
Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024



December 2019



Elmbridge
Borough Council
... bridging the communities ...

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Foreword

I believe that every man, woman and child in this country is entitled to food in their stomach, a roof over their head and clothes on their back.

Many adults make every effort, to deal with life as they find it but sometimes, they need that little bit of extra help.

Working with our own staff in the civic centre, and with our housing partners throughout the borough and further afield, we are able to meet some of those rights.

The council, working with our local housing associations partners will strive to provide affordable accommodation, various charities in the borough will help with clothing and the foodbanks fully supported by the council will help with food.

Those reading this document will see and understand the enormous work that Housing Service staff undertake along with colleagues in other departments to ensure that vulnerable people in the borough are looked after.

For many people, especially the single, find that having a pet, especially a dog is something special in their lives. Our proposed approach to providing kennels for rough sleepers, who cannot normally take dogs to temporary accommodation, goes a long way to prove that the council has a heart.

There is still a lot that we can do to help people - we need to rethink and review our policies on a regular basis. This document covers four years, but there is no reason, why in that four years we cannot make changes which improve housing matters.

We must not be afraid to embrace changes, to work for what is best for those we serve.

The setting up of EBC Homes Limited will ensure that affordable homes will be available when needed instead of putting families in bed and breakfast.

I have an aversion to bed and breakfast and I will work to see that we no longer send families to far-flung places.

I fully recommend this strategy, it has been written by people who care and work to look after those in society who are not so lucky.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the strategy, please contact the council's housing team at housingpolicy@elmbridge.gov.uk. To find out more about housing services in Elmbridge, visit elmbridge.gov.uk/housing.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Roy Green,

Portfolio Holder for Housing, Elmbridge Borough Council

Introduction and strategic context

This strategy sets out the borough's housing plans for 2020 to 2024, confirming the council's commitment to providing more affordable housing, from temporary accommodation to high quality permanent homes, across Elmbridge. Especially important is our approach to tackling homelessness and supporting vulnerable people, securing more resources for the people who need them most, including when they are in crisis. It builds on the achievements recorded since the last strategy was adopted.

Key achievements since the adoption of the last Housing and Homeless Strategy in 2015

- Delivery of 299 affordable homes between April 2015 and September 2019
- 216 households helped into home-ownership via the Elmbridge Equity Loan Scheme since April 2015
- Establishment of the council's wholly owned housing company, EBC Homes Limited, in 2018, to increase the supply of affordable and market housing within the borough
- Additional 10 temporary accommodation homes for homeless households secured within the borough, with 16 more units in the pipeline – all intended to minimise the need to place homeless households out of borough
- Adoption and implementation of a revised Housing Allocations Policy in 2018, strengthening the priority of applicants with a local connection
- Development of a range of services and projects to tackle rough sleeping and provide more support for single homeless clients – e.g. improvements to Transform Housing & Support in Walton on Thames, launch of daytime hub and rough sleeper outreach service by Elmbridge Rentstart and development of supported and move-on accommodation through partnership with Transform Housing & Support and Walton Charity
- Over 800 cases of homelessness prevented between April 2015 and March 2019
- Making better use of the social housing stock by helping 58 under-occupying PA Housing tenants to downsize between April 2015 and March 2019 through the Perfect Fit scheme
- Improving the customer experience for housing applicants through enhancements to the SEARCH Moves platform – e.g. daily bidding, developments of personalised housing action plans
- Adoption of new Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance and Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policies in 2018

- Successful implementation of the extension of mandatory licensing of Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) from October 2018
- Adaptations to over 250 homes through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants between April 2015 and September 2019, allowing disabled residents to live independently in their own homes
- Completing over 900 minor works and repairs each year for vulnerable residents through Care and Repair Elmbridge's Handyperson Service
- Delivery of improved performance in the accuracy and processing of claims for housing benefit and council tax support following adoption of the council's "Brilliant Customer Service Every Time" approach
- Taking action to minimise the adverse impacts of welfare reforms on our residents – co-ordinating the "Get Set" campaign to help residents and front-line services prepare for Universal Credit and the employment of benefit cap coaches who have assisted over 100 households to come off the benefit cap.

Our core strategic priorities remain:

Priority 1 - Delivering more affordable housing.

We will work in partnership to deliver more affordable housing in Elmbridge and make the best use of all social housing stock

Priority 2 - Improving housing conditions and meeting need.

We will work with landlords to ensure safe, healthy and energy efficient homes

Priority 3 - Supporting older and vulnerable residents

We will support older, disabled and more vulnerable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives

Priority 4 - Preventing homelessness & tackling Rough Sleeping

We will act to tackle rough sleeping and prevent homelessness

Priority 5 - Universal Credit & Welfare Reform: nobody left behind

Arranging support for those who need it most

The council's vision of: "A responsive and effective council, protecting and promoting the interests of residents and businesses and safeguarding our environment, while maintaining a community for all" is supported by this strategy, with an action plan to demonstrate how we will continue to address our priorities and fulfil our longer-term commitments.

Further housing reforms are due to be set out by central government following the consultation on the Housing 'Green paper', including a commitment to boost the supply of high-quality social housing, and we have to be ready to act on this for the benefit of our residents, as the government takes this work forward.

The Housing Service is supported, for the purposes of enabling and supporting the delivery of affordable Housing, by the council's Planning Service and Asset Management and Property Service with which it shares some key strategic documents: the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA); the council's Asset Management Strategy; the council's Core Strategy (2011) & Developers' Contributions (SPD), along with the emerging Elmbridge Local Plan and the change that will come about from that.

This housing strategy sets out to influence the amount and type of affordable housing required as part of new development in the borough, within the over-arching framework set out through the strategic documents mentioned above. One of this strategy's key aims is to champion the development of new affordable homes, particularly those built to be let at Social Rent levels.

This strategy also aims to help meet the community's diverse need for a range of tenures and types of homes, including for homes accessible to those with disabilities and more Extra-Care and other supported housing, where evidence of demand exists.

The housing strategy sits alongside the emerging Local Plan and, as Elmbridge grows and comes under more pressure to provide more homes of all types, the strategy aims to help the borough to respond positively to the growth agenda. This is not least when it comes to pushing for affordable homes that meet the needs of the entire community, not just those wealthy enough to access homes (either for sale or for rent) at market prices.

The council's vision is for a compassionate, caring and vibrant borough, with priorities for a safe, healthy, green and attractive place to live, where both the local economy and people can thrive, and affordable housing is key to enabling this vision.

Bordering half a dozen other boroughs, two of them in Greater London, Elmbridge sits between other Surrey boroughs and the nation's capital, characterised by large swathes of Green Belt, but with access to huge economic opportunities. These factors make the borough one of the most desirable places to live in the UK, in terms of both quality of life and economic opportunities, but this results in high demand for homes here and high house prices, whether for sale or to rent.

This popularity, combined with constrained development opportunities, not least because of the Green Belt that makes the borough an attractive place to live, makes demand for all types of housing very strong, set against challenging opportunities for housing growth.

As the UK's 7th most expensive borough in which to buy a home (only the London boroughs of Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, City of London, and Richmond upon Thames have higher average house prices) Elmbridge faces a real challenge, more familiar to inner London, when it comes to providing affordable homes.

Elmbridge's relative wealth does not insulate it from real-world economic challenges and the borough's high streets and town centres, just like those all across the UK, face

the prospect of dynamic change. The century-old tradition of high street shopping, along with the recent decades of out-of-town retail, is now challenged by the market disruption of e-commerce and the digital economy.

The Housing Service supports the work of elected members' groups to look for the opportunities in the challenges before the council and to provide more affordable homes, for example through the Affordable and Social Housing Member Working Group, which oversees the council's commitment to deliver more affordable homes for Elmbridge, particularly high-quality affordable homes for rent.

In addition, the Housing Service is anxious to support the council's new wholly owned housing company, EBC Homes Limited, in enabling more affordable rented homes to be delivered across Elmbridge, as well as working in partnership with social landlords and private developers to provide more homes of all types across Elmbridge.

The strategy has a four-year lifespan and runs to March 2024. It is not possible to provide a definitive assessment of the financial resources that will be available both to the council and other partner agencies over that timeframe in order to implement the action plan. As such, the action plan has been formulated on the working assumption that it will be delivered either within existing resources, whether that be through the council's own resources or those of partner agencies, unless otherwise stated.

At the time of writing, local government is waiting for details on the local government settlement for 2020/21 and central government has deferred the three-year spending review which was due to take place in Autumn 2019. There is a considerable amount of uncertainty nationally, both politically and economically, as demonstrated through Brexit, which obviously makes it difficult to make any sort of informed assessment about central government's housing and homelessness policies and / or the financial resources that will be available to deliver their policies and to support the work of organisations in Elmbridge to deliver on the strategic priorities identified above. There is an increasing tendency for the government to allocate funding on an annual basis, such as around homelessness prevention and rough sleeping, and whilst all such funding is welcome, such an approach does not lend itself to long-term planning and certainty.

It also needs to be recognised that local government in general has faced and continues to face significant financial challenges. Locally, this has had a particular impact on Surrey County Council and its capacity to fund a range of discretionary services that help support our most vulnerable residents and help support independent living and prevent homelessness. Whilst services can be transformed in response to these challenges, the approach taken in this strategy is to assume that there will not be a reversal in the fortune of the public finances and local government finances in particular. This position does not prevent the council and its partners from looking to exploit opportunities to innovate or enhance services, but this will largely depend on being able to draw in investment from other sources.

Priority 1: We will work in partnership to deliver more affordable housing in Elmbridge and make the best use of all social housing stock

Introduction

- 1.1** The costs of buying or renting a home in Elmbridge are amongst the highest in the United Kingdom.
- 1.2** Developers and landlords have benefited considerably from rising markets in Elmbridge but rises in value of homes for sale and high rental prices have left more and more people, especially young people and families, unable to afford a place to live. Where households have been able to afford rented homes, sometimes they are unable to afford subsequent annual rental increases and are forced to move on in search of somewhere more affordable to live.
- 1.3** Where families with reasonable incomes would once have been able to afford to buy a home of their own, including would-be first-time buyers, they now find themselves effectively 'priced out of the market'. This makes it hard for employers to attract and retain staff in the local area and may undermine the local economy and the delivery of key services. Over time this could deter businesses from setting up, or staying on, in the local area, as employees find lengthy journeys exhausting and expensive and a deterrent to continued employment in Elmbridge.
- 1.4** Where parents can afford to raise a family in the borough, by contrast their own children are increasingly unlikely to be able to afford to do so. Young people who have grown up in the borough may not be able to afford a house in Elmbridge, for sale or for rent, especially when they are starting out in their adult and working life.
- 1.5** The demand for affordable housing far exceeds supply and local people are finding it more and more difficult to stay in the borough and put down roots. So, increasing the supply of affordable housing is a key priority for the council, as is making best use of the existing social and private rented housing stock, as well as taking every opportunity to identify, acquire / dispose and use any available suitable land or building assets to support the delivery of more affordable homes in Elmbridge.
- 1.6** The council will continue to enable the delivery of a 'pipeline' of affordable housing supply, through supportive planning policies and plans, and the use of any council land. The underlying presumption will be in favour of developments for all affordable housing, where suitable and viable, and the

provision of finance to enable development, whilst still continuing to promote high standards in the private rented sector.

