder.

The Government has introduced a wide ranging package of social housing reforms, set out in 'Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing'. This includes the introduction of Fixed Term Tenancies, changes to allocations and homelessness processes and the promotion of increased mobility for social tenants. In addition, the Government published "Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England" in June 2012, which is new statutory guidance on allocations that replaces all previous national guidance.

As a result of the new statutory guidance, the Council will be able to set its own qualifying criteria to determine who will and will not be allowed to register with Coventry Homefinder. The Council will also have greater freedoms over the priority given to households, which can include criteria such as their current or past behaviour, their contribution to the community and local connection. However, households with a housing need that meets the 'reasonable preference' criteria will still be given a level of priority.

Welfare reform changes (including the introduction of Universal Credit, benefit caps and particularly the reduction of Housing Benefit paid to working age tenants who under-occupy social housing) could all have an impact on the Coventry Homefinder system.

Social housing provider partners are also considering their allocations policies in light of the greater flexibilities provided by Government. The current Coventry Homefinder Policy requires social housing provider partners to advertise 100% of their general needs vacancies on Coventry Homefinder (with certain specific exceptions). Based on their own need to make best use of their stock and to assist tenants affected by welfare reforms and other policies, partner social housing providers are considering their future involvement in Coventry Homefinder. Midland Heart has recently developed its own choice based lettings system open to all its customers across the region and now only advertises 50% of its general needs vacancies through Coventry Homefinder.

### **What we will do**

We will work together with current social housing providers and wider stakeholders to carry out a comprehensive review of Coventry Homefinder and the supporting Nominations and Lettings Policy. This will ensure that the policy is best able to deliver upon the priorities stated in this Strategy and takes into account the statutory guidance issued by Government.

## Implementing the Strategy

The implementation and monitoring of the Homelessness Strategy will be overseen by a new strategy implementation group, which will be a sub-group of the Coventry Partnership Housing Theme Group. The group will comprise representatives from Council departments, Probation, Police Service, third sector providers, and Registered Providers. Working groups will be set up to take forward specific projects that require a multi-agency approach. Co-ordinating the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy will be the responsibility of the Council's Housing Service.

This Homelessness Strategy contains an overview of our priorities for the next year and an action plan. The action plan will be reviewed annually by the strategy implementation group and an annual report on the implementation of the strategy will be submitted to the Coventry Partnership Housing Theme Group.

### **What we will do – summary**

- Work with partners to develop a new Coventry Homelessness Action Plan to respond to the ten preventing homelessness challenges set out by Government in 'Making Every Contact Count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness' (2012).
- Work with partners and other Council Directorates to establish a revised process for the assessment, allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation.
- Re-commission external homelessness services in 2013.
- Work with current social housing providers and wider stakeholders to carry out a comprehensive review of Coventry Homefinder and the supporting Nominations and Lettings Policy.



## Theme 3: Strive for a healthier and more sustainable City by improving the quality and use of existing housing

### **Our Priorities:**

- Improve energy efficiency and affordable warmth across all tenures.
- Improve property condition and management standards in the private rented sector.
- Make best use of existing housing by reducing the number of empty properties and addressing under-occupation.

### What do we know?

#### **Stock Condition**

- Ongoing reductions in public spending have significantly impacted on our ability to fund housing improvements in the private sector – in previous years funding has been available.
- The cost to remedy all non-decent private properties in the City is estimated at £130m and £24m to remedy only Category 1 hazards.
- An estimated 38,350 (35%) private sector homes in the City are non-decent.
- An estimated 1.6% of the City's social rented stock was non-decent as at March 2010.
- An estimated 22,100 (20%) private sector homes have a Category 1 hazard.
- Most non-decent homes are occupied by the elderly, people on low incomes or those that are economically vulnerable.
- There are an estimated 3,180 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in the City, with an estimated 300 that are licensable HMOs.

#### **Use of Housing Stock**

- Nationally there are around 430,000 households in the social rented sector who under-occupy their home by two or more bedrooms (against the bedroom standard).

- The 2011 Census indicated that in Coventry, 9.5% of households were overcrowded compared to 9.2% of households in the West Midlands and 8.7% of households in England.
- Whitefriars Housing estimate that 2,400 of their working aged tenants are currently under-occupying their property.
- In October 2012 there were 686 households in a priority band on the Homefinder register who were recognised as being overcrowded.
- At the same time, there were 218 households in priority bands on the Homefinder register who were recognised as under-occupying their social rented home.
- In April 2012 there were 2,587 empty homes in the private sector, of which 1,434 had been vacant for more than six months.
- New benefit rules mean that from April 2013, working age social housing tenants considered to be under-occupying their homes will face a reduction in their Housing Benefit.

### Energy Efficiency & Fuel Poverty

- In 2010, 21% of households in Coventry were in fuel poverty compared to the national average of 19%.
- At the LSOA (Lower Super Output Area) neighbourhood level, 68 out of the 197 LSOAs have fuel poverty levels at over 25% and of these, eight have levels of over 30%.
- The Climate Change Strategy for Coventry indicates that approximately 36% of the City's carbon dioxide emissions are from the housing stock.
- 22,070 dwellings in the City have a Category 1 hazard present and of these, 59% had an excess cold hazard.
- 79% of the private sector stock in the City has loft insulation below the current Building Regulations standard and 22% contain un-insulated cavity walls.
- Approximately 40% (44,000) private sector homes in the City have un-insulated solid walls.

## The Issues

### Background

There are clear links between housing conditions and the health and well-being of our communities. The condition of homes in the social rented sector is good, with most meeting the Decent Homes standard by the Government's deadline of 2010. However, this is not the case with privately owned and rented homes. The private rented sector has grown over the years and now accounts for around 20.6% of residential accommodation in the City. At the same time the private rented sector must rise to the challenge of increasing demand albeit with no government funding available (for grants or loans) to support housing improvements. The challenging economic climate together with rising fuel costs also mean that many people cannot afford to maintain or adequately heat their home.

Alongside the issues around poor private sector stock condition it is recognised that social housing, particularly larger family housing, is in short supply in the City (as described in Theme 1) - it is, therefore, important that we make the best use of the City's existing housing stock.

### Poor Stock Condition

A Private Sector Stock Condition Survey and Health Impact Assessment of the private sector stock were undertaken in 2012. This included an assessment of the financial cost of poor quality private sector housing on the health service. The intention is to use the evidence to inform a focused approach to tackling private sector housing in the worst condition and where possible, to work with partners to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable residents. It is anticipated that the transfer of Public Health into the Local Authority will greatly assist this work.

The Stock Condition Survey highlighted a number of issues within the private housing stock in Coventry and in particular that 35% of homes fail the Decent Homes standard. The highest number of failures was attributable to the presence of Category 1 hazards and the second highest to a poor degree of thermal comfort. There is little difference between the proportion of non-decency found in owner occupied and private rented dwellings. However, there is a strong correlation with household

incomes - 49% of homes where the household income is below £10,000 per annum are non-decent. Around 20% of the private sector stock has a Category 1 hazard, with this type of hazard being more common in owner occupied dwellings (21%) compared with private rented homes (17%).

Some of the worst housing conditions can occur in shared accommodation or Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). HMOs include bedsits, shared houses and self contained flats. It is recognised that HMOs provide a valuable component of the housing market. With two universities and two colleges of further education in the City there is a significant student population. Approximately 31,600 full time students attend either Coventry or Warwick University, many of whom live in shared accommodation in Coventry and Leamington. Due to changes in Local Housing Allowance from April 2012 there is likely to be an increased demand for HMOs from single claimants under 35 years old. Under these changes single claimants under 35 are now only entitled to claim the rate of a single room in a shared property, rather than the rate for a one bedroom property.

