



Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Communities

Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Strategy 2021-2026

Incorporating:
Homelessness Review,
Homelessness Strategy including people who sleep
rough, and
Private Sector Housing Strategy

October 2021

Foreword

The Strategy is the big picture about what is required to improve people's housing circumstances. The pandemic has not changed priorities but it does mean that the housing situation of many households has worsened. This has not yet affected the number of households approaching the Council for assistance. The full impact of the pandemic on household income, and consequently housing, will only become apparent with the ending of furlough.

At a time of constrained national and local resources, it is essential that the Council and its partners focus on doing the big things that they do well as opposed to trying to do everything. Delivering on this Strategy is the best way to assist as many local people as possible with housing. Partners are confident that the aims, objectives actions in the Strategy are the right ones going forward.

Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Communities sets out a bold vision for housing delivery across Stratford-on-Avon District. It is however, an interim position. The merging of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Council services and functions by 2024 provides exciting new opportunities, such as a South Warwickshire Local Housing Company, and means that this strategy will be reviewed and replaced before it expires in 2026.

In the meantime, this strategy based on the Evidence Log and accompanied by the Action Plan sets out specific objectives that we as a Council will deliver for the benefit of our residents and communities. Let's get on and deliver the homes the District needs.

Cllr Jo Barker

Portfolio Holder for Homes, Health
& Wellbeing



Purpose

The Stratford-on-Avon District Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Communities Housing Strategy 2021 to 2026 identifies the housing challenges facing the District and sets out what the Council and its partners must do to tackle them. It was drafted following consultation with partners, service users and the public. An up to date housing Strategy enables the Council and its partners to deliver on what really matters to people and to achieve better value for money.

The Strategy incorporates the Council's statutory Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy including people who sleep rough, and its Private Sector Housing Strategy.

An accompanying Equality Impact Assessment shows that the Strategy will have either a positive or a neutral effect on all the equalities strands.

The Strategy covers all tenures including owner occupation, private rented accommodation and affordable housing. The emphasis is on what our partners and we can realistically do to ensure that more people have suitable homes. As such, this Strategy takes account of other strategies and plans but does not duplicate them or assess their effectiveness (see *Relationship to other strategies and plans*).

There are essentially three components to the Strategy:

- [Housing Strategy itself \(this document\)](#).
- [Action Plan \(sets out how we will deliver the Strategy – Annex 1\)](#).
- [Evidence Log \(that underpins this Strategy and includes this Authority's formal review of homelessness and the Equality Impact Assessment – Annex 2\)](#).

All three documents are available on the Council's website at www.stratford.gov.uk/housingstrategy.

The starting point of the Strategy is the Evidence Log. The Log examines local housing circumstances, takes account of legislation and policy guidance, and sets out the views of local people and partners as to what is important. Although work on the Strategy started well before the pandemic, it was finalised during the pandemic. The views of partners have continued to feed into this process during 2020 and 2021.

If you have any queries about this Strategy please contact the Housing Policy and Development Team on 01789 260842 or via email at housing.policy@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Vision

Sustainable homes and sustainable communities that enable more people to live independently in good quality homes of their choice.

Aims & strategic actions

The three aims of the Strategy reflect the main housing challenges within the District, based on the Evidence Log. These are the aims we want to achieve in order to deliver the vision:

- Aim 1 - To support communities and build sustainable affordable homes
- Aim 2 - To improve existing housing and help people live independently
- Aim 3 - To prevent homelessness and reduce the harm caused by it

To deliver the aims, there are eighteen high-level strategic actions in the accompanying Action Plan. The actions have been identified through consultation and reflect the issues in the Evidence Log. There are milestones for each action. The Action Plan is realistic and timely. It can be delivered within existing resources, which is important at a time of constrained national and local resources. Any actions requiring additional resources will be considered separately by the Council.

The future

The Council is actively pursuing a proposal to merge with Warwick District Council by 2024. Ahead of this, the two councils will be bringing together their functions including a joint housing service. This will have a fundamental impact on service delivery because Warwick District Council owns its own affordable housing stock.

It also owns a housing company established to build new market and affordable housing. These initiatives present unique opportunities to deliver the vision and aims of this Housing Strategy.

Because of the above changes, it is likely that the two authorities will start to review this Housing Strategy before 2026.

Monitoring and review

The action plan is a *live* document that the Council can update and revise by adding new actions or milestones. This will be vital as we come out of the pandemic and things change. It also enables the Council to take advantage of new opportunities including external funding streams.

The Cabinet is responsible for monitoring delivery of the Action Plan twice a year.