- 1.7** Delivery of more affordable homes in future will depend largely on the efforts of Registered Providers (housing associations) operating locally, the council's wholly owned company EBC Homes Limited, and other local players, such as private developers and landowners. Along with any changes that may come in the planning approach in Elmbridge, for example through the emerging Local Plan, each of the factors mentioned here will have a significant part to play in providing more affordable housing in Elmbridge, through the unique development opportunities available locally, with the provision of affordable housing supported by the planning process.

Key objectives in delivering more affordable housing in partnership:

1.8 To ensure that the council's planning policies optimise the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system

1.8.1 The key internal partnership for the Housing Service is working with Planning colleagues to ensure we have the right numbers and types of homes developed in the right places in the borough. The Housing Service looks to Planning to set the big picture, as well as the wider framework put in place for sustainable development in Elmbridge, and our enabling work fits within that.

1.8.2 We already have data on the local housing market through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and this too will, inevitably, be reviewed, at least in part, as a result of the work on the emerging new Local Plan. This means that we need to ensure all of that data is up-to-date and fit-for-purpose, and we will ensure the SHMA has all the relevant data in place to inform future planning for more affordable homes of the right type and tenure.

1.8.3 The emerging Local Plan seeks to find the best options for new homes in Elmbridge and, when finalised, it will replace the current (2011) Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is used to set out what we require in exchange for permitting housing development, in terms of affordable housing contributions. The Core Strategy is, therefore, key to providing affordable new homes in the local area but will inevitably be superseded by the emerging Local Plan, which will then inform our future targets for affordable homes being developed in the borough.

1.8.4 When the Core Strategy is eventually replaced the council will still need to manage residential development activity in the borough, but how we enable the building of affordable housing may alter. So, we need to be ready to

respond to any forthcoming changes, whilst still keeping our eyes on our affordable housing requirements and the targets we must meet. This approach will ensure affordable homes are provided in Elmbridge, outside of what the market can offer to those on relatively high incomes who can stretch to a 'market price'.

1.9 To support the delivery of at least 300 affordable homes in Elmbridge between April 2020 and March 2024:

- 1.9.1 The delivery of affordable housing relies on using a variety of resources and powers. The planning system continues to be the main source of additional affordable housing, but it also relies on the council and, particularly, housing associations in managing their assets effectively and taking opportunities to redevelop or regenerate sites where appropriate. The availability of funding is also important, be that housing associations' access to funds, grant from Homes England or the council's own Affordable Housing Enabling Fund (AHEF).
- 1.9.2 The 2016 SHMA analyses all of the relevant available data on the local population, especially for those in housing need, to consider its growth and changes over time, along with income data, to tell us about local housing affordability and consequently the homes we need developed in the local area. The council is commissioning an update to the SHMA, to be completed in autumn 2020, and this will help provide an updated picture on the need and demand for housing across all types (including affordable housing) which will inform our future plans and priorities.
- 1.9.3 We recognise that private companies, building homes locally, are also important partners for us, in providing not just private homes for sale, but also actual affordable homes, in the contributions agreed to for providing affordable housing locally through the planning process, either on site or, on smaller sites, by way of a financial contribution. Alongside the emerging Local Plan, the intention is to adopt a comprehensive updated Developer Contributions SPD by 2022, which will provide detailed guidance to developers in relation to the provision of affordable housing through local planning policy.
- 1.9.4 Making the best use of council-owned land and funding, in partnership with local housing associations, EBC Homes Limited and local charities, can also enable the delivery of a step-change in the quantity of new-build affordable housing developed in Elmbridge. Our aim is to increase the overall supply of affordable homes every year in Elmbridge from 2020 to 2024.
- 1.9.5 We encourage and support local housing associations (Registered Providers) to make best use of their stock and to ensure they exploit their opportunities to intensify provision on existing sites, as part of the overall aim to increase the supply and letting of affordable homes every year in

Elmbridge from 2020 to 2024. This includes the re-lets of existing social rented homes that become available every year, as indicated by known data on supply from past years.

1.9.6 In partnership with housing associations, EBC Homes Limited, charities and private developers, we will support and enable the provision of 300 new affordable homes of all types between April 2020 and March 2024, for those excluded from the local private housing market.

1.9.7 **Table 1** below shows the number of affordable homes per year since 2011 and there are more than 200 additional affordable homes already in the pipeline to be delivered between 2020-24. We anticipate that more will be delivered on sites that have yet to be identified yet.

Table 1: Delivery of affordable housing (gross numbers) in Elmbridge: 2011/2019

Year	Tenure		
	Affordable Rented	Intermediate (Shared Ownership/Equity Loan)	Total
2011/12	65	18	83
2012/13	10	34	44
2013/14	75	45	120
2014/15	80	14	94
2015/16	29	33	62
2016/17	3	2	5
2017/18	12	40	52
2018/19	90	28	118
Total	364 (63%)	214 (37%)	578

Delivering on the council’s commitment towards more affordable homes in Elmbridge:

1.9.8 **Affordable Housing Enabling Fund (AHEF)** - The Housing Service has a key role in advising elected members (local councillors) on the use of the council’s AHEF), which has been well used in the past financial year [2018/2019] (see **Table 2** – Homes delivered with support from the enabling fund 2018/2019); totalling just under £3M of investment in the supply of more affordable homes and the better use of existing ones:

Table 2 – Homes delivered with support from the enabling fund 2018/2019:

Scheme	Spend (£'000's)	Units delivered
Catalyst scheme	£186	4
Perfect Fit	£21	3
Weybridge	£2,400	16
Albemarle	£383	5
Total	£2,990	28

- 1.9.9 The council has previously earmarked a number of surplus sites of land in its ownership for possible future development. This approach now potentially includes the redevelopment of some sites by local housing associations (subject to the usual planning consent) to provide more new affordable homes.
- 1.9.10 It is expected that at least one further site will be made available for affordable housing during the life of this strategy (2020 – 2024) and the fund may have a significant role to play in enabling this new development, where more affordable new homes may potentially be provided.
- 1.9.11 The current balance of the AHEF is approximately £9 million and officers are continually exploring opportunities with housing associations and, increasingly, through the council's own development (and that of EBC Homes Limited) to use this funding to deliver on our identified priorities.
- 1.9.12 Whilst AHEF alone cannot deliver significant increases in supply, it can help contribute, both in terms of additional supply in making best use of existing stock and supporting partners' initiatives for additional affordable homes in Elmbridge.
- 1.9.13 In terms of the asset management of property and land holdings, there remains some scope amongst some local Registered Providers to make better use of their existing assets (homes, estates and land), especially where these are under-used, not fit-for-purpose, or unlikely to meet with residents' rising expectations for higher quality homes with greater amenity, energy efficiency and comfort, in future. We will continue to support and engage with housing association partners in relation to their development and asset management strategies, with the aim of aligning their actions to meet local priorities.
- 1.9.14 The council's own asset management strategy, for its own land and buildings, also has a key aim identifying all opportunities to contribute to the provision of affordable housing in the borough.

- 1.9.15 The AHEF has already directly contributed to the provision of 96 additional affordable homes since 2011. It is likely that a number of groups of properties may be identified for redevelopment and / or alternative use over the coming years and AHEF can support our partners in delivering more redevelopment and more Social Rented homes on these sites.
- 1.9.16 **Elmbridge Homeownership Assistance Scheme (EHAS)** – This scheme is delivered in partnership between the council and Catalyst Housing who match the council’s funding for the scheme. The scheme has the capacity to offer low-interest equity loans to support potential buyers into homeownership, where they would otherwise be ‘priced out of the market’. Loans are then paid back over time to make the scheme sustainable and of benefit to future applicants; funds being recycled back into the scheme to then be re-used for future successful applicants.
- 1.9.17 **Registered Providers** - Although the council disposed of its housing stock nearly 20 years ago opportunities still come up for more affordable housing on ex-council land, now within the ownership of our largest development partner, PA Housing.
- 1.9.18 PA Housing is currently working to redevelop the former council garage sites now under its management in Elmbridge, and during the life of this strategy (2020 – 2024) will be developing a significant number of new affordable homes on these sites. Whilst PA Housing intends to develop a range of tenures across these sites (including market housing to subsidise the delivery of affordable housing) the council will be encouraging PA Housing to maximise the proportion of number of affordable homes for rent to be developed on these sites.
- 1.9.19 **Community-Led Housing (CLH)** – We are working with Surrey Community Action to raise awareness of CLH as a potential housing development option and supporting the exploration of opportunities within Elmbridge to meet local need. Community-led housing is inspired and controlled by the community and some have successfully completed housing schemes that provide homes for local people.
- 1.9.20 The Surrey Community Housing Partnership is an initiative delivered by Surrey Community Action. The partnership between Surrey Community Action and eight Surrey boroughs and districts (of which Elmbridge is one) has been formed to promote community-led housing in the county. It will support people to form groups and develop housing, and aims to help groups clarify their goals, access expert advice, secure funding and find suitable development sites.
- 1.9.21 **EBC Homes Limited** - As well as its enabling role, the council has decided to resume involvement in the provision of housing, so as to help meet the need for additional market and affordable homes. So, in 2018, the council approved the establishment of EBC Homes Limited, to play a significant

role in delivering new homes across Elmbridge with a focus on housing at affordable rents and temporary accommodation for homeless households.

