

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning / Assistant Director - Partnerships

Housing Strategy Quarterly Update to December 2023

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To update the Committee on actions within the Tamworth Borough Council Housing Strategy to 31 December 2023 which directly impact on health and wellbeing of Tamworth communities.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The Committee consider and endorse the report as presented

Executive Summary

The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee were given an overview of the Tamworth Borough Council Housing Strategy 2021-2025 at the meeting in 12 July 2022. The Committee requested an update on all actions and/or relevant data sets as they relate to health and wellbeing of Tamworth communities on a quarterly basis.

This report highlights relevant Council and partnership actions and emerging datasets available as of 31st December 2023.

Information is presented in line with priority areas identified in the Housing Strategy and as it relates to the health and wellbeing of the Tamworth communities.

PRIORITY 1 - ENABLE THE PROVISION OF SUFFICIENT NEW HOMES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE EXISTING POPULATION AND THOSE ATTRACTED TO THE AREA FOR WORK; ENSURING A RANGE OF PROVISION TO REFLECT BOTH NEED AND ASPIRATION

The council's Planning Policy states:

- Overall Affordable Housing (AH) Requirement on new sites – 20%
- First Homes initiative (from 2021) – 25% of the AH provision
- Additional affordable home ownership – 10% of all dwellings
- The remaining provision to be provided as rent

Further to approval at Cabinet on [14 December](#), the Tamworth Borough Council Monitoring report 2022/23 and Housing Delivery Paper 2022/23 is now published on our website <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/monitoring>

First Homes

- Nomination to 25% of affordable Housing on all new sites. Eligible buyers receive 30% reduction on full market value.
- The percentage discount is passed on to future purchasers in perpetuity on house market value (to be recorded by the Council)
- Maximum price of a First Home on its initial sale, after discount has been applied, will be £250,000.
- Eligibility criteria is set by Government – sales to local people with a combined household income of under £80,000

The First Homes discount is secured through a planning obligation, which runs with the land. A title restriction is also placed on every First Home which prevents the transfer of title without the express permission of the Council ¹

As at 31 December 2023, the first two First Homes properties have now been approved at a site at Two Gates.

A further seven properties will become available at a new site on Coton Lane.

PRIORITY 2 - MAKE BEST USE OF EXISTING HOUSING AND RELATED ASSETS

The 2021 Staffordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment sets out current and future strategic health and care needs in Staffordshire and identified that wider determinants such as the level of fuel poverty and homelessness in Staffordshire give an indication of how quality of life for residents can be improved.

Tamworth is currently represented at the Health Inequalities Directors Group. At the July 2023 meeting of the Health Inequalities Directors' Group (HIDG), the Insight team at Staffordshire County Council (SCC) presented an overview of data analysis completed to identify 'hotspot' areas of greatest health inequalities within each district/borough. This work was completed to enable the focus of resources and effort to achieve greatest impact.

Further work will be progressed to provide more focused and in-depth analysis, with a focus on the groups' identified topic of 'housing and health'.

Following the meeting of Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny on 28th November 2023, there will be a focus on the lower super output areas identified in Amington, Belgrave, Glascote and Stonydelph which have high indices of deprivation and health inequalities.

The Council have also been successful in receiving £250,000 grant funding from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) for projects in Tamworth for 13 projects to promote healthier housing and address health inequalities. The projects are outlined within the relevant sections of this report.

Fuel Poverty

There are number of ways in which Tamworth Borough Council supports and assists residents who may be experiencing fuel poverty to adapt and remain in their own homes.

Beat the Cold commissioned as HEAT (Home Energy Advice Tamworth)² are a Staffordshire based charity over 20 years' experience in energy advice and support. They are commissioned by the Council (in partnership with Staffordshire County Council) as part of the Staffordshire Warmer Homes initiative.

¹ Draft First Homes Guidance April 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes>

² <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/save-money-your-fuel-bills>

The commissioned service funded through the Private Sector Housing budget – current contract value is £8,500 that concludes 31st March 24. Beat the Cold did a presentation for us in October 2023 and has events planned over the winter to promote their services.