Our housing challenges

- The high cost of market housing in the District. People's incomes determine the type and size of housing that they can afford. If more people could afford housing in this District, and or find suitable housing, there would be no housing waiting list and little homelessness. On the plus side, there is no failing housing market.
- The shortage of affordable housing for many households on middle and low incomes.
 - Young people continue to leave the District – some probably because they cannot afford housing. Deaths continue to exceed births.
 - Additional affordable housing is also required for people in poor health, people with special needs, older people and people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- The importance of building the right type and size of market and affordable homes. Building the wrong market housing increases the demand for affordable housing.
 - Improving the design of all *mainstream* market and affordable homes and their accessibility (homes that are suitable for people who have or may develop ill health or acquire a disability- Lifetime Homes or similar) would help create stable local communities. People could live independently for longer in their current homes and benefit from their established social networks.
 - The necessity of ensuring generous internal space standards, including living space and bedroom space) in affordable housing in particular (where children can be expected to share bedrooms).
- Reducing carbon emissions (low carbon new build and retrofitting) and enabling homes that can adapt to changing climate and how much (if anything) they can afford to pay for low carbon technologies.
- Need to improve existing homes and ensure that they are in good repair and provide for a comfortable temperature and living environment. This is not just about energy efficiency; it is also about how much households can afford to pay for their energy (i.e. fuel poverty prevention).
- The District's very ageing population requires both additional adaptations and repairs to existing housing and appropriate new housing.
- There is inadequate provision of support and care for older people, people with special needs and people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Ensuring that everyone has equal access to services. This includes anyone who is socially excluded or digitally excluded.

Relationship to other strategies and plans

The Strategy complements many other strategies and plans but does not replicate actions in them. Information about all such strategies and plans is set out in the Evidence Log but those that most affect and cut across this Strategy are highlighted below (and in the Action Plan).

Stratford-on-Avon Council Plan

The Housing Strategy has a major role to play in helping to achieve the Council's vision for the District 2030 including:

- To be one of the UK's first carbon-neutral Districts supporting zero-carbon innovation, technology and construction and be at the forefront of climate change adaptation.
- To enable all its residents to live safe and healthy lives, work, raise children and grow old in an excellent District for leisure, education and sport.
- To have high quality, appropriate and affordable housing across the District

Find out more @ [Council Plan 2019 - 2023 | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Declaration of Climate Emergency

In July 2019, the Council declared a climate change emergency. There is no separate climate change aim in the Housing Strategy because climate change is an integral part of the strategic actions in the Strategy

The Government in its 2021 [response](#) to the *Future Home Standard* consultation is proposing that all new homes are 'zero carbon ready' by 2025. This will also apply to extensions, building improvements and renovation in existing buildings. New energy efficiency standards will help the UK meet its target for achieving net zero by 2050 and result in reduced fuel consumption, smaller energy bills and fewer households in fuel poverty.

Delivering on climate change whether it is new build affordable homes or the retrofitting of existing affordable homes has been commonplace in Stratford-on-Avon District for many years. This strategy continues this good work but recognises the need to accelerate it, including making use of grant schemes and supporting residents to make informed and affordable decisions about how to reduce carbon emissions from the use of energy in their homes.

Find out more @ [Climate Change Update - September 2019 \(stratford.gov.uk\)](#)

Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy

The Local Plan for the District to 2031 sets a target for the number of new homes to be built and where they should be located. The District has a five-year housing land supply and there is no overall shortage of new housing. However, there is a big demand for more affordable homes including some specialised housing.

Find out more @ www.stratford.gov.uk/corestrategy

South Warwickshire Local Plan

The emerging replacement for the Core Strategy is being prepared in conjunction with Warwick District Council. The Housing Strategy will help inform the content of this new Local Plan highlighting the key housing challenges facing the District.

Find out more @ www.southwarwickshire.org.swlp

Warwickshire Health and Well Being Strategy

The Warwickshire Health and Well Being Strategy 2021-2026 is a high-level plan for improving health and wellbeing and reducing differences, or inequalities, in health across Warwickshire. The Strategy is owned by Warwickshire's Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) which includes the county, health, the five district and borough councils, the third sector, Warwickshire Fire Service and the Police & Crime Commissioner. The three current priorities are:

- Help our children and young people have the best start in life.
- Help people improve their mental health and wellbeing, particularly around prevention and early intervention in our communities.
- Reduce inequalities in health outcomes and the wider determinants of health.