- 1.9.22 Over the life of this strategy (2020 – 2024) the role the company can play in affordable housing provision will emerge, with the company currently refining its development strategy to ensure more affordable homes of the right type and size are provided to meet the housing needs of local people. This will be supported by the analysis of the data we hold and commission, to support sensible and sustainable business decisions by EBC Homes Limited, that also provide solutions for local people in housing need.
- 1.9.23 The company (wholly owned by the council) aims to increase the overall supply of affordable homes in Elmbridge and has been set up to provide more housing that is affordable for individuals and households on lower incomes. The EBC Homes Limited Business Plan sets an ambitious target of over 250 new homes to be delivered over the life of its first 5 years, to the end of this strategy's life in 2024.
- 1.9.24 The company's development strategy, based on evidence of local housing need, will aim to fill the gaps in rented housing supply that we know about, whilst keeping an eye on the ever-changing picture of those local people who need to be housed. The company will ensure the right types, sizes and numbers of affordable homes are developed in the places people want to live. This will require close work with Planning colleagues to ensure the overall need for affordable housing in Elmbridge is successfully met.
- 1.9.25 EBC Homes intends to meet the needs of a range of groups, including those termed "key workers" or what the National Planning Policy Framework refers to as "local essential workers". A number of local housing associations already provide key-worker housing for rent in the borough, including PA Housing and A2Dominion and research carried out locally by Walton Charity, provides anecdotal evidence gathered from a number of local employers about the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff in Elmbridge due to the high costs of housing locally, which impacts on the delivery of public services and the long-term competitiveness and balance of the local economy. There is a need for further work in this area, to look to identify the housing needs and options available to this group and to determine how their needs can be met going forward, whilst recognising that their needs may be disparate, and that priority given to this particular group may be at the expense of others.
- 1.9.26 The council's current preferred mix of affordable housing to be developed in Elmbridge is based on the June 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Kingston-upon-Thames and North East Surrey Authorities (the SHMA). Planning Policy colleagues may update specific elements of the assessment in the light of the emerging Local Plan and other ongoing work.

1.9.27 Over the years local needs may change, due to a number of factors, including ongoing Welfare Reform and the affordability of shared-ownership and other intermediate tenures, linked to a number of factors such as open market values of developed properties and the relationship between local incomes and property prices. Through analysis of the data held by the authority the Housing Service is determined to ensure that the right kind (size, quantity, tenure) of affordable housing is delivered through EBC Homes Limited and that what is provided is affordable to those who need it most.

Making the best use of all social housing stock in Elmbridge:

1.9.28 **‘Perfect Fit’** – This scheme was introduced in 2010 and currently runs until March 2020, enabling PA Housing tenants to move out of their current housing association social rented homes, by choice and if too large for their needs, with support, assistance and payments. The scheme has achieved the following:

- 169 under-occupying households have been assisted to downsize to more appropriate accommodation
- 169 families have moved in to those vacated properties, meaning that 338 households in total now have a home more suited to their needs.

1.9.29 Due to the scheme’s successful long-term outcomes, the Housing Service will now explore whether the scheme should be in place permanently, with the ongoing partnership with just one local housing association extended to most, if not all, of the housing associations with rented homes in Elmbridge. This would allow us to build on past success and do more across the borough, in partnership with all of the social landlords in Elmbridge, to enable more homes to be better used locally.

1.9.30 The council along with Spelthorne Borough Council and PA Housing have a contract with a specialist provider to provide a computer system for our on-line Housing Register and housing advice application form and choice-based lettings scheme. The current contract ends in September 2020, with an option to continue for a further year. We will therefore need to evaluate to extend, enter into a new contract, or seek an alternative provider, during the period of the strategy.

1.9.31 The council already has a nominations agreement with our main Registered Provider PA Housing following earlier large-scale stock transfer. We wish to update this, so that we can include arrangements to address any variations that we might seek for new developments to meet local needs.

- 1.9.32 Reviewing the housing needs of specific groups and use the results to shape future policy
- 1.9.33 Central government requires that planning for Gypsy and Traveller sites must be taken into consideration in preparing our emerging Local Plan and in taking planning decisions within that context. We are encouraged by central government to formulate an evidence base for Gypsy and Traveller needs and to provide local targets relating to pitches and we will do this by autumn 2020. Without an evidenced five-year supply of deliverable pitches, we may make it difficult to refuse planning permissions for temporary pitches at appeal. As a consequence, further work is needed to ensure local needs are properly assessed and considered.
- 1.9.34 A 2017 central government consultation on the Gypsy and Traveller community included addressing unlawful encampments, but also suggested supporting traveller pitch provision through planning policy and the Affordable Homes Programme. A benefit of this will be improving life chances for these communities, seeking to address barriers and continuing to improve outcomes, in terms of education and healthcare, and of course to ensure further community cohesion across local communities.
- 1.9.35 In 2016 the council committed to resettle no less than five and no more than 15 Syrian refugee families under the government's Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). Working with a range of private landlords and charitable organisations, the borough has welcomed six families to date, with two more expected by early 2020 and the council remains committed to resettling up to 15 families.
- 1.9.36 The council also plans to carry out a houseboat dwellers accommodation needs assessment to inform our policies in this area, whilst noting the legitimate concerns about unauthorised moorings along stretches of the River Thames and the impact on the local environment and residents, by autumn 2020.

Reviewing the housing needs of specific groups and use the results to shape future policy

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Priority 2: We will work with landlords to ensure safe, healthy and energy efficient homes

Introduction

2.1 Supporting safe and healthy homes

- 2.2 Although the council owns very little of the housing stock in the borough our strategic role extends to promoting high standards in the safety, energy efficiency, condition, and management of the entire housing stock, across all tenures, whilst recognising that key responsibilities lie, first and foremost, with property owners.
- 2.3 The council has a range of tools at its disposal, from providing general advice and information, through to offering practical assistance, which may also include financial help for some vulnerable households in need.
- 2.4 In some cases, the council can carry out enforcement activity to remedy disrepair and other breaches of the law by property owners and agents.
- 2.5 The council is also concerned with supporting the most effective use of the housing stock, for example, by tackling overcrowding and supporting efforts to bring long-term empty homes back into use.
- 2.6 The link between housing conditions and the health and well-being of residents is well-established, as is the local housing authority's role in this. However, in recent years, and over the lifetime of this strategy, there are four topics that, for different reasons, will have increasing prominence.
- 2.7 The first of these is, following on from the Grenfell Tower tragedy of June 2017, ensuring the safety of residents in high-rise buildings.
- 2.8 The second is the energy efficiency of housing stock, in relation to reducing CO2 emissions from the housing stock, which account for around 28% of total carbon emissions nationally and tackling fuel poverty.
- 2.9 The third is raising the standards of accommodation and management in the private-rented sector, with a range of new tools being provided by government to local authorities in recent years to ensure that standards are met, for example through the expansion of licensing for Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO's), and that rogue landlords and agents are dealt with effectively.
- 2.10 The fourth is tackling empty properties and supporting efforts to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

Our four key objectives in improving housing conditions:

2.11 Ensuring the safety of residents in high-rise buildings

- 2.11.1 The Grenfell Tower tragedy of 14 June 2017 claimed 72 lives and has had a profound effect on how the nation thinks and acts on high-rise residential buildings and their safety. Government's focus in the aftermath of Grenfell has been to identify high-rise residential buildings with Aluminum Composite Material (ACM) cladding and, where this has failed combustibility tests, the expectation is that the building owners will act to safely remove the cladding and replace it with a more suitable and safer alternative.
- 2.11.2 The tragedy also raised wider concerns about the safety of high-rise buildings, including concerns about other external wall systems and the advice given to residents about what to do in the event of a fire, including, for example whether to 'stay put' or quickly evacuate.
- 2.11.3 Elmbridge has thirteen high-rise residential buildings (at either six or more storeys or at least 18 metres high) and one of these has ACM cladding. The council has been working closely with central government and the owners and managers of the building with ACM cladding to remedy the issue and ensure the right safety measures are put in place in the time before the cladding can be replaced. The building's owners now intend to apply for funds, through the government's Private Sector Housing ACM Cladding remediation fund, to help meet the costs of making the building safe.
- 2.11.4 The council will now be collecting information on the external wall systems and insulation in place on the other high-rise buildings in Elmbridge to help the government build a national picture of the issue and to inform what, if any, action is needed to ensure that these properties are safe for local people to live in.

Reducing CO2 emissions from the housing stock and tackling fuel poverty

- 2.11.5 The council declared a Climate Emergency on 17 July 2019 recognising the urgency of the issue and calling for bold action locally to make the council's own operations carbon neutral by 2030.
- 2.11.6 The council will play a leadership role in this locally, especially where communicating information to landlords, along with any necessary enforcement action provided by the Housing Service, if landlords fail to do

the right thing, as carbon reductions will have to be made, both nationally and locally.

- 2.11.7 The Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations 2018 set a minimum energy efficiency level for most domestic private rented properties, with a requirement for an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and fines for non-compliance.
- 2.11.8 ECO3 is a government scheme to help low income and vulnerable households experiencing difficulties in keeping warm due to 'fuel poverty' (low income and high fuel costs).
- 2.11.9 The council does not have the finances to fund a large-scale programme of works, but will act with Action Surrey, private and social landlords and health and social care agencies to exploit and promote more opportunities for better use of energy.
- 2.11.10 The council will also continue in partnership with Action Surrey and other agencies to identify qualifying households and properties to access energy efficiency funding and promote the benefits to residents (and to the environment) of installing energy saving measures and of changing behaviour to reduce energy use, carbon emissions and bills
- 2.11.11 We will align our approach with central government's fuel poverty strategy and the Surrey Health & Wellbeing Strategy, as well as new regulations coming into force.

Raising the standards of accommodation and management in the private rented sector (PRS)

- 2.11.12 After owner-occupation the private rented sector (PRS) is the second largest tenure in Elmbridge, with the 2011 Census indicating that at that time, over 8,650 (16%) households¹ were renting privately, and it is possible that the number has increased since.
- 2.11.13 The PRS in Elmbridge is extremely diverse, in terms of the range, type and cost of properties let and the profile of tenants and landlords alike.
- 2.11.14 A relatively small proportion of private tenants receive financial support (either through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit) to help with meet their

¹ ONS UK Census 2011

housing costs, whilst at the other end of the income spectrum, we know that there is a “high-end” market too.

- 2.11.15 Our knowledge of landlords is more limited, but we know that it includes professional landlords (with portfolios of different sizes) as well as so-called accidental landlords (who comes to the sector by chance more than by design), all of whom we need to engage with.
- 2.11.16 Nationally, despite improvement over time, the English Housing Survey consistently finds that privately rented homes are more likely to have indicators of poorer housing quality and safety than other tenures.
- 2.11.17 This helps to explain why the government has introduced a number of reforms in recent years with a focus on tackling rogue landlords and improving the safety of tenants’ homes, including:
- the extension of the national mandatory licensing scheme for Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) from 1 October 2018 - HMOs generally provide accommodation for tenants who are unable to afford to rent a flat or a house (i.e. self-contained accommodation) and can be more difficult to manage than fully self-contained accommodation
 - previously, mandatory licensing of HMOs covered dwellings of three or more storeys, occupied by 2 or more households and with five or more occupiers (with certain exemptions) - the new regime removed the reference to storey levels, meaning that accommodation on one or two floors could also be captured and, within Elmbridge, this has meant the number of licensable HMOs has increased
 - measures to tackle rogue landlords now include the introduction of civil penalty notices (with fines of up to £30,000), rent repayment orders and banning orders and the establishment of a national database for rogue landlords and managing agents from April 2018, which will help us manage the PRS
 - the introduction of minimum space standards in HMOs for rooms to be used for sleeping from October 2018, is also another measure to enhance that we will use in our work.
- 2.11.18 The council adopted a new Housing Enforcement Policy in April 2018 and a revised version was then further adopted in October 2019 and regular review will ensure officers have the tools needed to tackle and improve poor standards.
- 2.11.19 The Housing Service’s approach is initially as the provider of information, advice and guidance, moving from financial assistance and support through to enforcement action, if required.