### **Orbit Care & Repair**

Many older homeowners have equity that is tied up in the value of their home but have little or no savings. The Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Orbit Care and Repair, in partnership with Just Retirement and Houseproud, have supported many people who want to use this equity to fund repairs, improvements or adaptations to their homes. The future challenge for the agency is addressing the funding shortage for home improvements in the private sector, particularly as the Kick Start programme for equity release loans has now ended.

### **Addressing fuel poverty and energy efficiency**

Significant amounts of funding have been invested over the last five years to improve the energy efficiency of homes and tackle fuel poverty, through initiatives such as the Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT), the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) and Warm Front. However, there are still many thousands of households that find it difficult to afford to heat their homes to a healthy level due to inadequate thermal insulation, inefficient and uneconomic heating systems, low household incomes and high fuel prices. Increasing energy prices have far

outweighed rising incomes and improvements in energy efficiency and the problem is unfortunately getting worse.

A household is considered to be in fuel poverty when more than 10% of their income has to be spent to achieve an adequate level of warmth in their home. Fuel poverty is associated with low income and vulnerable households – in the private sector stock this is highlighted by the following statistics:

- 72% of all households in fuel poverty have incomes of less than £10,000 per annum.
- 48% of households with a person aged 75 or over are in fuel poverty.
- 36% of households with a resident with a disability are in fuel poverty.
- 25% of households comprising a lone parent and dependent child are also in fuel poverty.

The effects of fuel poverty can be far reaching, impacting on health and wellbeing, limiting educational attainment and exacerbating child poverty. The Marmot Review Team produced a national report in 2011 that reviewed the evidence relating to the health impacts suffered by those living in fuel poverty and in cold housing. It confirmed the linkage between excess winter deaths, the low thermal efficiency of housing and low indoor temperatures and identified both physical and mental health consequences for children, young people, adults and older persons.

The problems of fuel poverty and its impacts on health and wellbeing will continue to demand a co-ordinated approach to tackling the causes. A key challenge will be to get help to those communities and individuals that are most vulnerable. As the Marmot Report concluded, the households in the most urgent need are those who are least likely to access support.

In 2012, the Council approved a Climate Change Strategy for Coventry. The Strategy recognises the connections between carbon reduction, energy efficiency, fuel poverty and the adverse health impacts of cold homes. A key aim of the Climate Change Strategy is to protect the most vulnerable people in Coventry by ensuring that they can afford to heat their homes.

## Empty Homes

Empty homes have a significant impact on the overall condition and supply of the private sector housing stock as well as the neighbourhoods in which they are located. They can detract from the quality of the local environment and can cause significant problems for local residents. With over 2,359 households in urgent or extremely urgent need on the Homefinder Register, long term empty properties are also a wasted resource. Many of the empty properties on the Council's list are in the inner city wards, particularly Foleshill, Stoke and Hillfields. The overwhelming majority of empty properties are family houses of which there is a particular need in the City.

In April 2012, 2,587 dwellings were empty, including 1,434 that had been empty for more than six months. These figures have decreased over recent years. Bringing empty properties back into use can benefit the owner, potential occupiers, businesses and the wider community. In addition, the New Homes Bonus provides another incentive to bring empty properties back into use.

## Under-occupation & Overcrowding

Large numbers of households living in social housing have more space than they need – often because their children have left home. Under-occupying a property not only affects the supply of larger sized affordable housing but also places a degree of pressure on households affected. For example, older householders who under-occupy are often unable to manage a larger property and this may be compounded by anxieties in relation to moving home or leaving long established community roots.

Encouraging under-occupiers in social housing to downsize releases properties for larger households who may be living in overcrowded conditions. In October 2012 there were over 680 households in a priority band on the Homefinder register who were recognised as being overcrowded. In April 2012, there were also 3,549 households registered as requiring family housing of three or more bedrooms. However, the number of larger social rented homes is limited - only 372 family homes of three bedrooms or larger were available through Homefinder in 2011/12.

The Council has been working with Whitefriars Housing Group to provide support and financial incentives to social housing tenants who are under-occupying their property

to downsize from larger family homes. The scheme was piloted in 2011 and extended to other Registered Providers in 2012.

New benefit rules mean that from April 2013, working age social housing tenants who claim housing benefit will face a reduction in their benefit if they are considered to be under-occupying their homes. In total it is estimated that 3180 working aged tenants in the City will be affected by the change. Whitefriars Housing Group has contacted approximately 2,400 of their tenants who may be affected to give them advance notice of the changes and inform them of their options either to budget for the shortfall in the rent they will have to pay or to consider moving to a smaller home. The Council Benefits Service and other Registered Providers are also identifying and contacting under occupying social housing tenants of working age who may be affected by changes to Housing Benefit in 2013.

***Working in partnership to make best use of the City's housing stock***

*An initiative was piloted by Coventry City Council and Whitefriars Housing to free-up much-needed larger properties in the City by helping tenants to downsize to a smaller home.*



*Jim and Mary Elvidge had lived in their family home for 25 years where they raised four children, but as they got older they found that the house and garden was too much for them. Now they have moved to a one-bedroom bungalow in Coundon.*

*“Whitefriars helped us move by arranging the removals and we could leave the furniture we didn’t need and they got rid of it. Moving home can be a difficult thing to do but we’re really happy where we are now.”*

## What we will do next

### **Energy Efficiency/Affordable Warmth**

We will continue to work with our partners and continue to play a leading role in the development and implementation of projects to improve home insulation and heating efficiency, provide help to reduce fuel costs, maximise incomes and support householders with fuel debt arrears. Projects include the following:

### **Green Deal & the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)**

The Green Deal is a major new energy efficiency initiative being introduced by the Government in 2012 – it is based on a 'pay-as-you-save' model that allows energy efficiency measures to be installed without any up-front costs. This will be complemented by the ECO where energy companies will be set targets requiring them to invest in measures such as insulation and heating improvements. The ECO, in particular, presents a new opportunity to tackle fuel poverty in Coventry and will replace the CERT, CESP and Warm Front schemes. We will work with our sub-regional partners and other organisations under the direction of the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP to implement schemes that conform to the strategic aspirations proposed by the LEP.

In conjunction with this, we will pursue other complementary funding for energy efficiency and affordable warmth projects. We will also implement a range of initiatives to provide information and advice that will connect home owners and tenants with available assistance and encourage behavioural change.

Our energy efficiency and affordable warmth work will be across all tenures, but will need to take into account the scale of the problems affecting the owner occupied and private rented sectors. The private rented sector has expanded rapidly over recent years to a point now where it is larger than the social rented sector. In light of the Government's proposals to make it illegal from 2018 to rent out a property that has an F or G rated Energy Performance Certificate, steps will be taken to encourage private landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their properties in readiness for this change.



We are required by the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 to submit a report to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 detailing the measures that will lead to significant domestic energy efficiency improvements. The Housing Strategy and Climate Change Strategy will inform the content of the report.