Performance statistics included below:

| | (01 Apr - 30 Jun 2023) | (01 Jul - 30 Sep 2023) | (01 Oct - 31 Dec 2023) |
|---|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Enquiry count | | | |
| Total No. of enquiries | 100 | 109 | 130 |
| No. of individual Households supported | 76 | 80 | 112 |
| Of which: | | | |
| Disadvantaged households - health related | 55 | 54 | 72 |
| Disadvantaged households - benefits & low income | 61 | 59 | 79 |
| No. of Hospital/MPFT* referrals | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| Home visits LA funded | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Home visits BTC funded | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Community events LA funded | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Community events BTC funding | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Engagement with referral agencies/stakeholders/partners** | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Support provided - figure may exceed No. enquiries | | | |
| General energy/Behavioural advice | 97 | 104 | 122 |
| Advice given for tariff switching/billing/problem supplier | 18 | 11 | 14 |
| Estimated savings from tariff advice | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Self-reported improvement wellbeing | 32 | 33 | 41 |
| No. of PSR sign-ups | 16 | 26 | 20 |
| Potential Value of PSR £234.00 per household | £3,744 | £6,084 | £4,680 |
| Other Savings from BTC intervention/Gesture of Goodwill | £5,541 | £0 | £0 |
| No. of ECO 4 Referrals | 0 | 5 | 12 |
| SCF referrals for heat grant (£450.00 per household) | 39 | 45 | 30 |
| Potential value of SCF referrals | £17,550 | £15,750 | £10,500 |
| Food Vouchers Issued | 16 | 9 | 7 |
| Potential value of Food vouchers issued (£58.00) | £1,600 | £522 | £406 |
| No of households referred for water tariff support | 20 | 28 | 33 |
| Estimated savings from water tariff support (avg. £350 per household) | £7,000 | £7,000 | £8,250 |
| Signposted for additional Fuel Voucher Support | N/A | N/A | 10 |
| No. of referrals for debt advice/consolidation support | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| No of referrals for benefits checks | 0 | 1 | 6 |

*Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust

**SFRRS, ST/SS Water, DWP, SCF, Trussell Trust, CAB

Beat the Cold were successful in a UK Prosperity Fund bid however declined to continue with the project so £10,490 was provided to Support Staffordshire to provide grants to 3 voluntary sector organisations to deliver services that will support with E13 Community Measures to reduce the cost of living.

Staffordshire Warmer Homes³

Staffordshire Warmer Homes is a scheme run by Staffordshire County Council, in partnership with district and borough councils. The goal is to combat fuel poverty across the county and help residents to heat their homes for less using greener and more energy efficient solutions.

Home Upgrade Grants (HUG) Fund

HUG 2 is a government scheme awarding grants to Local Authorities (LAs) for energy efficiency and clean heating upgrades in owner occupied and private rented sector fuel-poor homes off the gas grid. The funding is administered through application to Staffordshire Warmer Homes and Community Home Solutions (CHS) have been contracted to deliver Customer Journey Support (CJS),

³ [Staffordshire Warmer Homes Partnership](#)

The private housing Team are currently running a marketing campaign with CHS to promote this scheme within the Borough for home improvement that has produced

Tackling Empty Homes

This is a Corporate Priority with a strategy in development to be completed by March 2024. Staff are currently undergoing training and working with the Empty Homes Network.

COMF grant funding has been successful until September 2024 for an empty homes officer to inform the Council approach around bringing empty homes back to use (TBC). This is due to go to staffing and appointments this month.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licencing

Houses of Multiple Occupation are properties rented out by at least three people who are not from the one 'household', eg a family, but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. It is a statutory requirement to ensure that all HMOs meet a licensable standard regardless of whether the property requires a mandatory licence.

93 HMOs have been identified in Tamworth (with a further two at planning stage).

At this time the Council have 65 currently active licences which must be retained on a public register⁴.