- 2.11.20 The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 applies across the private rented and social rented sector and requires landlords to ensure that the homes they rent out are safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm; being secure, warm and dry.
- 2.11.21 If rented homes are not 'fit for human habitation' landlords can be taken to court and made to carry out repairs, or to put right health and safety problems, as well as paying compensation to tenants.

Reducing the number of long-term empty homes in the borough

- 2.11.22 Housing demand in Elmbridge far exceeds supply, as evidenced by high house prices and rents, a shortage of affordable homes and the volume of planning applications made to increase housing supply.
- 2.11.23 In these circumstances it might be expected that the number of long-term empty homes (those empty for six months or more) would be minimal, but in recent years the number has fluctuated between 450 and 600 dwellings. The figure as at 7 October 2019 was 531. Our investigations and experience tell us that there are plans for most of the empty homes that we know about to be brought back into use. For example, they may be undergoing renovation, or may be being held empty pending redevelopment, or they may be up for sale or rent, whilst others may be subject to probate.
- 2.11.24 However, where properties are empty and do require being brought back into use we will consider using all of the powers available to the authority, which may include bringing these homes back into useful occupation by arranging for them to be rented to homeless households.
- 2.11.25 The Housing Service uses Council Tax records to conduct a targeted annual survey to ensure empty properties are only kept that way where necessary (for example, if actual building works are being carried out) and, where there is no good reason for a property lying empty, we act.
- 2.11.26 Our knowledge of the borough indicates that there are relatively few properties that are empty and could be considered a nuisance. That said, given the level of housing demand locally and the financial incentives offered by the New Homes Bonus Scheme to minimise the number of such properties, the council will continue its efforts to minimise the number of long-term empty homes through the tools available to it. This will include information, advice and guidance and, where appropriate and proportionate, potentially enforcement action as well.

Priority 3: We will support older, disabled and vulnerable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives

Introduction

- 3.1** As you might expect, in one of the UK's wealthier boroughs, the health of our residents is better than the national average and deprivation is lower, with only 0.1% of older people recorded as living in poverty. However, there are inequalities in life expectancy higher than the national average, 6.1 years lower for men and 3.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Elmbridge compared to the least deprived areas.
- 3.2** Collaboration between the NHS, Surrey County Council (SCC), district and borough councils (including Elmbridge) and wider partners, including the voluntary and community sector and the police, has led to a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This strategy is aimed at improving children's health and wellbeing, developing a preventative approach, promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health, improving older adults' health and wellbeing, and safeguarding the population, and we aim to support this approach.
- 3.3** SCC's 'Accommodation with Care & Support' vision is to work towards an integrated approach, building working partnerships to ensure everyone in Surrey lives well, with access to the right care and support, with housing, health and social care integrated and working together.
- 3.4** People with learning and physical disabilities, mental health problems, ex-offenders, young people at risk, victims of domestic abuse and those with substance misuse problems, all need a range of specialist advice and support, as well as accommodation. This may come from a range of statutory, voluntary and private-sector partners, and this is something that needs strategic co-ordination, aiming to get the right people involved from the outset for the best outcomes for those who are most vulnerable.
- 3.5** The key to living independently may simply be about the design and layout of a person's home, or giving housing-related support, along with the right information and advice about services. Giving vulnerable people the right support can keep them out of residential and hospital care and help maintain their independence, meaning less cost and a better life lived.
- 3.6** Our aim is to help to deliver real improvements to the lives of local people in need, preserving their independence, where that's practical, and helping

them with moving to care or giving the right advice and information to find the best way to improve the quality of their daily lives. As well as using innovative solutions - influencing where we can, as well as sharing expertise and resources - we can ensure that the resources we do have are carefully used to best meet local needs.

3.7 Our key objectives in supporting vulnerable people in Elmbridge to find the best solutions for long-term living and assistance centre on:

- Staying put
- The right place to live
- Giving advice and information

Staying Put

3.7.1 Most of us would prefer to 'stay put' in our homes, wherever possible, even when the daily tasks of everyday living become more challenging. However, many people have complex needs, no matter what their age, and partnership working is necessary to fulfil our aims.

3.7.2 For older people just one unexpected bad experience may leave someone feeling vulnerable, even anxious, about their future and the solutions that may be available to them.

3.7.3 For younger people their vulnerability may mean that their learning disability and / or autism means that they require specialist care, support and accommodation.

3.7.4 For those with a learning disability and / or autism SCC's strategic ambition is to reduce the number of people with a learning disability and / or autism living in residential care by 40-50% (over the next 5 years to 2024) through expanding the development of new independent living provision.

3.7.5 It is estimated that around 90 new people per year with a learning disability and / or autism will require accommodation funded by the county. Where we can we will look to support provision, providing access to specialist mainstream affordable housing accommodation with the appropriate support.

3.7.6 For those with a physical disability we recognise the importance of well-designed and accessible housing to support independent living, given the needs of our ageing population and the needs of those with limited mobility (including wheelchair users). As such, we are committed to supporting the

increase in accessible housing and making better use of the existing stock of accessible housing owned and managed by housing associations. We will continue to work with partners to deliver our commitment on this, with development of a plan for this by autumn 2020.

3.7.7 In recent years, the council has assumed a greater role in relation to working with health and social care partners, such as hospital discharge teams and social workers, in supporting the timely discharge of patients from hospital, through initiatives, such as Homesafe Plus. This is very much in line with the ethos of the government's Better Care Fund and the council will look to build on these links, to support related initiatives that support independent living, whether through services that reduce the need for crisis intervention or supporting residents' re-enablement following a period of ill-health.

3.7.8 The council's Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy offers a range of mandatory and discretionary financial support through grants and loans, to support independent living, including:

- **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)** - where a household member is disabled we may be able to support adaptations through a DFG, if the home someone is living in needs to be adapted in order to help someone stay where they are, and this usually covers the cost of adaptations, such as fitting a level-access shower or a stair-lift
- **Subsidised Home-Owner Loans** - for owner-occupiers whose properties need essential repairs, improvement or adaption, but who do not have the funds to carry out the work themselves, we may be able to offer a subsidised loan of between £1,000 to £25,000, offered through our partner for this purpose, the Parity Trust.

3.7.9 Through our local home improvement agency and Handyperson Service Care and Repair Elmbridge (CARE) we provide a dedicated service for older, disabled and vulnerable residents helping people to stay safe, warm and independent in your own home.

3.7.10 CARE's services include: help in identifying any repairs or adaptations needed; advice on applying for financial assistance; provision of adaptations, including level-access showers, stair lifts, extensions, ramps and railings.

The right place to live

3.7.11 At the county level a need for additional Extra-Care housing, that is available at an affordable rent, has been identified. However, there is

limited provision of this type of accommodation in Elmbridge, so we will work to support an increase in the supply of Extra-Care housing.

- 3.7.12 The council has been working with charities and providers to plan for more fit-for-purpose Extra-Care housing and a fresh supply of this type of specialist housing is now emerging through the planning system in Elmbridge.
- 3.7.13 The county's strategic ambition is to reduce the number of people with a learning disability and / or autism in residential care by expanding the development of new independent living provision.
- 3.7.14 Where there is evidence of need for supported housing we will look to support its provision, subject to feasibility, working with health and social care partners and housing and support providers to secure this provision.
- 3.7.15 Specialist accommodation, that facilitates independent living as much as is possible, reduces costs and increases independence by providing accommodation, that is both popular and suitable for different needs, will be a key element of future affordable housing provision.
- 3.7.16 There is a broadly sufficient supply of ordinary sheltered housing for rent in Elmbridge and some evidence of over-supply. So, we will continue to work with local Registered Providers (housing associations) to encourage them to review their assets to make sure they can both meet current and future need. Where this may involve re-designation of schemes, decommissioning and redevelopment, or refurbishment to meet the expectations of future residents, we will support this positive change.
- 3.7.17 Where existing provision is obsolete and / or, not fit-for-purpose, we will seek to support modernisation or renewal, particularly for accommodation for rent for lower income groups, supporting an overall increase in specialist accommodation for a range of people who may be vulnerable.

3.8 Giving advice and information

- 3.8.1 A key role for us is to ensure that vulnerable residents and their families and carers know what their housing options are, so that they can make informed decision, for example about whether to stay put or move. The council, working with our partners, will review our effectiveness in this area and, where necessary, we will take steps to ensure that residents can access the information and advice they need when they need it.
- 3.8.2 We also have a role in providing access to move-on accommodation for those people who no longer need supported housing and are ready for independent and affordable accommodation, which we facilitate through

SEARCH Moves, our choice-based lettings scheme, with specialist advice available from our housing team.

Priority 4 - We will act to tackle rough sleeping and prevent homelessness

Introduction

- 4.1 This part of the council's overall strategy focusses on how the council, working alongside partners, will work to prevent homelessness amongst single people and families and work to manage its effect on those who do become homeless.

Background

- 4.1.1 Elmbridge is a wealthy borough, rich in community resources, with a number of housing associations, local faith groups, charities and other agencies wanting to assist the council in partnership to prevent homelessness and to work with those who do become homeless to minimise its effect. Partnership working already happens, but is something we wish to further develop, as we appreciate the council is unable to solve all the issues alone.
- 4.1.2 There is a scarcity of affordable accommodation for many within Elmbridge, which means that some individuals and families inevitably find it difficult to secure an affordable home.
- 4.1.3 There are many different reasons why an individual or a household becomes homeless and we recognise that different approaches and advice may be needed to prevent homelessness and to secure suitable accommodation for those affected, in particular for those with complex needs.
- 4.1.4 Whilst our strategy includes a number of actions around rough sleepers and those with complex needs we continue to have approaches from families and single applicants needing our assistance and we foresee that this is likely to increase, due to local market conditions, and other factors, as set out in other chapters of the overall housing strategy.
- 4.1.5 Wherever possible we seek to maintain households in their current accommodation, where this is safe and reasonable to do so, or to assist them in securing accommodation to avoid homelessness and any subsequent admission into temporary accommodation when we can.
- 4.1.6 We recognise that the council is not always best placed to meet all local need, not least because we do not have the full range of specialist services

to work with specific client groups. For example, those with significant substance abuse issues.