### **Improving Property Condition**

The Council is committed to ensuring that those living in the private rented sector are living in decent, good quality homes which are well managed. We will do this through:

- Supporting and improving our relationship with private landlords through the Landlords' Forum and newsletter.
- Developing the new APRP Scheme (Access to Private Rented Properties), aimed at helping those in priority need access private rented housing in the City (described further in Theme 2).
- Membership of the Homestamp Consortium. This involves working with partners to improve the standard of private rented homes and to provide information and training for private landlords.
- Providing relevant information, advice and support on our website.

Where landlords do not offer a reasonable standard of accommodation and who do not engage with the Council, we will use enforcement powers to ensure that they improve the quality and management of privately rented housing. This includes addressing issues around disrepair, harassment and illegal eviction.

The Council is responsible for enforcing standards within HMOs to make sure they are free from hazards and are managed properly. The Housing Act 2004 also requires the Council to license certain types of HMOs. We will routinely check licensed HMOs and continue to assess conditions in the property using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Enforcement powers will be used where necessary to ensure HMOs in the City are safe and free from Category 1 hazards. We will proactively survey HMOs in the City to ensure that where relevant, they are licensed.

### **Tackling Empty Properties**

Our aim is to bring 211 empty private properties back into use in 2012/13 of which 53 will be long term empty properties. The target will be increased by 5% year on year.

We will use sophisticated software to help identify and prioritise empty properties in the City so that resources can be deployed to tackling those properties that could potentially cause the greatest nuisance or risk to health. Alongside this we will work with internal partners such as Planning, Environmental Health, Legal and Finance departments to identify opportunities for bringing long-term empty properties back into use. Our approach will include offering advice to the owners of empty properties and where necessary we will make full use of a wide range of enforcement powers, including enforced sales to recover any debt to the Council.

Using funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, we will bring 47 empty properties back into use at Affordable Rents. This will be achieved by working in partnership with WM Housing Group, Moathouse Community Trust and Emmaus (a charity working with homeless people).

***Tackling empty properties – a wasted resource***

*This property on Henley Rd is a listed building. Through a family member the owner was contacted. However, due to the poor condition of the property and planning restrictions, the owner had found it difficult to refurbish the property. Following numerous attempts by the Empty Property Officer to assist this owner in bringing this property back into use, he was eventually served with an improvement notice to carry out works to the property. As the owner was not in a position to carry out the works himself the Council assisted the owner in selling the property to someone who was. The new owner was able to completely refurbish the property, increasing the City's much needed supply of family sized housing.*



**Before**



**After**

## Making Best Use of Stock

We are keen to ensure the best use of the social housing stock by securing a better match between the size of tenant households and the homes they occupy. Our Allocations Scheme can contribute to this but other means are needed as well. Our aim is to address under occupancy whilst at the same time being sensitive to the needs of households who currently under occupy their homes. Our approach will include:

- Considering how we provide future support and information to people wanting to move to smaller accommodation.
- Working with Registered Providers to consider how to integrate the Whitefriars down-sizing scheme into future social housing allocation practices.
- Increasing the choice of accommodation available for people wanting to downsize.

### What we will do – summary

- Bring long-term empty private properties back into use and increase our target year on year.
- Work with the Council's Benefits Service and Registered Providers to increase the supply of larger family homes by addressing the issue of under occupation.
- Improve the condition of the existing stock by prioritising properties in the worst condition and assisting the most vulnerable people.
- Work with landlords and tenants to support the increasing role of the private rented sector to provide high quality, professionally managed accommodation.
- Aim to reduce energy bills and make homes warmer by identifying opportunities for installing energy efficiency and renewable energy measures and maximising funding from external sources.

## Theme 4: Encourage balanced, stable and sustainable communities

### **Our Priorities:**

- Support independent living for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Improve housing choice for an ageing population.
- Improve the quality of our neighbourhoods to support safe, inclusive and cohesive communities.

### What do we know?

- The number of people in Coventry aged over 55 is expected to increase by 30% between 2010 and 2030, with 64% growth predicted in the population aged over 85.
- For 2012/13 the budget for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) is £2,140,000, funding around 378 grants - however the Council's capital budget is insufficient to meet future demand.
- Since its inception in April 2003, the former Supporting People budget has reduced from £16.9m in 2003 to £12.9m for 2012/13.
- 7,458 people benefitted from housing related support services in Coventry in 2011/12.
- The Council is funding 3,757 units of housing related support, which includes 2,586 units of supported housing and 1,171 units of floating support (2012/13).
- In 2011/12 the Home Improvement Agency, Orbit Care and Repair were able to access funding to the value of £1,328,132 to help customers to improve, repair or adapt their properties.
- 65% of working age people in Coventry are in employment, down from 71% in 2007 before the recession. 6% are unemployed and 29% are economically inactive (eg long term sick, full time student, looking after family/home etc).
- Indicators (2012) based on the Marmot Review report suggest that 19% of people in Coventry live in households in receipt of means-tested benefits compared to 15% nationally.

- 32% (101,349) of the City's residents live in neighbourhoods which are in the 20% of the most deprived neighbourhoods nationally.
- During 2011/12 the number of reported crimes in the City was 25,734.

## The Issues

### Background

The Council is committed to encouraging the development of balanced, stable and sustainable communities in the City. Strong communities require effective approaches to promote inclusiveness, assist the vulnerable, increase safety and to ensure the built environment and public space meet people's needs and aspirations.

There are also some vulnerable and marginalised groups with specific needs that require particular types of accommodation or support to sustain housing. This requires provision of a range of specialised housing and support to enable them to live safely and independently.

### City Deprivation

Coventry is ranked 52 out of 326 Local Authority Districts under the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (with 1 being the most deprived), but there is a wide variation within the City. 35 LSOA (Lower Super Output Area) neighbourhoods are within the 10% most deprived areas in the country, but there are also 5 areas in the 10% least deprived areas in the country. The north-east of the City, particularly St Michael's and Foleshill, have a high number of deprived neighbourhoods, but there are also pockets of significant deprivation in other parts of the City including Henley, Binley and Willenhall.

### Demographic Change

The population aged over 55 is expected to increase by 30% between 2010 and 2030, with 64% growth predicted in the population aged over 85. Given the expected increase in older people, key illnesses or disabilities affecting older people (aged 65+) are also expected to increase significantly between 2012 and 2030. In particular there is expected to be a 44% rise in the number of people with dementia and a 30%

increase in people with activities affected by previous strokes, falls, hearing impairments and mobility problems.

There is no single statistic that captures the extent of disability in the population.

There are 55,848 people in Coventry with a limiting long term illness, which is around the national and regional average. The proportion of people aged 16-64 with either learning disabilities, moderate or serious physical disabilities or mental health problems is expected to increase by an estimated 21-22% between 2012 and 2030.

The fact that people are living longer and the future expected increases in people with disabilities, is likely to have an impact on the number of people with care and support needs and/or requiring specialist accommodation. It is also recognised that many older people wish to live as independently as possible in their own homes. As such there is a need to identify alternative support models, in order to improve the housing options available.

### **Development of new affordable specialist housing**

There is a shortage of purpose-designed or suitably adapted accommodation for people with disabilities in priority housing need. The Homefinder register has over 140 applicants for disability housing suitable for independent living but only 29 suitable properties became available through vacancies during 2011/12.

There continues to be a substantial need and demand for bungalows (mainly 2 bedroom) across both the affordable and private sectors amongst older people and those with disabilities. However, the development of supported housing, including bungalows, can be problematic in terms of both funding and site location.

Disproportionately larger plot sizes are required for bungalows compared with apartments and houses. This discourages developers from building new bungalows despite the demand for them and as such only limited numbers are built.