Find out more @ <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/healthandwellbeingstrategy>

Safer South Warwickshire - Community Safety Partnership

The Safer South Warwickshire - Community Safety Partnership is responsible for reducing crime, disorder and drugs misuse in the districts of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick. Priorities in the rolling 3-year joint plan to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in both districts include:

- Violent crime - focus on knife crime, domestic abuse and the nighttime economy.
- County lines - focus on identifying vulnerable groups. Links to violence and substance misuse.

Find out more @ [Community Safety | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Social Inclusion Statement

The Social Inclusion Statement 2019-2024 lists priorities for the Social Inclusion Partnership. Typically, socially excluded households have limited access to employment, education and training, and health services. They live in poor housing and unsafe neighbourhoods, have lower incomes and use minimal or only high interest financial products and services. They are likely to have lower expectations than the norm.

Find out more @ [social inclusion](#)

Regulatory framework

There is no single piece of legislation covering the necessity to draft this Strategy *and* the things that we will need to do to deliver it. This Strategy as a whole meets and satisfies a number of different high level housing and housing related legislative, regulatory, policy and best practice requirements that are not covered elsewhere.

The Strategy covers a period of five years because it is a legal requirement for all local authorities to review homelessness and its causes (in the widest sense) every five years and then to publish a strategy to address the identified issues.

Aim 1

To support communities and build sustainable affordable homes

Justification and further information

All sections of the Evidence Log @ www.stratford.gov.uk/housingstrategy are relevant to the strategic housing function, although the following sections are particularly relevant to the delivery of new affordable homes:

1. Consultation
5. Earnings and income
6. Cost of buying or renting a home
7. Requirement for new housing
8. Affordable housing

Delivering the Strategy

Effective strategies result in positive changes. The Council will regularly review progress in delivering the action plan and will update it to ensure that it continues to meet local communities' expectations. Partners will monitor delivery of the Strategy via two multi-agency groups: the Housing Partnership that deals with building new homes and the District Housing Forum, which aims to prevent homelessness.

Research about local housing and economic circumstances is required to deliver actions in the Strategy. The research will enable us to achieve value for money by correctly identifying problems and solutions. The research includes keeping up to date with new policy and assessing its likely impact; examining existing national and local data; undertaking new research; and consultation and feedback from customers, partners and residents.

It is important that the right market and affordable housing is built. This includes housing for people with special needs. To make this happen, housing organisations must continue to contribute to the drafting of the Local Plan and accompanying documents.

Strategic actions

1. Monitor the impact of the Housing Strategy and update the action plan.
2. Maintain an up to date understanding of local housing circumstances to support and inform the delivery of this Housing Strategy and development plans.

Enabling affordable homes including specialised housing

Affordable housing is subsidised rented or sale housing for people who cannot afford and/or find suitable market housing. For a full definition of affordable housing, see Annex 2 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

Many households, whether in work or not, cannot afford either to buy an open market house or to rent privately. In September 2020, the District ratio of lower quartile house prices to income was 10.08. As well as having the highest house prices in the West Midlands, the District also has the second highest private rents in the West Midlands. Sometimes the issue is not solely cost but the lack of suitable market accommodation.

There is an urgent need for more affordable housing of all types and sizes (including bungalows) across the District. Tenure wise, the biggest need is for rented affordable homes.

In the five years ending March 2021, the Council enabled 1,880 new affordable homes; this equates to an average of 376 affordable homes each year. The Council will enable approximately 400 + affordable homes in 2021/22.

Sufficient and appropriate affordable housing allows for mixed income and all-age neighbourhoods and villages where young people, singles and families, including people with special needs and retired people can ensure local vitality. Good quality affordable housing promotes social cohesion; improves health and contributes to an attractive environment.

Creating sustainable communities is about making sure that new homes are of the right tenure, type, size and design to meet the needs of the local population including people who are disadvantaged or who require specialised forms of housing. New homes must also be environmentally sustainable and affordable to run. The ideal mix, type, size and tenure of affordable housing for each location will differ.

There are concerns about the quality of some of the affordable housing on offer on s106 sites. Of particular concern are poor space and accessibility standards.

Continual policy and funding changes, only some of which have arisen because of the pandemic, mean that the way the Council enables affordable housing, and what housing it can enable, change very frequently.

In some circumstances, developers pay contributions to the Council in lieu of onsite provision of affordable homes. The Council's Housing Investment Panel determines how to spend these financial contributions (or *commuted sums*) for affordable housing.

The number of new affordable housing schemes that are *green* continues to increase. The Council's Housing Investment Panel (HIP) has helped with this agenda. It has recently funded a rural *passivhaus light* affordable housing scheme (following the success of a nearby *passivhaus* affordable housing scheme that it also funded) and a scheme that will use Modern Methods Of Construction (MMC).