- 4.1.7 The annual rough sleeper estimate has shown an increase in numbers reported as sleeping rough in the borough and the latest available estimate (September 2019) indicates 10 people sleeping rough on a particular night. There is a commitment to continue to ensure resources are targeted effectively, to provide advice and to help to secure accommodation for this client group through joined-up local partnership working.
- 4.1.8 We will continue monitoring the numbers of rough sleepers and work with local partners to address this targeting of our work to include those who are particularly hard to engage with services, so as to achieve a reduction in rough sleeping. This is alongside our commitment to work to prevent homelessness for all other households and to minimise its effects where homelessness does occur.

The council's duty

- 4.1.9 The council has specific legal duties to assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, with new duties introduced by the provision of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, that came into force on 3 April 2018.
- 4.1.10 The Act provides for the council to assess the circumstances that have caused a person to be homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, to assess their housing needs and what accommodation would be suitable for them, as well as the support that would be necessary for them to have and sustain suitable accommodation.
- 4.1.11 The council is required to develop Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) setting out the reasonable steps it will take, as well as the applicant, to prevent or relieve their homelessness. Where an applicant is homeless and has a priority need there will be a duty to secure accommodation in most cases, but otherwise the council is to take reasonable steps to help an applicant secure suitable accommodation.
- 4.1.12 We have restructured the service's housing options staff into three teams to enable us to better deliver homelessness services, to make the best use of temporary and private sector accommodation, as well as for the effective assessment and allocation of social housing.
- 4.1.13 Our main aim remains to prevent homelessness by early intervention, including by using our Homelessness Prevention Fund, that provides for one-off payments to be made to avoid homelessness, in securing private

rented accommodation through our Rental Support scheme, or by referral to Rentstart who manage local hostel provision.

Developing the strategy - communication and the Homelessness Network Group

- 4.1.14 The local Homelessness Network Group (HNG) is comprised of local charities, agencies, Registered Providers, faith groups, Surrey Police, and other local stakeholders. HNG meets regularly and is one of the key connecting points for us with our local partners, not just to exchange useful local information, but also to plan future partnership working to tackle all aspects of homelessness.
- 4.1.15 From the inception of developing this strategy we have worked with a small group of core partners to obtain intelligence from them and to inform the overall approach and content of the strategy. We have also involved the wider HNG to assist in identifying gaps to inform the strategy. In addition, we have circulated drafts of this part of the housing strategy for comment and held two well attended HNG meetings, to obtain views and comments whilst developing the action plan elements of the strategy.
- 4.1.16 The HNG has been a vehicle to discuss current provision, identify gaps and consider how these can be bridged in a more direct and responsive way. This has led to local faith groups opening up overnight shelters at churches in Elmbridge for the first time and a pilot of a day-time hub for those actually street homeless or those vulnerably housed with little security of occupation. This facility has provided essential services to a vulnerable group and a means of connecting them to organisations that could help them off the street and also help them to rebuild their lives.
- 4.1.17 A pilot hub was operated by Elmbridge Rentstart in early 2019 with financial support from Walton Charity, the council and central government. Further funding was secured from government, through its Rough Sleeper Initiative, to continue the service until at least April 2020, and very probably beyond that time. This is the first time this type of provision has been established in Elmbridge and within the strategic action plan we set out our aim for this service to be extended and built upon within the lifetime of the strategy, subject to available funding.
- 4.1.18 The HNG has also raised exploring the use of social media to connect the work of different local groups, to enable access to information and to communicate special initiatives. This would be particularly effective for triggering the council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), so that all agencies know immediately it is called into action and for further efforts to be made to locate rough sleepers. Thereafter, we would seek to engage with those clients to avoid a return to street homelessness.

Strategic vision and objectives

- 4.1.19 Based upon our review and work with the HNG we have set out our five key strategic objectives to prevent and manage homelessness in Elmbridge. This takes into account the council's legislative duties and local evidence available to us about the nature and scale of homelessness in the borough.
- 4.1.20 These priorities are set out below and the detail of how they will be achieved is set out in the action plan. There are a number of activities that are ongoing, and are very much business as usual, that may not be included in the action plan, as it primarily centres on the most significant issues and on new initiatives.
- 4.1.21 As the strategic lead for partnership working locally on solutions with local partners and the wider community, we have five key strategic theme priorities, set out as follows:

Strategic objectives:

Objective 1: Preventing homelessness through the provision of effective support and advice to meet local need

Objective 2: Maximising supply and choice for temporary or longer-term accommodation for homeless people

Objective 3: Identifying and responding to rough sleeping through provision of services and accommodation

Objective 4: Managing the effects of homelessness where it cannot be prevented

Objective 5: Tackling homelessness through partnership working.

Temporary accommodation

- 4.1.22 The council is committed to reducing our use of bed and breakfast accommodation and other nightly paid temporary accommodation placements out-of-borough. By law, the council should only place those with dependent children, or those who are pregnant or aged 16 /17, in bed & breakfast accommodation as a last resort, and then only for a maximum of 6 weeks.
- 4.1.23 Our use of these types of accommodation has traditionally been low but we have seen some recent increases in use. There were 53 households in temporary accommodation arranged by the council under our homelessness duties (at the end of September 2019) and, of these, 32 households were in accommodation within the borough in self-contained accommodation and 21 were in 'out-of-borough' placements. Of the twenty-one households placed 'out-of-borough', ten were in bed and breakfast accommodation with shared facilities and the other eleven were in privately-run, nightly-paid self-contained accommodation.
- 4.1.24 We are working hard to try and reduce these numbers and we will to continue to do so throughout the lifetime of the strategy, reviewing the reasons for any increase and taking appropriate action with our goal to completely eliminate its use.
- 4.1.25 We view having relatively low numbers overall in temporary accommodation (in comparison with many other local authorities) as an achievement, especially given the very buoyant and expensive local private rented sector market and, in part, this demonstrates that our prevention of homelessness activities has been successful.
- 4.1.26 We will also continue to focus on minimising, and ultimately avoiding, the need to place homeless households outside the borough boundary, as this often makes worse the social and financial issues caused by the interruptions to everyday life that homelessness and these placements may inevitably entail.
- 4.1.27 Since the last strategy, the council has put significant efforts into increasing temporary accommodation for homeless households as well as shared accommodation for single households and this includes:
- 2 additional rooms at Transform's local hostel plus an additional annexe to be used for the provision of services to the homeless

- 10 bedspaces in shared accommodation for those with medium to high support needs from summer 2018, with 2 full-time workers providing visiting support
- 7 additional units of self-contained temporary accommodation, including purchase and conversion of an office building into a high-quality residential building comprising five flats in Thames Ditton, for direct referrals from the council's Homelessness Prevention and Advice Team
- 5 two-bedroom flats purchased by a Registered Provider for use as temporary accommodation by the council.

4.1.28 The action plan at **Appendix 1** sets out our plans for further delivery of increased numbers of temporary to medium-term accommodation for the future and is a key priority within the strategy, alongside increasing the supply of affordable accommodation.

4.1.29 We will keep our provision and location of temporary accommodation under review and will respond as necessary to meet any increased local demand and the effectiveness of our action plan.

4.1.30 Following government consultation on the planning and provision of safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse and subject to the details being set down in planned forthcoming legislation (through the current Domestic Abuse Bill), the council will actively engage with Surrey County Council and other partners around assessing the need for safe accommodation and supporting the commissioning and delivery of such in the county, with the aim of doing more to support victims of domestic abuse.

Funding to address Homelessness from central government and other funding sources

4.1.31 The council currently receives grants from central government to assist in managing homelessness locally by way of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) that was £365,255 for 2019/20.

4.1.32 At the time of writing (October 2019), the government has not confirmed how much the council might expect to receive through this grant for 2020/21 and how long this grant might continue. This does make it difficult to make long-term commitments, but the authority has built up a reserve of approximately £500,000 to help deliver the strategic priorities set out above,

either directly through its own efforts or through commissioning partner agencies.

- 4.1.33 There are some local charities within Elmbridge who have been able to provide grants for homelessness services and other initiatives, often match-funded by the council, as well as fundraising to supplement existing income streams. We are mindful that we will need to continually review the financial situation, so as to ensure, wherever possible, that services can be maintained, and that exit strategies are put in place.
- 4.1.34 Earlier in 2019, the council successfully bid for £100,000 from central government's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) to support the provision of services aimed at tackling and preventing rough sleeping in 2019/20. This has allowed the daytime hub (described above in 4.3.4) to continue to April 2020 and to expand Elmbridge Rentstart's rough sleeper outreach service so as to help cater with the greater numbers that are being seen.
- 4.1.35 The RSI funding also puts an element aside to help resettle rough sleepers into private-rented accommodation, sourced by Elmbridge Rentstart, within its bid for funding for the Rough Sleeper Initiative. There are challenges, both in terms of ensuring that these services deliver the outcomes expected and in how they might be sustained on a longer-term basis, given that funding is generally available on one-year cycles.
- 4.1.36 Our new and planned initiatives will expand and improve upon the local solutions for those who are faced with homelessness.

Strategic theme summary:

Objective1: Preventing homelessness through the provision of effective support and advice to meet local need

- 4.1.37 We want to review and improve, as necessary, access to local advice services and to train staff to attend at court and challenge possession action or to seek an extension to enable planned moves, prior to crisis point being reached.
- 4.1.38 Elmbridge has only recently had Universal Credit introduced and we are very aware of the local impact this has already had. So, we need to work together with our Housing Benefit Team to look at Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) alongside referrals to ETHOS, whom we fund for 1 day a week to support homeless or vulnerably housed individuals into training or, where possible, into work.

- 4.1.39 We want to ensure housing providers notify us of tenants at risk of eviction, so that we can seek to prevent homelessness by early intervention as well as reviewing if we can improve our response to those threatened with homelessness in the private rented sector.
- 4.1.40 We will also keep under review our relationship with the Family Support Team, that works with the most vulnerable or challenging households with specific issues, as well as those classes of persons subject to 'pathway plans'.
- 4.1.41 Alongside the above we will continue to give grant funding to local organisations such as Rentstart and the local Citizens Advice Bureau and the Sanctuary Scheme to provide security measures for those who have been subject to domestic abuse but also choose to remain in their homes with appropriate security in place.

