

**Public
Key Decision - Yes**

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Tenancy Strategy 2023

Meeting/Date: Cabinet - 18 July 2023

Executive Portfolio: Cllr S. Wakeford, Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing

Report by: Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The aim of this strategy is to set out Huntingdonshire's vision for the way social housing providers in the district should let their properties to meet the needs of residents.

Even though Huntingdonshire is not a stock owning Council having transferred its affordable housing stock in 2000, to Huntingdon Housing Partnership (HHP) through a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT), now part of the Places for People Group, the Council is still required under the Localism Act to develop and publish a tenancy strategy setting out how social housing in its area is let and managed including:

- the kinds of tenancies they grant,
- the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind,
- where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of the terms, and
- the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

The Tenancy Strategy relates to lettings of all social and affordable rented properties, including general needs, adapted, sheltered and extra-care housing. It does not cover lettings to hostels, transitional accommodation or other forms of supported housing and does not apply to low cost home ownership (generally Shared Ownership) residents.

All Registered Providers (RP's) with housing stock in Huntingdonshire are required to have regard to this strategy and ensure that, wherever possible, their policies work to complement, and do not contradict, our Tenancy Strategy.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is requested to:

- Note the contents of this report and;
- Agree to the Tenancy Strategy 2023.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To set out Huntingdonshire's vision for the way social housing providers in the district should let their properties to meet the needs of residents.
- 1.2 Specifically, to develop and publish a tenancy strategy setting out how social housing in its area is let and managed including:
 - the kinds of tenancies they grant,
 - the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind,
 - where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of the terms, and
 - the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy.

BACKGROUND

- 1.3 HDC first Tenancy Strategy was published in September 2012, following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 which placed a duty on local housing authorities to develop and publish a tenancy strategy setting out how social housing in its area is let and managed.
- 1.4 Registered Providers of Social Housing (RP's) is a term given to organisation that provide social housing that is registered and regulated by the Government. They can be public or private organisations that offer different types of tenancies and licences to their residents; they are often known as Housing Associations.
- 1.5 It is now necessary to refresh this document following the expiry of the first strategy.
- 1.6 The Council's Corporate Plan states that:

“we want everyone to live in a safe, high quality home regardless of health, stage of life, family structure, income and tenure type. Homes should be energy efficient and allow people to live healthy and prosperous lives, New homes should be zero carbon ready and encourage sustainable travel”.
- 1.7 Social housing plays an important part in delivering this vision. Sufficient flexible and affordable homes that meet local needs contributes to strong and happy communities where people can prosper.
- 1.8 The principles that underpin this strategy are:

- A social home for those in need, whilst they remain in social need,
- Making best use of stock,
- A fairer system, that promotes social mobility and aspiration,
- Helping people to move up the social ladder.

1.9 When reviewing this strategy, the Council, has had regard to the Huntingdonshire Lettings Policy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

2.1 The Panel discussed the Tenancy Strategy at its meeting on 5th July 2023.

2.2 Following an observation from Councillor Pickering that lifetime tenancies did not motivate tenants to become self-sufficient in terms of their own housing, the Panel heard that whilst there was no easy answer to this, Housing Associations awarded tenancies based upon making best use of the existing housing stock.

2.3 In response to a question from Councillor Corney, the Panel heard that whilst it was difficult to anticipate how Housing Associations would deal with tenancy issues, a balance had been struck to ensure that they would meet their obligations to residents.

2.4 Councillor Gardener observed that it would have been helpful to see where changes had been made from the previous policy and queried the life expectancy of the policy. The Panel were advised that the anticipated review date of 10 years would be fluid to allow for earlier or later revision depending on external factors and best interests of residents. Following a further question from Councillor Gleadow on the anticipated review date of 10 years, the Panel were advised that this was a normal review date for this type of strategy.

2.5 The Panel heard, following a question from Councillor Gleadow, that analysis of active RPs had been undertaken to ensure that the policies being adopted were aligned.

2.6 The Panel were assured that all consultees mentioned within the document were active within the district following an enquiry from Councillor Blackwell.

2.7 The Panel were assured that despite the unknown of the future, the policy would provide flexibility and security.

2.8 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for Cabinet to make a decision on the recommendations.

KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 3.1 The Council is required to have an up to date Tenancy Strategy in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, failure to have a strategy will mean that the Council is unable to influence RP's on how they manage their tenancies in the District.
- 3.2 The RP's listed in the strategy have had an opportunity to comment on this draft document prior to its finalisation, we will continue to work with them as part of the Council's Enabling function and seek the most secure tenancies for our residents as part of the lettings process.

LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The completion of the Tenancy Strategy aligns to Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan under the Priority – "In creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations", under the outcome of Improving Housing.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Senior Officers across the Council have reviewed the Tenancy Strategy and their comments have been included in the document.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There will be no additional resource implications, in implementing this Strategy, activities relating directly to HDC will be undertaken by existing teams and partnerships are already established with RP's.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Within the Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy, there is a priority of, "*Reducing poverty through better housing, employment and skills*" This strategy aligns with this priority by providing residents with stable, secure affordable housing.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 In February 2023 the Council formally approved the Council's Climate Strategy this recognises that the current cost of living and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In passing this motion, the council committed to not only the delivery of a Climate Strategy but also that in making decisions it will wherever possible seek to contribute to positive environmental and social benefits. The delivery of good quality, affordable and secure accommodation for residents supports this ambition.

EQUALITIES

- 9.1 The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 9.2 A Tenancy Strategy will enable the Council to set out guidelines on how tenancies should be managed by RP's in Huntingdonshire which will aim to prevent discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The strategy relates to lettings of all social and affordable rented properties, including general needs, adapted, sheltered and extra-care housing.

Appendix 1

Tenancy Strategy 2023

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