The high build quality of homes constructed via Modern Methods of Construction that is homes manufactured largely or wholly offsite, results in homes that are highly energy efficient. The downside is that some of the *standard* homes currently

available are not very spacious. A number of such affordable homes have already been built in the District.

Self-build and custom-build housing can play an important role in delivering high-quality housing that meets the needs of all sections of the community. Such housing helps to diversify the housing market and increase consumer choice and has the potential to offer a more-affordable housing product than developer-built market housing.

The Council funds an independent full-time Rural Housing Enabler to facilitate the development of rural housing schemes brought forward by local communities to meet their own housing needs. These schemes are popular with local people. The Rural Housing Enabler assists local communities to carry out housing needs surveys and identify suitable sites for development. Part of the role includes the promotion of community land trusts but to date no community has yet delivered such a scheme. Most communities prefer to work with a housing association because there are many local successful examples of such schemes.

Strategic actions

3. Continue to enable the right amount and type of affordable homes and ensure that they are available to all households who cannot afford or access suitable market housing.
4. Continue to encourage and enable communities to meet their local housing needs.

Specialised housing, support and care

To live independently in the community, some people require purpose built specialised housing that can also easily facilitate the provision of support and care. Each household has its own home and front door.

Extra care housing is ideal for people whose disabilities, frailty or health needs make ordinary housing unsuitable but who do not need or want to move to long term care (residential or nursing homes).

There are four operational extra care affordable housing schemes for older people in the District; a fifth scheme will open shortly. The schemes all provide additional services to the wider community. There is a need for additional provision; Warwickshire County Council is preparing an updated position statement identifying the need for this type of provision.

In recent years, a wide range of special needs schemes has been developed in the District for people of all ages. However, we require more housing for local people with dementia and disabilities including mental ill health; learning disabilities; autism; physical disabilities and sensory impairment; care leavers and some people who risk experiencing homelessness or who are homeless.

Authorised sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople, will only be sustainable if they are well managed and have good facilities.

Warwickshire County Council, working in partnership with district and borough councils, health, probation and others, is responsible for the provision of most housing related support across the County. There is a need to review housing related support needs and to commission accommodation based support services and *floating support* in people's own homes. The County has extended existing contracts for such services during the pandemic.

Strategic actions

5. Promote the development of independent living specialized housing with support and or care in accordance with identified needs.
6. Meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers through the provision of well-managed appropriate sites.
7. Facilitate a reconfigured range of housing related support services.

Tenancy strategy and policy

Every five years, the Council is legally required to do a *tenancy strategy* setting out who gets what affordable housing tenancy in the District. The tenancy strategy has limited weight because housing providers are only required to have due regard to it, or in other words, to have considered it. Providers find it difficult to take proper account of tenancy strategies because they work across many areas and each has its own tenancy strategy. As the Council acquires affordable housing, it is also legally obliged to draw up its own *tenancy policy*.

Strategic action

8. Make best use of affordable housing by reviewing the Tenancy Strategy, and drafting a Tenancy Policy for the Council's affordable homes.

Aim 2

To improve existing housing and help people live independently

Justification and further information

Most people want to live as independently for as long as possible in their current home. Maintaining and improving the physical fabric of housing means good homes that are warm, safe and affordable to run, and that remain suitable as people's health needs change. These requirements are particularly important to children, disabled people, people with chronic health conditions, and older people. Councils are legally required to keep housing conditions within their areas under review.

The following sections of the Evidence Log @ www.stratford.gov.uk/housingstrategy are particularly relevant to this aim:

1. Consultation
3. Number of households and tenure
5. Condition of existing housing stock

Comfortable homes

Cold and damp homes threaten good health, reduce quality of life and result in excess deaths in the winter months. The highest concentration of fuel poverty is in the private sector (both owner occupied and private rented housing).

A household's fuel poverty status depends on the interaction of three variables i.e. the energy efficiency of the home, energy prices and household income. Fuel poverty occurs when households have above average fuel costs, and if they were to spend that amount, they would have a residual income below the official poverty line. About 13.6% of all households in the District (7,559 households) are in fuel poverty. Fuel poverty is particularly prevalent in the District's rural communities.

These households are more likely to be people living alone; households on low incomes; and to live in homes with poor energy efficiency. People who are at home during the day because of unemployment, retirement, long-term sickness or disability have a greater requirement for heat and hot water.

The Government has committed the UK to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to [net zero](#) by 2050. Climate change will also cause an increase in temperatures. Ensuring new homes built during the lifetime of this strategy are fit for the new climatic conditions expected by the middle of this century will be a real challenge. Addressing climate change will require better energy efficiency in buildings and low carbon heating systems.