Objective 2: Maximising supply and choice for temporary or longer-term accommodation for homeless people

- 4.1.42 We will seek to increase the supply of accommodation, through specialist provision or newly acquired or developed homes, to be made available to those in housing need, including homeless households and individuals.
- 4.1.43 We continue to work in partnership with agencies who work with vulnerable groups. For example, the Elmbridge Mental Health Resettlement Panel facilitates discussion in order to provide the most appropriate housing solution, or advice on tenancies at risk, or advice on the prevention of homelessness.
- 4.1.44 We will also provide more homes through the council developing and / or owning high-quality temporary accommodation within the borough, or through the council's new housing company, EBC Homes Limited, to provide longer-term affordable housing, as well as seeking to improve the supply of, and access to, affordable accommodation at or around local housing allowance (LHA) levels, which is lower than the market rate.
- 4.1.45 There are also plans to provide 14 additional homes for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households by April 2021, across three sites, and the need for further provision will be kept under review.
- 4.1.46 The council's Rental Support Scheme (RSS), operating in the local private rented market, has been reviewed and improved to increase assistance to landlords, and guaranteed rent and DHP enables the council to help tenants pay their rent under the reformed benefits' system, where rents exceed Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels.

- 4.1.47 We will seek to sustain those existing tenancies set up with the help of the RSS and we will look to work with landlords, letting agents and managing agents, to expand the number of low-income households supported through the scheme, given the benefit it provides in diverting potentially homeless households away from temporary accommodation.

Objective 3: Identifying and responding to rough sleeping through provision of services and accommodation

- 4.1.48 As referred to above, central government and council funding (plus Spelthorne BC and Runnymede BC funding) has enabled the expansion of a Transform hostel, increasing the number of rooms for occupation from 10 to 12. The funding has also provided a rear extension, to be used as a day-time hub, for surgeries, training and activities.
- 4.1.49 We will also work with agencies to address short term pet care, especially kennelling for dogs, for those who become homeless who might otherwise refuse assistance, if their pets cannot be homed.
- 4.1.50 Local faith groups in Molesey piloted a winter night shelter in early 2019 (operating four nights a week) and following this successful trial, Molesey Churches Night Shelter will be operating seven nights a week over winter 2019/20. This is a community-led response, with support provided by a number of voluntary and sector agencies, and the council is committed to work with initiatives like this, where they deliver real and practical solutions to tackle rooflessness. We will continually review the local response to rough sleeping and look to support the development or transformation of services where necessary.
- 4.1.51 Like other parts of the country we are seeing the emergence of a small number of “entrenched” rough sleepers with a range of needs, who for a variety of reasons, are not responding to the services available.
- 4.1.52 We will look to work with partners across housing, health, social care and other sectors to develop appropriate responses that deliver practical solutions.

Objective 4: Managing the effects of homelessness where it cannot be prevented

- 4.1.53 We will work to promote social and health services to the young homeless, where they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and will seek

to engage with Further Education Colleges and senior schools to advise generally on issues related to homelessness.

- 4.1.54 Those who fall within the LGBT1Q+ across the country are reported as being disproportionately represented amongst those who are homeless, being 5 times more likely to be homeless. We will need to take this into account in the delivery of our services and the targeting of support for this client group.
- 4.1.55 An ongoing responsibility is to secure support or supported accommodation, for those requiring it, but resources are limited. The council's Housing Options Unit will identify such needs in our housing assessments and the developments of Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) making appropriate referrals and maximising all such referrals, where appropriate, to improve the prospects of accommodation being secured and maintained.

Objective 5: Tackling homelessness through partnership working

- 4.1.56 The work with partners to produce the homelessness element of the overall strategy demonstrates our commitment to partnership working, listening to concerns and considering the best response. This includes recognising who is best placed to provide any service and the appropriate funding for effective and successful delivery.
- 4.1.57 We want to ensure that we work effectively with statutory services to best effect, to minimise homelessness, and particularly with hospitals, social services and the probation service. Applicants from these sources often have more complex needs, that need to be considered in terms of both advice and suitability of accommodation, and we will also review our 'Duty to Refer' outcomes.
- 4.1.58 Whilst there is good communication, the idea of a joint platform for sharing information on services and initiatives, including the potential for joint funding, in real time, is something that we will investigate. This could ensure more effective and timely use of the resources available for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and be available for a wide range of organisations across the borough, and the HNG has been keen to investigate this.
- 4.1.59 The council will ensure that updates on the action plan are provided to all those on our extensive HNG contact list and will be a standing item on the agenda for our future meetings. This will serve to allow for effective scrutiny, monitoring and review of the action plan with council officers, so

that we can ensure the action plan, and the thinking behind the strategic aims, remain relevant through the life of the overall strategy.

Priority 5: Nobody left behind – arranging support for those who need it most

- 5.1** By most measures Elmbridge is a relatively wealthy borough, the eighth least deprived of England's 317 local authority districts². Earnings are above regional and national averages and rates of unemployment and economic inactivity are below national and regional averages.
- 5.2** However, 2,000 children (8%) are growing up in low income households and there are clusters of socio-economic deprivation in particular areas of Elmbridge, roughly matching the areas of social housing in the borough.
- 5.3** In 2015 Walton Charities commissioned "Inequality in Elmbridge", written by the New Economics Foundation, reporting that disadvantage and deprivation is not tenure or area specific, but experienced by individual households across the borough and tends to be hidden. These themes are still clearly relevant now, and likely to remain so over this strategy's lifetime.
- 5.4** The high cost of housing in Elmbridge means that some households, even those on a good 'middle income', may move away to find a home they can afford, even if this means leaving the community they grew up in, weakening family ties and support, or having to put up with a long, exhausting and expensive commute.
- 5.5** The nature of work itself is now changing, with different work patterns and more self-employment (at low incomes), with growth in zero-hours and fixed-term contracts and part-time opportunities, all marking a significant shift away from permanent, full-time work. These factors also put pressures on household finances, including the ability to meet housing costs.

Welfare reform

- 5.5.1** In 2010 the Government started welfare reform with four aims, to: reduce benefit dependency; make welfare more affordable for the taxpayer; make work pay; and provide a safety net for the most vulnerable. Help with housing costs for those on low incomes has been affected, both in the private and social sectors.
- 5.5.2** Changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) – mostly frozen from 2016 - means more private tenants, relying on Housing Benefit or Universal

² Based on the Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2015)

Credit for help, have a shortfall between the rent owed and the support available. Whilst allowances have been frozen, market rents have increased, which creates shortfalls and makes it more difficult for low-income households to access private-rented accommodation, with landlords cautious of letting to tenants thought to be at higher risk of rent arrears.

- 5.5.3 ETHOS (Employment and Training, Housing Options Support), a service part-funded by the council supporting those on low incomes with insecure housing accommodation, is delivered by the Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership. ETHOS works with clients who are homeless, in private rented accommodation and facing eviction, struggling with mortgage repayments, or living in hostels, where they are at a disadvantage in finding work, to support people into employment. ETHOS has helped over 200 households, and will continue its partnership working, including with PA housing as the major social landlord in Elmbridge, for the foreseeable future with the council's support.
- 5.5.4 As at May 2019, 207 households in Elmbridge were affected by the under-occupation charge (also referred to as the loss of the spare room subsidy or the 'bedroom tax'), because Housing Benefit for social housing tenants is now based on the number of bedrooms required to be adequately housed, rather than the size of the property being rented. It was introduced in 2013 to make better use of social housing, as well as saving money paid out in benefits. The council has helped those affected with advice to: increase their hours worked; move to smaller property with fewer bedrooms; find work, and / or apply for help with a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP).
- 5.5.5 The changes brought about by under-occupation charge were similar to the aims of the council's existing Perfect Fit scheme, which also aimed to help people downsize to more affordable and manageable homes, at less cost to themselves. Working with PA Housing, we launched the Perfect Fit scheme in 2012 to encourage social housing tenants in homes larger than they need to downsize, thereby freeing up the much-needed larger homes for families in greater housing need. With support and incentives of up to £4,000 for those households choosing to move, resulting in around 150 households downsizing, through a scheme that we will carry forward in partnership with PA Housing for the foreseeable future.
- 5.5.6 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced the 'benefit cap' – a limit on the total amount of benefits that most working-age households can receive; lowered in November 2016 to £13,400 per annum for single people and £20,000 per annum for families (for cases outside of London). This reduced income limits the ability of households to pay their rent, which increases the risk of tenancies being ended due to rent arrears and reduces the likelihood of such households being able to find rented accommodation, all of which increases the risk of homelessness.

- 5.5.7 The same benefit caps apply across the country (with the exception of London) and no allowance is made for variations in rent levels. As such, the cap does tend to affect more households in areas of high housing costs, such as Elmbridge. As at May 2019, 91 households in Elmbridge had been affected by the benefit cap, so the council has employed ‘coaches’ to assist in: helping claimants into work (or increasing their working hours) or supporting claims for disability-related benefits (whereby claimants are exempted from the cap). Between October 2016 and August 2019 143 households were helped to come off the cap.

Universal Credit

- 5.5.8 Universal Credit (UC) is at the centre of the Government’s welfare reform programme and, by the time that this strategy draws to a close in 2024, the Government may have completed its roll-out across the country. UC is replacing six income-related “legacy” benefits and tax credits (including Housing Benefit) for working-age households with one single payment.
- 5.5.9 UC is introducing significant changes to the way in which claims are assessed and administered and payments made, with a shift from weekly to monthly payments, a much greater emphasis on claims being made and managed on-line, and an assumption that claimants (in most cases) will receive direct payments and take responsibility for managing their money themselves (including passing on the housing-related element of their claim to their landlord).
- 5.5.10 The full UC digital service rollout in Elmbridge was relatively late, compared to the rest of the country, with Weybridge Jobcentre Plus introducing the full digital service from 28 November 2018. The numbers of UC claimants under the full digital service will gradually increase over time as new claimants, or benefit claimants with changed circumstances, are dealt with under UC, rather than the legacy benefits.
- 5.5.11 A greater challenge will be the transfer of the much larger group of working-age benefit claimants from the old legacy benefits to UC, a process known as “managed migration”.
- 5.5.12 Many households on benefits for a long time may not be not ready for the changes, in terms of making applications online, managing their accounts online, receiving monthly payments and needing to budget differently. So, the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), is running a year-long pilot in Yorkshire, until summer 2020, to trial different ways of successfully achieving managed migration. The aims are to begin managed migration by the end of 2020 and to complete it by the end of 2023.
- 5.5.13 At this stage the timetable for when managed migration will begin in Elmbridge is not known, so we cannot yet plan for this, but it is something

that we and our partner agencies and claimants will need to be ready to plan for and respond to, when the time comes.