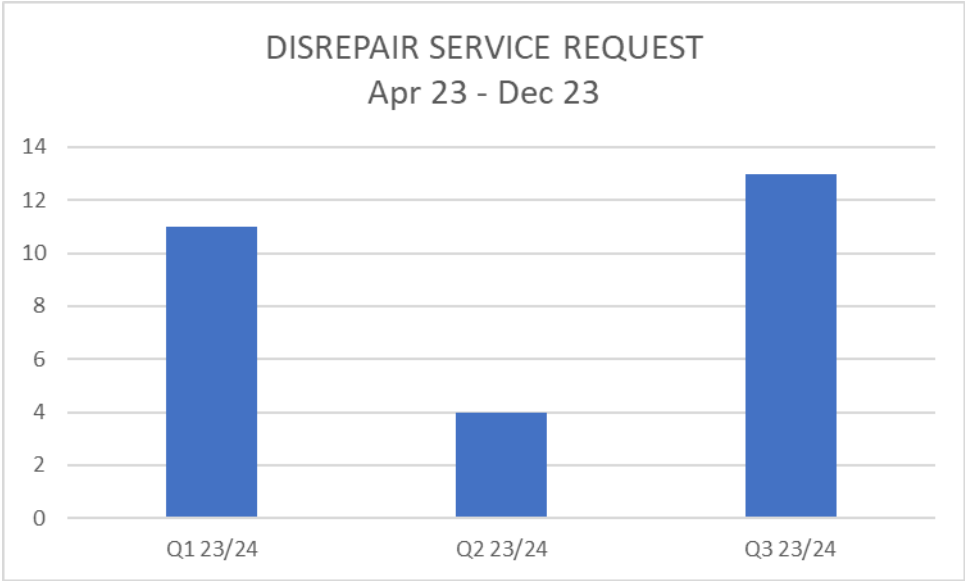
28 HMOs do not require licencing but must comply with legislation. A proactive inspection regime is now in place and it is likely more HMOs will be identified.

Damp and Mould

Key performance indicators have been updated for Private Sector Housing to include any reports or disrepair which may be attributed to damp and mould.

Updated KPIs are as follows:-

Number of disrepair service requests:



⁴ [Tamworth Council HMO Public Register](#)

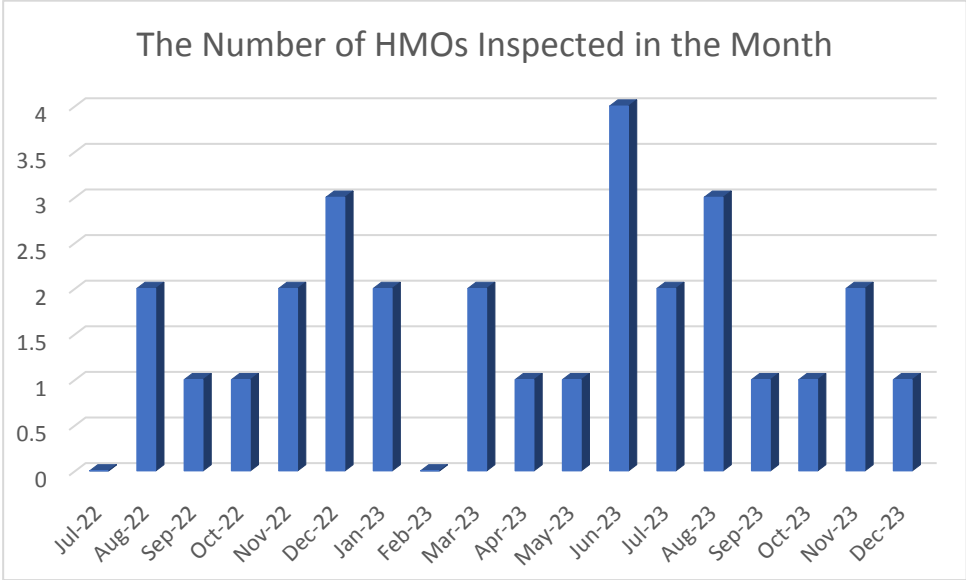
The Private Sector Team have also secured COMF funding to purchase some dehumidifiers to assist private tenants who have reported mould issues during investigation.

CASE STUDY

An elderly couple were signposted to the Council team around excessive damp and health issues in an older private rented property in October 2023 with high rent.

Working with the landlord and tenants, the property was issued with a Prohibition Notice and the couple were successfully re-homed into sheltered accommodation on a temporary basis whilst the Landlord undertook the works. During this time they were given the highest banding to bid on properties and accepted an offer of sheltered accommodation that also bought substantial rent and utilities savings with it.

The number of HMO’s Inspected



- Number of category 1 Hazards identified as result of inspection 3.
- Number of category 2 Hazards identified as a result of inspection 5.
- Number of formal interventions around notice and harassment issues/landlord behaviour 0
- Number of Improvement Notices served 1.
- Number of Prohibition Notices served 1.
- Number of Civil Penalties issued other than HMO 0
- Number of Hazard Awareness Notices served 0.