The reduction in grant rates for new affordable housing combined with the need for Registered Providers to contain development costs is likely to have an impact on new (affordable) supported and specialist housing provision. The extra costs associated with particular design requirements to cater for more complex or acute mobility or disability needs puts additional pressure on grant funding availability for new

schemes. As a consequence, it will be necessary to seek alternative ways of financing schemes in order to maintain the delivery of future supported and specialist housing.

### **Housing for an Ageing Population**

Although there is a growing ageing population in Coventry, there is a low demand for traditional 'sheltered housing' and limited alternative choices of housing for older people. The results of our consultation with housing/support providers for older people indicate that the housing available for older people in the City needs to change as the current provision is out of step with modern aspirations and needs. Much of the former Council owned sheltered accommodation is outdated or is in less desirable locations and is therefore characterised by low demand.

Nationally there has been a strategic shift from providing residential care to providing housing with care and support – known as extra care housing. The focus is on enabling residents to have more choice over their lifestyles and to maximise independence. As residential care will increasingly be restricted to older people with more complex care needs there is a need to look at the gap that is developing between sheltered housing and residential care.

### **Health and Social Care**

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 contains various changes to the National Health Service, including the transfer of the majority of public health functions from Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to local authorities. The Council has established a Health and Wellbeing Board (in shadow form until April 2013) to coordinate and provide a strategic lead for local commissioning decisions across health, public health and social care. The Board includes local commissioners across the NHS, public health and social care, elected members and service user representatives. Public health is about helping people to stay healthy and avoiding ill health which improved housing can alleviate.

### **Transformation of Adult Social Care**

To meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable people we need to address the personalisation agenda within social care to enable people requiring support to remain in independent accommodation. Direct payments are part of the Government's

Personalisation agenda, which puts the client at the centre of the support required, giving them more choice and control. Direct payments were given to over 600 people in Coventry at the start of 2012/13 to enable them to purchase their own care and support instead of the Council arranging it. Whilst improving choice and control is positive, it also presents a challenge. People will need information about what services are available and how their health and care needs are affected by their housing circumstances. This will require integrated working between housing, health and social care commissioners.

The Government has also published the 'Caring for our Future: Reforming Care and Support' White Paper (July 2012) and the Draft Care and Support Bill (July 2012). The White Paper sets out the principles on which care and support are to be established, including a greater focus on prevention of, or delaying the need for, more intensive care interventions (for example, through adaptations and provision of supported accommodation). The Bill states that authorities must 'make arrangements for ensuring co-operation' between various groups, including housing staff, adult social care teams and directors of children's services.

### Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

We provide financial assistance to eligible homeowners or private tenants to enable a disabled person to gain access to essential areas within their homes including access to a kitchen, bedroom and bathing facilities. The assistance is in the form of a grant to meet the costs of undertaking the works required.

However, as the number of elderly people living in the City is increasing, the Council is seeing a higher demand for disabled adaptations from elderly home owners and private tenants. The number of DFG applications relating to younger disabled people is also on the rise. In 2008/09 less than 25% of grants completed were for people aged under 60 but this has gradually increased year-by-year and in 2011/12 it was up to 34%. This presents particular challenges, as the nature of the disabilities presented by younger adults and children tend to require larger and more expensive adaptations.

Despite this the current capital budget made available for DFGs from Government grants is insufficient to meet this growing demand. The Council has consistently



added resources to the capital programme to ensure that we can meet the demand for aids and adaptations. We are investing £2.1m towards DFGs in 2012/2013, which should finance a programme of 378 grants. However, future funding is uncertain and alternative approaches to funding and managing aids and adaptations will need to be considered if we are to continue to meet the demand.

Many housing authorities around the country continue to work with long waiting lists for adaptations. In Coventry our approach to managing the DFG programme has meant that for the last five years, we have avoided a waiting list for DFG adaptations. We have also seen the average cost of a DFG reduce from around £12,000 to £5,200. This has enabled us to provide more grants with the resources available.

We also work in partnership with Orbit Care & Repair to provide a Home Improvement Agency service in Coventry. The service supports older or disabled people who need a repair or adaptation to their home, thereby helping people maintain their independence, safety and dignity. The service helps by:

- Organising repairs and adaptations.
- Making sure people are receiving the right benefits.
- A handyperson service to do small jobs around the home.
- Finding organisations that can help with other problems.

A challenge for Orbit Care and Repair is the lack of available funding for home improvements in the private sector – this is described further in Theme 3.

### ***Working in Partnership to Assist the Vulnerable***

*Mr N, who has multiple sclerosis, sight and balance difficulties, contacted Orbit Care and Repair for assistance. The case worker forwarded Mr N's details to the Department for Work and Pensions to arrange a home visit to maximise his income, as he was not receiving his full benefit entitlement. In addition, the flooring throughout Mr N's home was in a desperate state. Orbit Care and Repair applied for charitable funding from the Coventry Jubilee Rotary Charitable Trust and the Royal British Legion - this raised £1,200 for replacement flooring enabling Mr N to live more comfortably in his home.*



### **Welfare Benefit Changes**

The changes introduced as part of the Welfare Reform Act and the introduction of Universal Credit from 2013 is likely to have an impact on people requiring housing support, many of whom receive welfare benefits. In terms of the impact on services, the changes could potentially increase demand for specialist advice services around finance, debt and benefits as well as having an impact on Adults, Children's and Health services.

Key welfare reform changes that are particularly likely to have an impact on carers and disabled people include:

- The reassessment of Disability Living Allowance and the move to Personal Independence Payment. This could result in a loss of benefit entitlement.
- The extension of the Housing Benefit shared accommodation rate from people aged under 25 to people under 35. This could affect vulnerable people trying to

move-on from short term supported housing to a suitable private rented tenancy.

- The social sector Housing Benefit size criteria (for working age tenants) could have an impact on the different types of care provision. This could include those families with disabled children and disabled people living in adapted accommodation, who will not be exempt from reductions in Housing Benefit if they are assessed as under-occupying their home.
- The one-year time limit on claiming the contributory element of Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) for those disabled people expected to move gradually towards employment. This could result in a loss of benefit entitlement, putting pressure on people, especially those with fluctuating conditions, to return to work within a year.

### Housing Related Support

We commission a diverse range of services for vulnerable people to enable them to live independently in the community. Client groups assisted include older people, people with physical and sensory impairments, people with mental health issues, people with learning disabilities, as well as those with substance misuse issues, homeless people, ex-offenders, young people at risk, domestic violence victims and teenage parents. However, national Government funding which was guaranteed for housing related support is now being reduced and is no longer ring-fenced. This means that it can be used more flexibly to address local issues. In light of this the Council has carried out a review of the way in which services are commissioned for vulnerable groups.

The day to day management of the housing related support contracts is now within the Adult Social Care Commissioning team, after transferring from the Council's Housing team in 2011. The Council remains committed to providing support services for vulnerable people, but is faced with the challenge of how to protect and improve the quality of services to vulnerable people, as well as address gaps in provision, in the context of reduced funding.

## Safer Communities

Coventry's crime rate is not exceptional in the context of the West Midlands or nationally. Nevertheless, anti-social behaviour, crime and the fear of crime can cause distress to individuals and undermines community well-being.