Supporting the UC rollout and other welfare reforms, whilst seeking to minimise the adverse impact on residents, 2019 snapshot:

- Nine months after the launch of the full UC service in Elmbridge, information gathered from front-line agencies is helping to provide some early impressions as to the local impact
- Weybridge JobCentre Plus is dealing with approximately 930 UC claims, with around 30-35 new UC claims being made per week
- PA Housing has indicated that around 260 of their tenants in Elmbridge are in receipt of UC, and 57% of these have had rent arrears develop or rise since, although none of these tenants have been evicted
- Feedback from one of the local Citizens Advice teams is that there have been minimal adverse impacts on residents thus far (based on those that they have dealt with) - at the same time, it is recognised that a small number of claimants with more complex needs are struggling with managing their UC claims and this will need to be kept under review.

5.5.14 The greater challenge will be the transfer of existing working-age benefit claimants from the old legacy system to UC, “managed migration”, of many households, who will have been on benefits for a long time, will be a challenge, with new online account management for claimants and new monthly payments and completion planned for the end of 2023.

5.5.15 Homeless households now in certain types of temporary accommodation and residents in particular forms of supported housing will continue to have their help with housing costs dealt with through Housing Benefit. However, over the lifetime of this strategy, tenants of retirement age with limited means will continue to have their applications for help with housing costs dealt with through Housing Benefit.

5.5.16 Within Elmbridge, the council has worked closely with the DWP, Citizens Advice, Surrey County Council, PA Housing and a number of other housing associations to help local residents and frontline organisations get ready for the rollout of UC. Training has been provided for front-line staff to create a team of “Universal Credit champions” and a “Get Set Guide” was produced to give claimants and frontline staff details of services that could provide support, giving access to personal budgeting support and getting residents skilled and confident in the move to a digital service.

5.5.17 For the council, ultimately our objectives are to help ensure that UC is successfully introduced locally, whilst making sure that any adverse

impacts on our residents are minimised. This ties in not only to the council's priorities, about promoting community wellbeing, but also relates to concerns that if risks are realised, then the council is likely to face an increase in homelessness.

- 5.5.18 When UC is fully implemented, it is expected that the council will have little, if any, role in administering help with housing costs for tenants, as the role in dealing with Housing Benefit claims will have become much reduced in the years ahead.

The council's key objectives in relation to nobody left behind are as follows:

- 5.5.19 The successful local implementation of Universal Credit (UC) will depend on the following:
- **Effective communication** – to raise awareness of the reforms for those affected, the likely impacts and sources of support
 - **Making claimants aware of the support available in making a claim for UC** – Citizens Advice is delivering “Help to Claim” across the country and most social housing providers have invested in services to help their tenants with
 - **Provision of personal support** – for example, to manage finances, avoid arrears, make and manage claims on-line and make choices for the future
 - **Joint working and sign-posting** – for example, working with Jobcentre Plus to support people to prepare for and find work and co-locating services so that claimants can easily access help
 - **Offering financial assistance** – for example, making use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
 - **Clarity on the roles and responsibilities of different agencies** – for example, the council remains responsible for administering Council Tax Support (CTS) and UC claimants will need to make a separate claim for CTS
 - **Managing the migration of existing claims to Universal Credit.**

5.5.20 In the short term, the focus will be on maintaining the partnerships that have been created and regularly reviewing the impact of UC on residents and organisations. If and when problems emerge, either with individual cases or more generally, then it is anticipated that solutions will be proposed and implemented. Although the council's resources, influence and responsibilities are limited, the medium-term challenge is for a successful 'managed migration' and local plans will be developed once more details are known.

5.5.21 In the meantime, the council will continue to seek to make most effective use of its annual Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allocations to help minimise the adverse impacts of the aforementioned reforms, in order to prevent homelessness and to provide claimants with the time to resolve their difficulties.

Delivering the council's remaining responsibilities around Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (CTS) to a high standard:

5.5.22 In early 2019, the council restructured its Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support service to deliver improvements in both the timeliness and accuracy of assessments, as part of its "Brilliant Customer Service Every Time" approach. This is already seeing improvements in performance and further enhancements are planned, for example, through better use of technology. Whilst Housing Benefit caseloads will gradually reduce, as a result of the transition to UC, it is important that claims are dealt with quickly and accurately to help maintain landlord confidence and minimise hardship for residents.

5.5.23 The council plans to make minor changes to the design of its Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme to take effect from April 2020 to make a 'better fit' with UC. This should make it simpler and quicker to make a claim for CTS and for the claims to be assessed.

Monitoring and review of the implementation of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2024 through the action plan

There are a number of mechanisms to manage and monitor the implementation of the strategy, some more formal than others, including:

- The Council Plan – the council’s overall strategic planning document, which sets out its key priorities and targets for each year, the delivery of which will help achieve the council’s vision
- The plan’s quarterly monitoring across each service area (such as the Housing Service) not only has targets within the Council Plan, but also has a more detailed Service Delivery Plan, setting out a more detailed work-plan and targets for each year - the primary means of managing and monitoring the delivery of actions within the strategy, where the council has assumed lead responsibility
- The authority’s Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) – produced annually by the council’s Planning Service and reporting on delivery against targets within the council’s Core Strategy (such as housing delivery) and the progress being made in implementing the council’s Local Development Scheme
- The council’s Affordable and Social Housing Member Working Group- (ASHMWG) – which reports directly to Cabinet – monitors and champions the delivery of affordable housing within Elmbridge and assisting in the formulation of policies intended to support its delivery. It also considers proposals for use of the council’s AHEF.
- The Elmbridge Homeless Network Group (HNG) – a multi-agency group that brings together agencies with an interest dealing with in homelessness locally and which has helped shape the content of Priority 4 (Homelessness) with a role in the priority’s delivery, as well as monitoring and review.

In order to bring this all together and allow for oversight of the delivery of the whole strategy through the Action Plan (see Appendix 1 - Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2024 Action Plan & monitoring), the council will publish an annual progress report, no later than 30 June on each year of the strategy’s life, with a formal review of the whole strategy to take place at the mid-point of the four-year strategy in 2022.

Appendix 1 - Action Plan: Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 – 2024

Priority 1: We will work in partnership to deliver more affordable housing in Elmbridge and make the best use of all social housing stock

Ref.	Action	By when	Resources	Lead agency (& partners)
Objective 1 - To ensure that the Council's planning policies optimise the delivery of affordable housing				
1	Update the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) so that development of Local Plan policies is informed by current assessments of housing requirements (in relation to splits between tenures, type, size etc).	September / October 2020	Existing	EBC Planning Services
2	Complete Local Plan-wide viability assessment to inform affordable housing targets.	September / October 2020	Existing	EBC Planning Services
3	Adopt a revised Local Plan.	Autumn 2021	Existing	EBC Planning Services
Objective 2 - To support the delivery of at least 300 affordable homes in Elmbridge between April 2020 and March 2024				
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adopt an updated Developers Contributions SPD covering affordable housing policies, in the light of national policy changes and advances in best practice b. Adopt an up-to-date Developers Contributions SPD to reflect new Local Plan policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Summer 2020 b. 2022 	Existing	EBC Planning Services (& Housing Services)
5	Enable, manage and deliver the provision of an average of 75 new affordable homes per year, with at least 300 affordable homes delivered.	2020 to 2024	Various	EBC Housing & Planning Services, Registered Providers & housebuilders

6	Working with Surrey Community Action and the wider Surrey Community Housing Partnership to promote and support the development of appropriate and affordable community-led housing in Elmbridge.	Ongoing	Community housing fund	EBC Housing & Surrey Community Action
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Objective 3 - Delivering on the Council's commitment towards more affordable homes in Elmbridge

7	Strive to spend, or commit to spend, at least 20% of the annual starting balance of the Affordable Housing Enabling Fund, , each financial year between 2020 and 2024, with at least 5 new initiatives to be funded over the lifetime of the strategy.	2020 to 2024	Enabling Fund	EBC Housing Services
8	Jointly review the operation and effectiveness of the Elmbridge Equity Loan Scheme with Catalyst Housing to inform decisions on its future, including further investment.	September 2020	Enabling Fund	EBC Housing Services & Catalyst Housing
9	Support the Council's wholly-owned housing company, EBC Homes Limited, to deliver on its ambitions of delivering up to 250 homes by 2024, including recognising the needs of local key workers.	Ongoing	Various	EBC

Objective 4 – Making the best use of all social housing stock in Elmbridge

10	To review the operation and effectiveness of the Perfect Fit scheme with PA Housing with the aim of increasing the number of properties freed up for re-letting for families in need.	March 2020	Existing	EBC Housing
11	Engage and consult with all Registered Providers with significant rented stock in Elmbridge with a view to adopting measures designed to make better use of the existing social housing stock.	December 2020	Existing	EBC Housing & Registered Providers

12	To review the contracting arrangements for the delivery of SEARCH Moves choice-based letting partnership, with re-procurement if necessary.	During 2022	Existing	EBC Housing, PA Housing & Spelthorne BC
13	To develop an updated borough-wide nominations agreement with PA Housing, to ensure PA Housing's stock is effectively used and a fair balance struck between the needs of applicants on the council's housing register and PA Housing tenants seeking alternative accommodation with their landlord.	September 2020	Existing	EBC Housing
14	Adopt a revised Tenancy Strategy setting out the Council's expectations about the type and length of tenancies that should be granted by Registered Providers within Elmbridge.	July 2020	Existing	EBC Housing

Objective 5 - Reviewing the housing needs of specific groups and use the results to shape future policy

15	To commission and complete an updated Gypsy & Travellers Accommodation Assessment [GTAA].	September / October 2020	Existing	EBC Planning
16	To use findings of the assessment to inform target-setting for additional pitch requirements by 2022 and where appropriate, to allocate sites by 2024.	Autumn 2021	To be determined	EBC Planning
17	To commission and complete a Houseboat Dwellers Accommodation Assessment and use the results to inform future policy.	September / October 2020	Existing	EBC Planning & EBC Housing

Priority 2: We will work with landlords to ensure safe, healthy and energy efficient homes

Ref	Action	By when	Resources	Lead agency (& partners)
Objective 1 - Ensuring the safety of residents in high-rise buildings				
18	To work with building owners, statutory agencies and other stakeholders to support the assessment of the safety of these buildings and where applicable, to oversee the delivery of appropriate interim safety management measures and remediation plans.	Ongoing	Existing	EBC Housing, building owners, managing agents, Surrey Fire & Rescue, Building Control
Objective 2 – Reducing CO2 emissions from the housing stock and tackling fuel poverty				
19	In our community leadership role, to promote to residents the benefits of installing carbon saving measures in their homes alongside encouraging wider behaviour change to reduce energy consumption.	Ongoing	Existing	EBC Housing, Action Surrey
20	In the light of the local declaration of a “climate emergency” and the legally binding national target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the Council will explore opportunities with partners to support significant reductions in carbon emissions from the borough’s housing stock.	Ongoing	To be determined	EBC Housing, Landlords
21	Where directly involved in the delivery of housing (e.g. delivered by the Council, EBC Homes Ltd or with the support of the Council’s Enabling Fund) and where feasible, to incorporate sustainability considerations and carbon reduction in decision-making re: design, procurement and investment.	Ongoing		EBC Housing, EBC Homes Ltd &