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires local authorities to publish a report every two years outlining their plans to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation of all tenures. Act on Energy is a local based energy

advice charity that does the majority of energy advice work across this District. It is drafting the Council's 2021 report.

[Energy Performance Certificates](#) (EPCs) rate properties by band from 'A' i.e. the most energy efficient to 'G' i.e. the least energy efficient. In the two years ending September 2020, over 12,000 Energy Performance Certificates were lodged for residential properties of all tenures in the District. Most new build properties of all tenures and types were Band B. Of the existing properties, private rented properties had the lowest band ratings; these were proportionately considerably lower than those for rented housing association properties. Apart from some limited exemptions, it is illegal for private landlords to grant new or renewal tenancies that have an EPC rating below E.

To improve the energy efficiency of properties, reduce fuel bills and the carbon footprint of homes, local housing associations, and in particular, Orbit Housing Association and Warwickshire Rural Housing Association, have been retrofitting their existing homes for some years (and building greener homes). Some projects have been national and regional exemplars.

Recently the Council and Orbit collaborated to bid for and receive a Social Housing Decarbonisation [Fund](#) (SHDF) demonstrator grant of £1.4 million. The grant will be used to retrofit approximately 69 housing association and private sector properties to create decarbonised neighbourhoods and bring the homes up to energy performance certificate (EPC) Band C or higher. Orbit will use its expertise in this field to deliver the actual works. The project expects to support 50 jobs.

The Council will also continue its successful programme of engaging with individual local communities to promote grants and give advice about keeping warm.

Strategic action

9. Support a programme to reduce carbon emissions and to help people live comfortably in their homes.

Promoting independent living – adaptations and repairs

[HEART](#) (Home Environment Assessment and Response Team) is a countywide partnership to help people to live independently and make homes safe, secure and warm. It provides tailored advice, support and assessments. It deals with home aids; adaptations including Disabled Facilities Grants; housing conditions; repairs; safety measure; and grants or loans for essential building works. It also facilitates the discharge of people from hospital. If a home cannot be adapted, it supports customers by identifying and checking out suitable alternative accommodation.

Housing adaptations enable disabled people and people with mobility impairments to continue to live independently in their own homes. Adaptations restore privacy, confidence and dignity to individuals and their families, and significantly improve people's health and quality of life. They can ease the burden on carers. Disabled

Facilities Grants (DFGs) can help pay for adaptations. The Council received a Disabled Facilities Grant award of £961,444 for the year 2021/22.

Adaptations can include *Assistive Technology* (or AT). It assists people to retain or improve their independence, safety, security and dignity (Housing LIN). People with disabilities, older people and people with dementia can benefit from AT. One well-known type of AT is telecare, which uses digital systems to monitor emergencies and lifestyle changes. It includes alarms, lifestyle monitoring and telehealth monitoring of vital signs, and covers a wide range of equipment (detectors, monitors, alarms, pendants etc.) and services (monitoring, call centres and response).

The Council spends considerable time in ensuring that the HEART service continues to meet people's expectations. Councils and partners are to review the work of HEART.

Strategic action

10. Participate in effective programmes of assistance to keep people in their own homes.

Raising standards and dealing with empty homes

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a tool to assess hazards in people's homes. Local authorities are required to take action when they identify a Category 1 hazard.

The most serious hazards (Category 1) in the District are strongly associated with older dwellings, and dwellings occupied by older people, people with disabilities, people on low incomes and those in receipt of benefit. The main hazard failures in the District are excess cold, and falls on level surfaces and stairs. Private rented properties are more likely to have Category 1 hazards than owner occupied properties.

The Council took action to free 100 homes from all Category 1 hazards in the year ending 31 March 2021.

A house in multiple-occupation (HMO) is a property where people who are not related are rent the property and share facilities. Local Authorities are responsible for issuing licences and ensuring that properties meet safety standards and minimum space standards. As at 31 March 2021, there were approximately 250 mandatory licensable homes in multiple occupation in the District. Of these homes, 61 had been licensed. The Council is proactively addressing the licensing of such properties.

To improve standards, the Council must regularly update the advice it provides to landlords and tenants. In order for the Council to target the worst properties, it must ensure that its licensable and non-licensable database of houses in multiple occupation is fit for purpose.

In October 2020, 1,178 private properties in the District had been empty for more than 6 months.

Empty properties have increased over the last few years and this is partly due to the increase in the number of new developments and the length of time it takes to sell. New build properties count as empty at *first fix stage* i.e. before they are practically complete. Delays in finishing new build properties during the pandemic will have contributed to the increase in the number of empty properties.