The Council, through the work of the Coventry Community Safety Partnership, identifies and implements effective initiatives to improve the safety of communities and to promote cohesive communities. The partnership brings together agencies, including the Police and Registered Providers. The Coventry Community Safety Strategic Assessment identifies the priorities for the partnership to reduce the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour in the City.

It is widely recognised that access to appropriate accommodation and support plays a key role in providing a stable home life, particularly for at risk groups including victims of domestic violence, ex-offenders and people with substance misuse issues. The benefits of tackling the issues and helping people to feel safe and secure in their homes include:

- Improved health and well-being.
- Improved mental health.
- Reduced costs of crime, anti-social behaviour and nuisance.
- Reduced hospital admissions and impact on health services.
- Stable communities where people want to live and stay.

## Employment & Housing

The welfare reforms and effects of the recession could have a disproportionate impact not only on certain vulnerable groups of people but also in the more deprived areas of the City. It is widely recognised that Housing services and providers have a major role to play in supporting employment and in particular the aims of the Coventry Jobs Strategy 2011-14, to help people improve their skills and enter employment.

Our partners, including Registered Providers, the voluntary sector and employers, have been at the forefront of innovative ways of working with residents to reduce worklessness, improve their life chances and to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms.

This includes offering training and employment opportunities to local people and bringing construction led employment and training opportunities into the City.

Initiatives have included a boot camp for young people who are not in education, employment or training to gain work or an education placement. The success of the Coventry boot camp has gained national recognition and as a result similar schemes are being considered across the country.

***Coventry Boot Camp – helping young people into jobs and education***

*Organisations including the Council, Whitefriars Housing, Midland Heart, Orbit Heart of England, West Midlands Fire Service and the West Midlands Police are working together to help youngsters forge more positive futures for themselves.*

*"My dream is to get into landscape gardening and boot camp has shown me how to do it. And the help doesn't stop here. The guys at boot camp will continue to support me if I need it. If it wasn't for boot camp I'd still be doing nothing and looking for a job. This will help me for the rest of my life." (18 year old Ryan).*



**Financial Inclusion**

Debt may be either a cause or a consequence of homelessness or unstable accommodation. Problems with debt can contribute to people being financially excluded, which in turn can make it difficult to open a bank account, get or sustain a

tenancy, or access credit. This is recognised as an important issue and the Housing Options Team is working closely with Coventry CAB to develop debt advice skills within the Housing Options team by seconding a CAB officer. In 2011, 184 households were referred to the CAB officer by the Housing Options Team as they were at risk of homelessness due to debt issues. Registered Providers, in partnership with other agencies such as Coventry CAB and the Coventry Law Centre, also already carry out a number of activities which assist and advise customers on financial inclusion.

### **A Tenancy Strategy for the City**

As discussed in the 'Setting the Scene' section we are required to produce a Tenancy Strategy which has been developed in tandem with the Housing & Homelessness Strategy. At the heart of the Tenancy Strategy, we aim to minimise the impact on vulnerable households in the City who may be adversely affected by the measures introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and the changes to the social housing regulatory standards.

### **What we will do next?**

#### **Housing Related Support**

Despite Government cuts in former Supporting People funding, the Council is currently committed to funding housing related support services for vulnerable people. However, significant reductions in public sector funding for the longer term will mean that we will have to carry out further reviews on how the available funding is spent and to ensure the support services reflect changing local needs.

Following the initial review on the way in which services were being commissioned for vulnerable groups, the Council has introduced strategic panels which will, as part of their role, scrutinise the housing related support contracts to ensure value for money and the best possible outcomes for the City's most vulnerable people.

Current housing related support across social care services costs the Council £3.041m annually with some service contracts due to expire in March 2013. In light of the Council's challenging funding position we will use the opportunity this presents to

explore future funding options for commissioned services. This will include investigating opportunities for a more integrated approach to the design, commissioning and contracting of supported accommodation and floating support services across directorates, with other authorities and with Health services.

### **Specialised Housing Provision**

We will work with Registered Providers in the City to ensure a co-ordinated strategic approach to delivering improved services and specialised housing provision for vulnerable and older people city-wide. This includes housing for older people across a broad range of provision such as purpose built bungalows and where possible larger complexes catering for a variety of care needs and offering on-site facilities. Our approach to specialised housing provision will include an appropriate mix of tenures as described in Theme 1. As well as meeting the needs of older and vulnerable people, our aim is to make best use of the available housing stock by addressing the issue of under-occupation (described in Theme 3). This will reduce reliance on expensive residential care or out of city placements and will promote independent living.

Theme 1 of the Housing Strategy describes the imbalance of apartments in the social housing sector in the City. We will, however, continue to develop apartments but on a smaller scale, particularly where it can be shown that they will help to meet the needs of older and disabled people or those needing supported housing.

To facilitate the development of specialised housing we will continue to work closely with the colleagues in Adult Social Care Teams and Children and Young People Services to identify what further supported housing and specialist provision is required. This will be in the context of available sites, funding and identified priorities. The re-use of redundant sites or development on land occupied by existing outdated or unpopular sheltered / supported housing in the social sector, will be encouraged. This will help to secure the land needed for new purpose designed housing for vulnerable groups or older people.

Alongside developing specialist housing we will increase the supply of new homes that can cater for the needs of people as they age and those with physical disabilities,



through appropriate design standards (described in Theme 1). We will encourage all new rented homes in the social sector to be designed to Lifetime Homes Standards and for all new homes to be wheelchair accessible.

Future proposals for increasing specialist/supported housing in the City include:

- A specialist scheme of 12 units for adults with autism on a redundant Council owned brownfield site.
- A replacement for the Chace homeless hostel, comprising up to 63 units.
- 10 self contained flats in Willenhall for people with Learning Disabilities.

### **Public Health and Social Care**

We will continue to work closely with Public Health colleagues as the responsibilities for public health are transferred to the Council, to identify opportunities for joint working where housing improvement/initiatives can improve health outcomes for communities. We have recently jointly commissioned the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey and Health Impact Assessment (described in Theme 3) to identify any specific issues in the City relating to poor housing and health.

### **Adapting Properties**

We will carry out a review of the relocation options available for disabled people to ensure a more integrated approach between the Adaptations and Homefinder teams. The aim is to ensure that disabled people can be assisted more efficiently to either have their property adapted or to move to suitable alternative accommodation. This will help to ensure that best use is made of the City's adapted social housing stock.

We will consider more economic and alternative ways of providing adaptations. This includes:

- Looking at the options for sharing services and best practice with our sub-regional partners.
- Exploring the potential for the Adaptations team to act as an agency to install adaptations, for those customers not entitled to a grant who can meet the cost of the work themselves.
- Working with Registered Providers to develop alternative funding options for adaptations to their own properties.



## **Supporting Customers to Financial Security, Training & Employment.**

We recognise that the impact of Housing Benefit changes, the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the difficult economic climate represent one of the biggest challenges to be faced by the Council and its partners over the lifetime of this Housing Strategy. We will support our partners including Registered Providers and the voluntary sector to integrate opportunities which will: improve the skills base; maximise employment opportunities; and provide tenancy support to reduce arrears and financial problems at the earliest stage.

Future initiatives include:

- Working in partnership with other agencies including Groundwork, Coventry CAB, Whitefriars Housing and Midland Heart to implement the 3-year lottery funded 'Sorted' scheme. This is aimed at helping social housing tenants improve their financial confidence and to successfully sustain their tenancies.
- Continuing the activities of the Coventry Partnership Financial Inclusion Forum.
- Working with partners to implement and develop Crisis Skylight in the City in 2013. This is an award winning and accredited training and employment centre aimed at enhancing the skills and confidence of single homeless people through practical workshops and formal learning.