The approach to enforcement in private rented properties is outline in the Council’s Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy .⁵

⁵ [Housing Policies](#)

Tamworth Borough Council Housing Repair Services report the following damp and mould requests September 2023-December 2023

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Jobs Awaiting Authorisation for Works | 0 |
| Jobs Awaiting Post work inspections | 0 |
| Jobs Awaiting payment to contractor | 8 |
| Jobs Awaiting payment approval | 33 |
| Calls Awaiting job card to be issued | 0 |
| Jobs In progress | 56 |
| Jobs ready for invoicing | 2 |
| | 100 |

PRIORITY 3

ENSURE HOUSING PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN DELIVERING TAMWORTH'S RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

A Net Zero Carbon Baseline Report was presented by the Leader of the Council to the Infrastructure Safety and Growth Scrutiny Committee on 26th September 2022 and endorsed by Cabinet on 20th October 2022.

The recommendations as follows:

- Endorse the baseline assessment
- Prepare an action plan
- Produce an action plan by 31st December 2024

ECO4 – Statement of Intent

ECO4 is an obligation placed on the largest energy suppliers in Great Britain and is focused on the least energy efficient homes occupied by low income and vulnerable households

In quarter 3 we have had 4 applications and 4 were approved.

Additionally, the COMF funding has provided top up funding for the ECO flex scheme to ensure vulnerable applicants can be assisted where the grant provided does not quite meet the full cost of home upgrade energy efficiency measures.

Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS)

Community Home Solutions are working in conjunction with Tamworth Borough Council to assist homeowners (and private/social tenants with permission from landlord) in Council Tax Band A to D with less than 100mm of loft insulation to obtain FREE loft insulation. Letters were sent over before Christmas and will be continuing. To date there have been 64 enquiries.

More information regarding the Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) is here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-great-british-insulation-scheme>

PRIORITY 4

ENSURE EVERYONE WHO LIVES OR WORKS IN TAMWORTH HAS ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE HOUSING THAT PROMOTES WELLBEING

Citizens Advice Mid Mercia (CAMM) operating as Tamworth Advice Centre, are working together with Tamworth Borough Council (TBC) to assist with the council priorities and vision:

- Creating a better future
- Living in Tamworth

Quarter 2 reports are included as Appendix

The outreach service provided at Heart of Tamworth, due to cease on 30th September as it related directly to Homelessness has now been re-considered and will continue for generalist advice until at least September 2024 with consideration as to whether this can be included into the main Tamworth Advice Centre contract from April 2025.

Key headlines Sept - December 2023

Tamworth Advice Centre(TAC):

Continues to see many clients with debt concerns coming through via the self-referral route. Fortunately, there are no further mortgage arrears this quarter. Although some areas such as rent arrears, council tax, credit card debt, and store cards remain high, the figures are lower than the last quarter. However, the number of clients is also lower which is something TAC expect to see during the summer months and around school holidays. Given that winter is on the way and clients are continuing to struggle TAC would expect debt figures to remain high.

Continue to see clients who cannot afford to remain in private properties, where the rent has increased but the Local Housing Authority rate remains frozen and where the landlords are selling their properties.

Continue to deliver financial gains and outcomes remain high. There have been both clients with new claims and errors and gatekeeping by the DWP. TAC have also seen an influx of Attendance Allowance/Personal Independence Payment this quarter.

Continue to offer a combination of channels for clients to access our service. Clients still seem to predominantly prefer telephone advice, but there has been an increase in face-to-face appointments within the CTCIC offices and at the outreach venue at Sacred Heart. To help accommodate this TAC have increased their presence in CTCIC offices with a second day per week now being offered. Accessibility into their service has also increased through access to Language line including to support British Sign Language interpretation where needed.

Outreach service at Sacred Heart remains busy and TAC are seeing a bigger mix of issues. The numbers have increased this last quarter, mainly due to staff going above and beyond rather than working within the time parameters of the project. However, this also shows the need for the service at Sacred Heart.

team is fully resourced and there have been no staff changes.

Staff remain flexible and both reactive and proactive to client's needs, for them to receive the help and advice that they need. Staff are going above and beyond to assist these clients; there are very few "simple" cases and fortunately TAC find ourselves in the unique position of being able to handle their problem for them and see it right through to its conclusion.

continue to work well together with council officers to assist clients effectively, to understand the client's health capabilities and history where needed and to assist the more vulnerable clients more effectively. TAC have been able to work collaboratively with the council to achieve the best outcome for the clients.

COMF Funding – A cost of living adviser service within the Tamworth Advice Centre is being recruited to support vulnerable residents

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

The Council has current strategy the outcomes of which are reported to Scrutiny.