The Council gives advice to empty property owners to help them bring properties back into use. The Council can use Empty Dwelling Management Orders to take over the management of problematic properties, which have been empty for at least two years, and whose owners are not engaging with the Council.

The Council works hard to bring empty properties back into use and it will draw up a plan to tackle the growing number of such properties.

Strategic actions

11. Work with partners to improve standards of accommodation across the District.
12. Deliver a programme of interventions to bring empty homes back into use.

Aim 3

To prevent homelessness and reduce the harm caused by it

Justification and further information

The following sections of the Evidence Log @ www.stratford.gov.uk/housingstrategy are particularly relevant to this aim:

1. Consultation
6. Cost of buying or renting a home
8. Affordable housing
10. The Council's Housing Waiting List (Home Choice Plus)
11. Homelessness
12. Other information and services

The Housing Waiting List – Home Choice Plus

There are over 5,100 households on the Council's Housing Waiting List for rented housing association properties. The List is known as [Home Choice Plus](#).

Families with children account for about a third of all households on the List. Single people under pensionable age account for almost another third of households and older people account for approximately a quarter of households on the List.

The List is a prioritisation mechanism for *some* of the households with the greatest housing need for rented affordable housing. This includes people who are homeless. For the reasons outlined in the Evidence Log, the List does not represent the entirety of housing need in the district. The List is also not representative of the total demand for affordable housing in particular settlements. Who joins the List is heavily skewed by the availability of properties in different settlements.

Home Choice Plus is a choice based lettings scheme. People 'bid' for affordable homes online. The Council provides assistance to support people to bid. The number of lets depends on how many new affordable homes are built and on how many existing housing association tenants move to other housing association properties.

The Home Choice Plus policy was last amended in early 2021 following the withdrawal of some councils from the scheme; it will be fully reviewed and updated in the next couple of years. This may be an opportunity to align allocations across Stratford and Warwick District Councils. This will first require decisions to be taken about who should get what properties in different settlements.

The allocations review should consider whether to prioritise households already living in one bed housing association accommodation who want to move to accommodation that is more appropriate. This would free up such accommodation for single people on the List.

It is important that people who are socially and or digitally excluded continue to know about the List. The Council will work with partners, community groups and other organisations to raise awareness of the List amongst hard to reach groups including people who sleep rough or have special needs, and Gypsies and Travellers.

Strategic action

13. Ensure that the housing waiting list for rented accommodation (Home Choice Plus) remains fit for purpose.

Tackling homelessness

The prompt payment of housing benefit by the Council to households who still qualify to receive it (Universal Credit is administered directly by the Department of Work and Pensions) and the effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments assists households to keep their accommodation and prevents homelessness.

Homelessness can happen to anyone. It occurs if a household has no accommodation that it can lawfully occupy or if it has accommodation but it would be unreasonable for the household to continue to occupy it. A person is homeless if they do not have any suitable accommodation and they are either homeless now or threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days. The legislation is complex and is summarised in the Evidence Log.

Levels of homelessness fluctuate from year to year. Only some homeless households approach the Council for assistance. The government's *Everyone In* scheme at the start of the pandemic in 2020 required housing authorities to provide accommodation for people sleeping rough and other homeless people who would not usually qualify for immediate housing. Many other people have retained their accommodation since the start of the pandemic because of government intervention but this will change going forward.

The Council owed a statutory homelessness prevention or relief duty to 544 households in the year ending 31 March 2021. The comparable figure for 2019/20 was 640 households.

The Council owed the full main housing duty to 66 households in 2020/21; the equivalent figure for 2019/20 was 87 households.

Over recent years, the Council has focused resources on preventing homelessness. Effective homelessness prevention relies on the Council and other organisations, advising people in housing difficulties about their housing options at an early stage. Prevention also depends on good partnership working, and on organisations sharing information about the local housing market and economy, and maintaining their knowledge of each other's respective services. The Stratford-on-Avon District Housing Forum co-ordinates much of this cross agency work.

There is need to both to map and review local homelessness prevention services, and to build on a trauma informed approach to people who have complex needs.

The recent Warwickshire Homelessness Strategy requires an action plan and the Council will also need to draft and agree a Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The Council's Tenancy Access Scheme enables people to obtain private rented accommodation. The Council will review it to ensure that it remains effective.

A review of the provision of support to formerly homeless people is required.

As at 9 April 2021, the Council had 80 households in temporary accommodation including bed and breakfast. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide temporary accommodation for some homeless people. The Council currently has 35 units of self-contained accommodation and 8 shared accommodation units that provide 29 rooms. The Council also uses bed and breakfast but has plans to reduce its use.