## **Community Engagement & Empowerment**

We recognise that the sustainability of a community involves the degree to which people of all generations and backgrounds are able to live, interact and have a meaningful say in the way their neighbourhood is run. We will aim to achieve sustainable communities by continuing to support and work with partners across a wide range of social, economic and environmental areas. Our approach will be to:

- Develop local solutions to local problems.
- Encourage public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to improve the local quality of life.
- Encourage local people to become involved in determining local priorities, influencing services and having a say in Council decisions that have an impact on their neighbourhood.

## Safer Communities

Partners in housing and the community safety sector will continue to work together to address the issues that affect the quality of life for residents. Key priorities for the Coventry Community Safety Partnership include reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, tackling domestic violence, substance misuse, re-offending and promoting community cohesion. Our approach will be to ensure that where possible the Housing Strategy contributes to initiatives identified in the Coventry Community Safety Strategic Assessment, to create safe and secure homes and neighbourhoods. This includes considering housing solutions for domestic violence victims, ex-offenders and people affected by substance misuse.

We will take a balanced approach to the design of new affordable housing to ensure that where it is viable new developments will incorporate Secure by Design principles. This involves designing out crime to enhance security for all those living on the development.

We will also tackle the issue of empty homes (covered in Theme 3) which can attract vandalism, anti-social behaviour and crime to an area.

### What we will do – summary

- Explore ways of increasing funding for DFGs and managing aids and adaptations to ensure resources are used effectively and maximised.
- Develop specialist accommodation and commission housing related support services to meet the needs of the City's most vulnerable and at risk client groups.
- Work with our partners to improve access to and take-up of money and debt advice and ensure customers receive their full entitlement to benefits.
- Empower residents to take more control in shaping our housing services.
- Promote and deliver activities to address worklessness, improve the skills base and maximise employment opportunities.
- Consider ways in which housing solutions can contribute to the priorities identified in the Coventry Community Safety Strategic Assessment.

## Coventry Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 Action Plan

The Housing & Homelessness Strategy has been developed in consultation with partners who have a key role to play in helping to deliver the strategy. The Action Plan below sets out in more detail how we will work in partnership with other stakeholders to deliver our strategy by determining clear actions, responsibilities and timescales.

Implementation of the Action Plan will be monitored by the Coventry Partnership Housing Theme Group. We recognise that it is important to share our progress with residents and partners; this information will be available for all residents and partners through regular bulletins on the Council website ([www.coventry.gov.uk/housing](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/housing)).

As stated in Chapter 1 of the strategy it is our intention to keep the Action Plan under review to reflect progress achieved and to enable us to respond to any changes in legislation or policy.

## Theme 1: Increase the supply, choice and quality of new housing.

### How this theme contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Theme 6: Housing. 'A good choice of housing to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Coventry'.
  - Priority to increase the supply and choice of housing across all tenures.

### Priorities:

- Optimise opportunities for increasing new affordable housing supply to ensure that the delivery of new affordable housing is at a level that supports the economic growth ambitions of the city.
- Promote balanced and sustainable communities by diversifying the size, type and tenure of new housing, particularly family sized housing.
- Develop new affordable housing to a high quality without compromising the deliverability and viability of new housing schemes.
- Support economic growth by developing high value, high quality housing to retain higher earners and attract new residents.
- Regenerate neighbourhoods where poor quality, low demand housing exists.
- Improve existing site provision to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers.

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead	Partners	Timescale
Develop an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To support the emerging Core Strategy and Housing &amp; Homelessness Strategy.</li> <li>▪ To provide guidance to house builders on extending the variety and mix of housing in the City.</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>	Planning Policy Team	Housing Strategy Team.	2014
Establish a new Affordable Housing Delivery Group.	To increase the number and quality of affordable housing.	Housing Strategy Team	RPs, developers, Planning, Property Assets, HCA.	2013

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead	Partners	Timescale
Increase the number of affordable homes in the City by 477 per year (2013 Coventry & Warwickshire SHMA) over the lifetime of the Housing Strategy.	Additional affordable housing to be delivered to meet housing need through new-build and the private rented sector.	Housing Strategy Team & Housing Options Team	RPs, Planning, developers, HCA, Property Assets, private landlords.	2013 – 2018 (monitor annually)
Aim for at least 55% of new affordable homes in each scheme to be suitable for larger families by having three or more bedrooms.*	An increase in the supply of larger family housing to assist households in housing need.	Housing Strategy Team	RPs, HCA, developers, Planning.	2013 – 2018 (monitor annually)
Remodel the Siskin Drive Gypsy and Traveller site.	Provision of the number of pitches required in the City on a site that is designed to a high standard.	Housing Strategy Team	HCA, Warwickshire CC, Whitefriars Housing.	2014
Promote the development of aspirational housing in the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Up-to-date contextual information on the current housing stock and population.</li> <li>▪ Identify the market for aspirational housing &amp; develop a local definition.</li> <li>▪ Identify and promote future housing sites where aspirational housing could be suitable.</li> </ul>	Planning Policy Team	Housing Strategy team, developers, RPs.	2014

\*Unless the scheme is for supported housing or is unsuitable for family housing.

## Theme 2: Prevent & tackle homelessness.

### How this theme contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Theme 6: Housing. 'A good choice of housing to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Coventry'.
  - Priority to increase the supply and choice of housing across all tenures.
  - Priority to ensure that housing services contribute towards meeting the needs of local people.

### Priorities:

- To deliver upon the challenges set out in the Government report 'Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness' (2012).
- Establish a revised process for the assessment, allocation and procurement of temporary accommodation.
- Re-commission external homelessness services which better align with homelessness priorities.
- Review the local social housing allocation system – Coventry Homefinder.

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Re-commission external homelessness services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A service better aligned to local priorities.</li> <li>▪ To remove duplication of processes, administration and assessments between contracts.</li> </ul>	Head of Housing	Homeless providers, Adult Commissioning, Procurement, Legal Services.	2013/14
Carry out a review on the use of temporary accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation at any one time.</li> <li>▪ Ensure no families are placed in B&amp;B for more than 6 weeks.</li> <li>▪ Reduce the cost of temporary accommodation.</li> <li>▪ Eliminate duplication in procurement processes and client assessments across the Council.</li> </ul>	Head of Housing	CLYP, Adult Social Care.	Sept 2013

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Carry out a review of Coventry Homefinder.	A Homefinder policy that meets local needs, operational requirements and aligns with the recent Government guidance on allocations.	Head of Housing	RPs	2013
Develop an implementation plan for 'Making Every Contact Count'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deliver on the challenges set out in the Government Report, 'Making every Contact Count'.</li> <li>▪ Deliver on the local priorities identified.</li> </ul>	Housing Options Team Manager	Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group	2013
Develop a Homeless Prevention Plan that sets out a robust baseline position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fewer homeless presentations &amp; assessments.</li> <li>▪ Reduced cost of temporary accommodation.</li> <li>▪ To better understand &amp; extend the homeless prevention measures used.</li> </ul>	Housing Options Team Manager	CAB, advice agencies, private landlords.	2013 (review thereafter)
Achieve year on year increases on the number of homeless households housed through the APRP scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An additional resource for maximising the use of existing housing stock.</li> <li>▪ An improved service to homeless people.</li> </ul>	Housing Options Team Manager	Private landlords	2013 – 2018 (monitor annually)

### Theme 3: Strive for a healthier and more sustainable City by improving the quality and use of existing housing.

#### How this theme contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Theme 6: Housing. 'A good choice of housing to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Coventry'.
  - Priority to improve the quality and use of existing housing.
- Theme 2: Health and well-being. 'People in Coventry living longer, healthier and independent lives'.
- Theme 4: Climate Change and environment. 'Making Coventry's streets, neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces attractive and enjoyable places to be and tackling climate change'.