The contract for the operation of the Homelessness Hub was awarded to Citizens Advice Mid Mercia in September 2023 in partnership CT CIC, Homestart and Betterway Recovery and is now operating successfully.

COMF funding will also provided a move on support budget for rough sleeper re-start to assist with obtaining support and accommodation.

PRIORITY 5

ENSURE APPROPRIATE ADVICE AND FUNDING IS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT OLDER PEOPLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATION.

Health ageing promotes well-being and enabling independence for older people. Outcomes on this priority includes warm efficient homes, independence, the prevention of falls and more choice around end of life choices.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Details of current open (known) cases: quarter 3 204
Referrals Received: Qtr 3 - 39
Closed Cases: Qtr 3 - 17
Completed Cases: Qtr 3 - 0

Disabled Facilities Adaptation (DFA)

Details of current open (known) cases q3 - 144
Referrals Received Qtr 3 - 24
Closed Cases Qtr 3 - 1
Completed Cases – 0

DFG

Quarter three has heavily focussed on laying the foundations for effective and compliant service delivery.

We now have work processes and operating procedures in place and the draft Housing Assistance Policy to support the work of the team is being presented to this Committee.

Contracts are in place for equipment, such as stairlifts and through floor lifts meaning we can deliver these at pace moving forward.

Operationally, the received the transfer data of DFG cases in September 2023. Quarter 3 has been focussed on interrogating case statuses and documentation to progress the legacy cases forward and the recruitment of interim support to start to progress the legacy cases.

In December, the team approved their first grants.

Council Adaptations

A Council Adaptations Policy is currently being written to present to this Committee in due course.

Work has started to understand the true budget position, given several historic work items showing in progress have likely been completed and remain unpaid. These have now been identified and are in the process of being inspected by the Team.

We have set up progress monitoring of the contractor moving forward so we can identify and remedy issues effectively.

Several adaptations are in progress, with many more being actively worked on.

Demand for adaptations far outstrips available budget availability, and a report will be considered by members to increase the allocation in 2024/25 to enable more tenants to have the adaptations they need.

Hospital to Home

CT CIC continue to work with health partners and have been commissioned to provide a or – hospital discharge service.

COMF funding has also secured the following until Sept 2024:

- Care Connect volunteers in GP practices to enhance social prescribing and promote social projects (CT CIC)
- Enhancement to hospital discharge scheme – funding for house clearances, deep cleans, minor repairs as necessary (CT CIC)
- Twelve month additional funding for the Wheel Connections social isolation project (CT CIC)

Sheltered Housing

Tamworth Borough Council Sheltered housing provides people aged 55 and over with another housing choice in Tamworth. There are 11 schemes and 365 units of mixed housing

COMF funding will also support:

- Cooking lessons within Supported housing for vulnerable tenants (TBC)
- Compostable toilet for Belgrave Allotment and Gardens to provide more access for visitors and vulnerable users who use the space to promote health eating and growing own vegetables (Belgrave Allotment)

Dementia Friendly Community Status

Tamworth has an established and extremely well attended Memory Café at the Heart of Tamworth and has recently taken part in Dementia Awareness Week.

Communities Together CIC continues to offer singing for the mind, arts and craft activities, seated exercise sessions. They also offer a befriending telephone line and Meals on Wheels service.

A new memory café has also been given grant funding through a recent community grant.

Additional COMF funded projects until September 2024

- Mobile unit for the Active Tamworth project (Tamworth Council) to be based at Anker Valley but will be able to go to other areas – healthy eating, signpost to activities for young people, adults and families

- Contribution to expand current free holiday activities managed by TBC
- Provision of Year 6 healthy eating programme across all primary schools (external provider through SCVYS)

Options Considered

Detailed in report

Resource Implications

Work is undertaken within the team

Legal/Risk Implications Background

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Actions and statistics reported as for the mitigation of risk to the most vulnerable within our communities and to ensure health and affordable housing is available

Equalities Implications

All activities give due consideration to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy – Making Equality Real in Tamworth (MERIT)

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Included within the Housing strategy, report and in wider considerations for the Council's Climate Change policies.

Background Information

Included within the report

Report Author

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Appendices

1. Tamworth Debt and Generalist advice
2. Tamworth Homelessness
3. Tamworth Tenancy Sustainment
4. Tamworth Sacred Heart project