The **Fred Winter Centre** in Stratford town will open in 2021. It will assist people who formerly slept rough and or who have multiple needs and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The scheme will provide 2 emergency accommodation units and 13 move-on accommodation units for people with low to medium support needs. The Centre will be a local hub for a wide range of agencies that will support residents in the scheme and the wider community.

The Council has bought four properties to use as **additional Housing First accommodation** i.e. accommodation for people who sleep rough and or who have multiple needs and who require housing with *wrap around support*. The Council is also hoping to acquire an existing property to convert it for use as **additional temporary accommodation for single homeless people**.

Strategic actions

14. Maintain good performance for dealing with housing benefit claims and applications for Discretionary Housing Payments.
15. Continue to deliver a successful housing options service for all households.
16. Ensure that the temporary accommodation and service for homeless households provides value for money, and is suitable and of good quality.

Supporting single people and young people

The Council and agencies estimated that four people were sleeping rough in the autumn of 2020. The Council will review its action plan for people who sleep rough and the outreach service provided to them.

There is a need to ensure sufficient move on accommodation for single people from both temporary accommodation and schemes such as the Fred Winter Centre. Adequate support is also essential. The Council will need to review the effectiveness of Housing First accommodation and the impact of the Fred Winter Centre.

Young people can experience 'crisis homelessness' when they are forced, or choose, to leave the family home in a hurry. The young person may not have made any

plans in respect of their accommodation, income or personal safety. It is not always possible or safe for the young person to stay at, or to return, to the family home.

There is a countywide protocol for dealing with homeless young people. It sets out the responsibilities of local housing authorities and Warwickshire County Council. There is considerable scope for better working to ensure that all young people in housing difficulty receive support, and possibly accommodation.

An assessment of the support available to young people and care leavers is required.

Strategic actions

17. Improve accommodation and support options (including emergency access provision) for single homeless people and people who sleep rough.
18. Improve emergency access accommodation, longer-term accommodation and support for homeless young people including vulnerable 16 or 17 year olds and care leavers aged 16-24 years.

Appendix A: Some key local facts and data

See the Evidence Log for more comprehensive and detailed information including, in particular, consultation outcomes, and for references and sources of all data.

1. Population

The resident mid-year population of the District in 2020 was 132,402 people.

The median age of people in the District is 48 years. This compares to a median age of 43 years in Warwickshire and 40 years in England.

Mid 2020 resident population by broad age bands: District, County and England

	Stratford-on-Avon District	Warwickshire	England
Children 0 to 17 years	19% 24,881	20% 119,153	21% 12,093,288
Approx. working age 18 to 64 years	56% 73,901	59% 343,398	60% 33,992,831
Older people 65+ years	25% 33,620	21% 121,235	18% 10,464,019
Total resident population	132,402	583,786	56,286,961

Source: [ONS Analysis of population estimates tool UK \(June 2021\)](#)

Proportionately the District has fewer children and working age households and more people aged 65+ years than Warwickshire and England. A quarter of the population of the District is aged 65 or over and older people are the fastest growing sector of the population.

Deaths exceed births in the District. Population growth is due to the growth in internal migration and to a much lesser extent international migration.

2. Ethnicity

The 2011 Census is the best source of information about ethnicity. Of the District population:

- 97.4% of the resident population is White and 2.6% is non-White.
- 94% of the resident population is White: British.

3. Number of households

The [ONS estimates that in 2017](#) (July 2019) there were 54,000 households in Stratford-on-Avon District. According to Council Tax data there were approximately 59,840 households in the District as at March 2021.

4. **Dwellings and tenure**

The Government estimates that in April 2019 of the 61,360 dwellings in the District, 87% were private sector housing (owner occupied and private rented) and 13% were affordable housing.

In February 2020 there were 8,916 affordable homes including 7,870 rented homes.

5. **Employment**

Across the District manufacturing; wholesale and retail including motor trades; and accommodation and food services provide the most jobs. Tourism related jobs are important. Compared with the national jobs profile, the District has proportionately more jobs in manufacturing and accommodation and food.

Locally the greatest number of employments furloughed has been in the accommodation and food services sector followed by the wholesale and retail sector.

6. **Employee income**

In April 2020, the District median gross annual income per employee was £28,004.

In 2019, a quarter of all employees in the District earned less than £14,514; this is lower than the England income of £15,603.

7. **House prices**

In the year ending September 2020, the District

- Median house price was £315,000 (the highest in the West Midlands). The ratio of median house prices to incomes was 9.44.
- Lower quartile house price was £235,000 (also the highest in the West Midlands). The ratio of lower quartile house prices to incomes was 10.08.