#### Priorities:

- Improve energy efficiency and affordable warmth across all tenures.
- Improve property condition and management standards in the private rented sector.
- Make best use of existing housing by reducing the number of empty properties and addressing issues such as under-occupation.

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Prepare an Affordable Warmth Action Plan & review the action plan annually.	Responds to the relevant aims and priorities of the Housing & Homelessness Strategy, the Climate Change Strategy and the Home Energy Conservation Act Report submitted to DECC.	Sustainability & Low Carbon Team.	Third sector organisations, private and social rented landlords, energy companies, installers.	Dec 2013
Evaluate options for Green Deal delivery and implement the selected option.	Option to be implemented in 2013, once Green Deal has been fully implemented by the Department of Energy & Climate Change.	Sustainability & Low Carbon Team.	Third sector organisations, private and social rented landlords, energy companies, installers.	2013



Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Work in partnership to maximise ECO investment in the City.	ECO funded schemes, including area-based schemes focusing on priority neighbourhoods, to commence in 2013.	Sustainability & Low Carbon Team.	Energy companies, private & social rented landlords, managing agents and installers.	Ongoing
Work with partner organisations to raise awareness of potential domestic energy efficiency savings and the assistance available for home owners and tenants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide information to owners and tenants through a variety of channels including events, publicity and digitally.</li> <li>▪ Influence behavioural change.</li> </ul>	Sustainability & Low Carbon Team.	Third sector organisations, private and social landlords, energy companies, installers.	Ongoing
Increase awareness amongst private rented sector landlords of their legal obligations under the Energy Act 2011 regarding energy efficiency standards.	Information and advice provided through a variety of channels including events, publicity and digitally.	Sustainability & Low Carbon Team.	Private landlords, letting agents, landlord associations, Environmental Services.	Ongoing
Prepare a report to DECC setting out the significant domestic energy efficiency improvements that the Council aims to achieve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To comply with the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act responsibilities.</li> <li>▪ To produce subsequent 2-yearly progress reports if required.</li> </ul>	Sustainability and Low Carbon Team.	Third sector organisations, private and social landlords, energy companies, installers.	March 2013

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Bring a minimum of 211 empty properties back into use in Apr 2012-13 (of which 53 should be long term empty properties), with the aim of increasing this by 5% year on year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A reduction in the number of empty homes in the City.</li> <li>▪ All owners of homes which have been empty for more than 6 months will have been contacted.</li> </ul>	Environmental Services Team	Home owners, Housing Strategy Team, HCA, WM Housing, Moathouse Community Trust, Emmaus.	Apr 2013 & ongoing
Host a minimum of three landlord forums per year.	Provide information, advice and support to private landlords.	Head of Housing	Private landlords, Environmental Services, Sustainability & Climate Change Team, Housing Benefits Team.	Annually
Work with Registered Providers on measures to reduce overcrowding and under-occupation.	Making best use of the existing social housing stock to accommodate households in housing need.	RPs	Housing Strategy Team, Housing Options Team	Ongoing
Create information and advice web pages for private landlords and tenants, which cover their legal responsibilities and obligations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comprehensive information, advice and assistance is provided to private landlords and tenants.</li> <li>▪ Relevant links to other sources of information.</li> </ul>	Environmental Services Team	CAB, Homestamp	Dec 2013

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Use appropriate action to address poor housing conditions in the private rented sector.	The number of poor quality private rented homes in the City is reduced.	Environmental Services Team	CAB	Dec 2013
Design and implement a programme to systematically identify all HMOs within the City.	More information on the number and location of HMOs in the City.	Environmental Services Team	Fire Service, Planning	Dec 2013
Deliver a planned programme for the regulation of HMOs to ensure that identified licensable HMOs are licensed and then inspected within 6 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relevant HMOs that are identified are licensed within 6 months.</li> <li>▪ Improved HMO property conditions in the City.</li> </ul>	Environmental Services Team	Fire Service, Planning	Dec 2013

## Theme 4: support balanced, stable and sustainable communities

### How this theme contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Theme 6: Housing. 'A good choice of housing to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Coventry'.
  - Priority to increase the supply and choice of housing across all tenures.
  - Priority to ensure that housing services contribute towards meeting the needs of local people.
- Theme 2: Health and well-being. 'People in Coventry living longer, healthier and independent lives'.
- Theme 3: Community Safety. 'A safer more confident Coventry'.
- Theme 9: Equality and Community Cohesion. 'A more equal Coventry with cohesive communities and neighbourhoods'.

### Priorities

- Support independent living for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Improve housing choice for an ageing population.
- Improve the quality of our neighbourhoods to support safe, inclusive and cohesive communities.

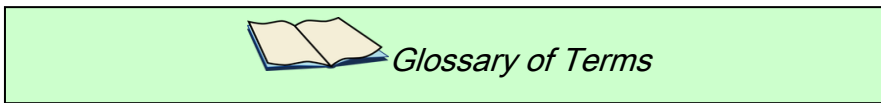
Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Review the allocation of adapted properties through Coventry Homefinder and the interface between Housing and the Adult Social Care teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A more efficient way of allocating adapted properties through Coventry Homefinder.</li> <li>▪ A more efficient DFG process.</li> </ul>	Head of Enablement and Therapy Services & Housing Options Team Manager		July 2013
Ensure that the allocated resources available for adapting properties is maximised to meet the needs of those requiring assistance and it is cost effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A review of specifications for adaptations and options of funding for administering the scheme.</li> <li>▪ Grant provision that adheres to policy (mandatory provision).</li> </ul>	Head of Enablement and Therapy Services		April 2013 (monitor annually)

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Assess ways of increasing resources for future DFGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consideration of shared services with other authorities where feasible and appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Consideration of the Adaptations Team operating as an agency.</li> <li>▪ Consideration of RPs meeting the cost of adaptations to their own properties.</li> </ul>	Head of Enablement and Therapy Services	RPs, sub-regional LAs.	Sept 2013
<p>Work with partners to increase the provision of specialised housing including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A replacement for the Chace hostel.</li> <li>▪ A specialist scheme for adults with autism.</li> <li>▪ Flats for people with Learning Disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The schemes described are delivered.</li> <li>▪ Increased choice of specialised housing for vulnerable people to promote independent living.</li> <li>▪ Identification of future needs. Identification of funding to support future delivery.</li> </ul>	Housing Strategy Team	RPs, Adult Social Care, specialist housing providers & agencies.	<p>Chace hostel replacement March 2015.</p> <p>Learning Disabilities scheme 2013</p> <p>Autism Scheme 2014</p>
Increase the range of housing suitable for older people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Older people's housing provision that is more suited to modern aspirations and needs.</li> <li>▪ More choice for older people wishing to down-size.</li> </ul>	Housing Strategy Team	RPs, Adult Social Care, specialist housing providers & agencies.	2013 – 2018 (monitor annually)

Action	Key Outcomes	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Complete the appraisal of existing sheltered housing and Housing with Care to assess if they can be remodelled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make better use of low demand housing stock.</li> <li>▪ Outcomes developed for each scheme.</li> </ul>	Whitefriars Housing	Housing Strategy Team, Adult Social Care.	April 2018
Through partnership working implement the 'Sorted' scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased financial security for customers.</li> <li>▪ Increased likelihood of tenancies being sustained.</li> </ul>	CAB	Groundwork, Whitefriars Housing, Midland Heart.	March 2013
Support RPs to maximise opportunities to create employment, education and financial inclusion schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased confidence for customers to help secure employment.</li> <li>▪ Increased likelihood of tenancies being sustained.</li> </ul>	RPs	Employment, education, advice agencies.	Ongoing
Work with partners to ensure the Crisis Skylight scheme becomes operational.	Homeless people are given the skills and training to help meet their personal development needs and secure employment.	Head of Housing	Homeless service providers, RPs, further colleges.	April 2013
Review & re-commission all housing related support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commissioning of housing related support services for vulnerable people is co-ordinated across directorates, authorities and other agencies, to ensure the most effective use of resources.</li> <li>▪ Commissioning of housing related support meets the needs of the most vulnerable.</li> </ul>	Adult Commissioning Team	Housing Strategy Team, Procurement, Legal, Finance, People Panel.	2014

Cross Cutting Actions				
Action	Outcome	Lead Officer(s)	Partners	Timescale
Monitor the impact of welfare reform measures on housing and homelessness.	Gain a better understanding of the impact of Welfare Reform on low-income households' ability to access affordable housing solutions.	Head of Housing	Housing Benefits Team, Whitefriars Housing, CAB.	Ongoing
Continue to ensure there is a robust process for customer involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous improvement of services.</li> <li>• Customers are involved in local decisions and shaping services.</li> </ul>	Relevant service manager	Identified customers, potential customers, Corporate Research.	Ongoing
Continue to review and maintain a robust evidence and research base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To inform policy and decisions.</li> <li>▪ To support operational changes.</li> <li>▪ To support bids for funding where appropriate.</li> </ul>	Housing Strategy Team	Corporate Research Team	Annually
Ensure that any changes to housing services or policies are assessed for equality impacts.	To eliminate discrimination and where possible promote equality.	Head of Housing	Corporate Research & Corporate Equalities	Ongoing

# Glossary



Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document	Part of the Coventry Local Plan. Its objectives are to facilitate the delivery of Affordable Housing to meet housing needs, and to assist the creation of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.
Affordable Housing	Affordable housing includes Social Rent, Affordable Rent and Intermediate housing (including Low Cost Home Ownership options), provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
Affordable Rent	Rented housing let by Registered Providers to eligible households at a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent.
Brownfield land	Development sites where there has previously been some development (also known as previously developed land).
Category 1 Hazards	Through the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (system for assessing housing conditions and enforcing housing standards), hazards are rated according to how serious they are. Category 1 Hazards are deemed to be the most serious hazards.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	CIL allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development.
Decent Homes Standard	<p>A 'decent home' is a property that meets a minimum standard set by the DCLG (formerly ODPM) by 31st December 2010 and is maintained to that standard thereafter. A decent home should be meet the following four criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is free from Category 1 Housing Health &amp; Safety Rating hazards;</li> <li>• Be in a reasonable state of repair;</li> <li>• Have acceptable and modern facilities and services;</li> <li>• Provide an acceptable level of thermal comfort.</li> </ul>
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	A grant to enable disabled people to have adaptations carried out to their homes.



Equality Impact Assessment	A tool to assess the consequence of a service, strategy or policy on certain protected groups to ensure that, as far as possible, negative consequences are eliminated, no individual or group is discriminated against and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.
Extra Care Housing	Housing set up to provide care and housing support to elderly people who are finding it increasingly difficult to cope due to physical frailty.
Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT)	A tenancy which runs for a fixed period of time and is reviewed, and either renewed or terminated, at the end of the fixed term. From April 2012, councils and Registered Providers are able to offer FTTs instead of having to offer long-term security of tenure as previously required.
Floating Support	A service that provides housing related support to vulnerable adults (over 16) in the short term to enable them to maintain their independence in their own home.
Homefinder	The name of the Housing Register for the allocation of affordable housing to rent in Coventry.
Home Improvement Agency (HIA)	An organisation that provides advice services to vulnerable people who are private homeowners or tenants of private landlords in order to help them stay in their own homes.
Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	The national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England, with the role to contribute to economic growth by enabling and helping communities to deliver high-quality housing that people can afford.
House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	A House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a dwelling that is occupied by more than one household who share basic amenities such as WC, washing, cooking and food preparation facilities.
Housing Benefit & Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	Financial assistance offered by the Government to eligible people on low incomes, whether they are working or not, to help to pay all or part of their rent.
Housing Need	Defined as the number of households who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market.

Intermediate Housing	Housing at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market price or rents.
Local Investment Plan (LIP)	Part of a process introduced by the Homes and Communities Agency aimed at better aligning their policies and resources with the aims and objectives of growth areas and local authorities.
Long term empty properties	Residential properties that have remained unoccupied for at least six months (and are not categorised as exempt).
Low Cost Home Ownership	Housing schemes that allow households with modest incomes to purchase a share of a home, e.g. through Shared Ownership (part-rent, part-buy).
Market housing	Housing available for purchase on the open market and at full price.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	The national framework introduced from March 2012 to replace all previous Planning Policy Statements and guidance. It sets out the Government's policies around new developments, including the development of Affordable Housing.
Registered Provider (RP)	All providers of social housing who are registered with the HCA. A Registered Provider can be either a non profit organisation or a profit-making organisation.
Right to Buy	Scheme introduced by the Housing Act 1980 which enables secure Local Authority tenants (and some assured Housing Association tenants) to buy their rented home at a discount. The Right to Buy now extends to tenants with Fixed Term Tenancies.
Section 106 agreements	Through negotiation, a planning condition can be imposed whereby a proportion of new homes must be made available for affordable housing (e.g. for rent or low cost home ownership).
Sheltered Housing	Sheltered housing is age restricted accommodation designed for people who wish to maintain and improve their independent lifestyle.
Social rented housing	Rented housing owned and managed by Registered Providers for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)	An assessment of land in an area to identify sites available for housing development.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)	An assessment of housing need and demand within a defined housing market area. This provides a good understanding of how housing markets operate.
Supported or Specialist Housing	The term describing housing for a particular client group e.g. elderly, people with a disability or suffering from mental illness.
Supporting People (SP)	A Government funded programme that aims to make sure vulnerable people get the housing related support they need to live more independently.
Sustainable Communities/development	Based on the idea that the quality of people's lives, and our communities, are affected by a combination of economic, social and environmental factors. Sustainability is achieved by understanding the links between these factors.
Sustainable Community Strategy	Sets out the targets to be achieved for the City through effective partnership working between public and private sector organisations, voluntary and community sector groups, local businesses and residents.
Unsuitable housing	All circumstances where households are living in housing which is in some way unsuitable, for reasons such as its size, type, design, location, condition or cost.
Vulnerable person/group	A vulnerable person can be someone who is in receipt of care or support services and who is less able to take care of or protect themselves.
Worklessness	A broader concept than traditional 'unemployment' (which is usually based on claimant counts). Worklessness describes all those who are out of work but would like a job.