The [National Housing Federation](#) (July 2020) calculated that in 2018/19 households in the District required an income of £84,033 to obtain an 80% mortgage at 3.5 times their annual salary.

8. **Cost of privately rented homes**

In the year ending 30 September 2020, the District

- Lower quartile private rent was £700 per calendar month or £8,400 per year.
- Median private rent was £775 per calendar month or £9,300 per year.

Lower quartile rents are concentrated in only a few areas of the District and largely exclude Stratford town with its big but expensive private rented market.

Households require a gross annual income of £31,200 or more to afford to privately rent a one-bed property and £36,000 to rent a two-bed property in the District. Higher household incomes are required to rent in Stratford town.

9. **Housing association rents**

Social rents are typically 50% to 60% of market rents. As at 31st March 2020, District housing association social rents were on average £449 per calendar month or £5,384 a year

Affordable rents set at up to 80% of local private sector rents are a concern because many people, including working households, cannot afford them.

10. **New affordable homes**

In 2020/21 a total of 386 affordable homes were built in the District. This is the second highest ever recorded number of affordable homes delivered in a single year (the record is 491 new affordable homes in 2019/20).

Over the past five years the Council has enabled 1,880 affordable homes or an average of 376 affordable homes each year. The average falls to 271 affordable homes over the last ten years.

The District successfully attracted £8.7 million government grant in 2020/21 for new affordable homes. However, most affordable homes are built without grant. Over the last ten years:

- Almost 80% of new affordable homes were built without any government or council grant.
- The Council helped fund 131 affordable homes to meet local housing needs in settlements.

The Council sometimes receives monies in lieu of onsite provision of affordable homes. These *financial contributions (commuted sums)* help fund affordable homes elsewhere. As at April 2021, £2.8 million in the pot was uncommitted.

11. **Overcrowding**

Approximately 3.4% of households in the District are overcrowded i.e 1,786 households.

12. **Existing housing stock of all tenures**

The Council's actions resulted in 100 homes being freed from the most serious (Category 1) hazards in the year ending 31 March 2021.

- Category 1 hazards include excess cold, unsafe electrical wiring or unsafe floor surface on stairs. Category 1 hazards are strongly associated with the private rented sector, older dwellings and dwellings occupied by heads of household aged over 65, and or where there are one or more residents with a disability, and or on a low income.
- As at 31 March 2021 there were approximately 250 mandatory licensable homes in multiple occupation in the District. Of these homes, 61 had been licensed.

There are no high rise buildings (defined as 10 storeys, or 18 metres, and above) with external cladding in the District.

Most housing association properties meet the [Decent Homes Standard](#).

In the two years ending September 2020 approximately 12,400 Energy Performance Certificates were lodged for residential properties of all tenures in Stratford-on-Avon District.

- New build properties had high energy efficiency ratings ranging from Bands A to D with the majority of homes being in band B (86% of all new builds).
- Private rented properties had low band ratings, which proportionately were considerably lower than those for housing association rented properties.

The Council received a Disabled Facilities Grant award of £961,444 for the year 2021/22. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) enable people to adapt their homes.

13. Fuel poverty

7,559 households in Stratford-on-Avon District are fuel poor i.e. 13.6% of all households.

14. Empty homes

There were [1,178 private properties in the District](#) that had been empty for more than 6 months in October 2020. Delays in finishing new build properties during the pandemic will have contributed to the increase in the number of empty properties.

15. The housing waiting list (Home Choice Plus)

There were 5,131 households on the List in November 2020.

- Families with children account for about a third of all households on the List. Single people under pensionable age account for almost another third of households and older people account for approximately a quarter of households on the List.
- Couples without children are the smallest group of households on the List. This is probably because of all the household types they find it easiest to find alternative accommodation that is suitable and affordable.

16. Homelessness

In 2020/21

- 544 households were owed a *prevention* or *relief* duty by the Council.
- 66 households were owed the *main* or *full* duty i.e. homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless by the Council.

The most common reasons for the Council accepting the main housing duty were children, mental ill health and physical disabilities/ill health.

The top three support needs are mental ill health, physical ill health and disability, and domestic abuse.

The end of private tenancies is the main reason for people losing their accommodation and becoming homeless.

The Council and agencies estimate that 4 people slept rough in the District in November 2020. They were all men and were aged 26+ years.

If you find the text in this document difficult to read, it may be possible to supply it in a format better suited to your needs.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Housing Policy and Development Team
Place and Economy Service