				Registered Providers
22	Subject to available resources, to continue to offer targeted help to tackle fuel poverty through the Council's Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy and evaluate the impact of such assistance annually.	Ongoing	Capital programme	EBC Housing
23	To support compliance by private landlords and managing agents with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, through targeted communications, thereby delivering improvements in the least energy efficient portion of the private-rented stock.	Ongoing	Existing	EBC Housing
24	To publish a completed Home Energy Conservation Act [HECA] progress reports on a two-yearly basis setting out progress made in improving the energy efficiency of the stock.	June 2021 & June 2023	Existing	EBC Housing
25	To engage with housing associations operating in Elmbridge and where they identify any eligible properties that they arrange for relevant energy saving measures to be installed under ECO3, or other programmes.	March 2020	Existing	EBC Housing, Registered Providers & Action Surrey
26	To promote local take-up of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO3) programme, so as to support the installation of insulation and heating measures for residents at risk of fuel poverty within Elmbridge.	Ongoing until March 2022	Existing	EBC Housing, Private Landlords
27	To continue to use the Local Authority ECO-Flex provisions to ensure that ECO3 can help support locally identified residents out of fuel poverty.	Ongoing	Existing	Surrey Energy & Sustainability Partnership
28	To review our continued participation in and funding of the Action Surrey initiative.	Annually	Existing	EBC Housing
29	Through Action Surrey - or other initiatives - lever in external investment to support improvements in the energy efficiency of the local housing stock.	Ongoing		EBC Housing
30	Subject to feasibility, to help develop and implement a "fuel poverty offer" across Surrey to help reduce this problem.	December 2020	Existing	Surrey Health &

				Wellbeing Partnership
Objective 3 - Raising the standards of accommodation and management in the private rented sector (PRS)				
31	To develop and implement an annual communications plan to ensure that landlords and others are aware of their roles and responsibilities and to promote a well-managed and maintained private-rented sector and annually thereafter.	April 2020 & annually thereafter	Existing	EBC Housing
32	To explore how the Council can support the retention of existing HMOs and where appropriate, to increase provision, given the role that HMOs of suitable quality can play in the local housing market.	Ongoing	Existing	EBC Housing & EBC Planning
33	To undertake a review of the Council's Private Sector Housing Enforcement & Financial Assistance policies.	October 2020 & annually thereafter	Existing	EBC Housing
Objective 4 - Reducing the number of long-term empty homes in the borough				
34	To complete a review of long-term empty homes in the borough and adopt an Empty Homes Statement and action plan with a target to achieve year-by-year reductions in the number of long-term empties.	June 2020	Existing	EBC Housing

Priority 3: We will support older, disabled and vulnerable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives

Ref.	Action	By when	Resources	Lead agency (& partners)
Objective 1 - Staying Put				
35	We will work with Registered Providers and Surrey County Council to review the use and provision of wheelchair accessible housing and how current and future needs for accessible housing are met in Elmbridge and develop and implement a plan to take forward agreed actions.	September / October 2020		EBC Housing & EBC Planning, Elmbridge Care Locality Team & Registered Providers
36	To complete installations of 70 major adaptations to support independent living during 2020/21 through the provision of disabled facilities grants (DFGs) and to maintain that as our annual target, with 280 major adaptations completed over the life of the Housing Strategy to 2024.	March 2024	DFG allocations from the Better Care Fund	EBC Housing (Care & Repair Elmbridge)
37	To deliver at least 1,000 rapid repairs and minor adaptations through the Care & Repair Elmbridge (CARE) Handyperson Service during 2020/21 and to maintain that as our annual target, with 4,000 repairs and adaptations completed over the life of the Housing Strategy to 2024.	March 2024		EBC Housing (Care & Repair Elmbridge)
Objective 2 – The Right Place to Live				
38	To support partners to identify and bring forward opportunities to increase affordable Extra-Care housing, with a target of at least 50 new rented affordable extra-care homes by 2024.	March 2024		EBC Housing, Surrey CC, Registered Providers

Priority 4: We will act to tackle rough sleeping and prevent homelessness

Ref.	Action	By when	Resources	Lead agency (& partners)
Objective 1: Preventing homelessness through the provision of effective support and advice to meet local need				
39	The Council's Homelessness Prevention & Advice Team (HPA) to maximise utilisation of the Homeless Prevention Fund with effective targeting of resources.	Ongoing and 6 monthly review	Existing	EBC Housing
40	To launch three projects all aimed at increasing the supply of temporary accommodation within the borough to reduce the need to prevent out of borough placements into temporary accommodation.	All mobilised by December 2020	Various	EBC, Walton Charity, Transform Housing & Support, EBC Homes & PA Housing
41	To actively explore opportunities to increase the provision of in-borough temporary accommodation with the objective of minimising the use of out of borough and nightly paid temporary accommodation.	Ongoing	Various	EBC Housing
42	Improve and maintain Homeless Prevention and Advice team's knowledge of Court Procedures.	February 2020	Existing	EBC
43	To attend Court with families to seek to challenge possession or seek extension / stay.	September 2020	CAB	Citizen Advice (Esher & Elmbridge West)
44	Review provision of access to legal advice services for those threatened with homelessness to include Surrey Law Centre.	August 2020	Existing	CAB EBC
45	Contact main social housing providers to request the Council are advised under the Pre-action Protocol of their tenants who are at risk of homelessness, so that we can make contact to work with them to avoid homelessness where possible.	Contact by March 2020 Review 6 months	Existing	Elmbridge Borough Council as lead with Registered Providers
46	Develop effective working with Family Support Team with communication / information exchange around prevention of homelessness with a 6-monthly review of operational arrangements.	January 2020 July 2020 and ongoing	Existing	EBC & Family Support Team

47	Review on an annual basis housing 'Pathways' for groups identified within Homelessness Reduction Act.	March 2021	Existing	EBC Probation /Prison/ NHS/ Mental Health
48	Investigate demand for hostel / temporary accommodation for women only and delivering if required.	January 2021 2024 delivery	Existing	EBC Walton Charity Rentstart
49	Specialist training to support women who might be homeless.	September 2020	Existing	EBC Walton Charity Rentstart
50	Actively engage with Surrey County Council and other partners to assess the need for safe accommodation and supporting the commissioning and delivery of such in the county, with the aim of doing more partnership work to support victims of domestic abuse.	March 2021		
Objective 2: Maximising supply and choice for temporary or longer-term accommodation for homeless people				
51	Investigate with Joseph Palmer Centre and Abraham Cowley Unit the type of supported accommodation / floating support that is needed for clients to inform future provision.	December 2020	FHSG? Enabling Fund?	JPC and ACU and Council as lead.
52	Once determined to pro-actively seek to procure appropriate service / accommodation.	December 2023	FHSG? Enabling Fund?	JPC and ACU and Council as lead.
53	Actively promote the Council's Rental Support and guarantee scheme to increase private sector lettings with marketing drives at least twice a year. Review effectiveness of the scheme.	March 2020 - August 2020	Existing	EBC
54	To achieve full spend and effective use of the Council's annual Discretionary Housing Payment allocation from central government).			
55	Contact ARLA (Association of Residential Lettings Agents) to investigate if we can improve our response to service of notice in PRS with the aim of preventing homelessness.	September 2020	Existing	EBC and Rentstart

Objective 3: Identifying and responding to rough sleeping through provision of services and accommodation

56	To work with Spelthorne Borough Council and Runnymede Borough Council to ensure the facilities and agencies who operate from the extension at 35 Hershams Road are used effectively and targeted towards the relief of homelessness.	August 2020 & yearly review	Existing	EBC SBC RBC Transform
57	Ongoing support of current arrangements for emergency bedspaces provided by local churches now operating 7 nights per week.	October 2019 to April 2020		Local Churches Walton Charity EBC
58	Review Reconnection Policy in cases where Local Connection is established elsewhere.	March 2021	None	EBC
59	Establish regular police liaison / rough sleeper co-ordinators / Council to identify rough sleeping hotspots and if there is an Elmbridge connection or change in profile of client group to inform delivery of services.	March 2020 and ongoing	Existing	Rentstart Rough Sleeper outreach Police
60	To carry out profiling of existing core of reported rough sleepers with complex needs who are not currently engaging with services to establish their exact needs and blockages preventing them accessing to services. To commence October 2019 but to keep under regular review every 2 months.	From October 2019 and regularly reviewed within the life time of the Strategy	Existing	EBC Rentstart Mental Health and Substance misuse services
61	Based upon findings of above outcome to investigate commissioning of services to meet complex needs of this client group to obtain engagement and reduce the numbers of rough sleepers.	November 2019 and ongoing	Rough Sleeper Cold weather fund FHSG	EBC - other agencies will depend on the identification of blockages.
62	Investigate viability of funding to provide street homeless with basic telephones to enable them to better access social support and housing.	August 2020	FHSG	Rentstart EBC
63	To secure emergency access provision for single homeless as a night shelter to be open all year round and for Severe Weather Emergency Provision - SWEP provision from 2020/21.	November 2021		Local Churches Walton Charity EBC
64	To investigate alternative provision of e.g. a mobile home for emergency provision if a settled base for hostel / night shelter SWEP is not identified and ongoing.	November 2020	Council Grant	EBC

65	Rough sleepers – to extend the provision of day time services ongoing for those who rough sleep in Elmbridge for their respect and dignity.	December 2020	RSI bid successful extend with Council support – FHSG	Walton Charity Transform Rentstart EBC
66	Encourage and obtain a commitment from local agencies to share data of households particularly the street homelessness so services are targeted and to avoid duplication – potential Egress.	April 2020	Existing ITC input	1 Rentstart 2 EBC
67	Funding for kennelling for pets for street homeless households to enable them to take up admission into temporary accommodation.	Ongoing	Walton Charity funding	Walton Charity
68	To investigate capital investment by EBC for the bricks and mortar element of a scheme to Providers to supplement above to meet local needs, with assurances for ongoing management arrangements.	First stage June 2020 with any provision from 2021.	EBC capital investment Revenue funding would need to be determined.	EBC – other lead partner for management / provision of will be subject to negotiation.

Objective 4: Managing the effects of homelessness where it cannot be prevented

69	Promote social, health and welfare to young people who are at risk of or are homeless, including 16- and 17-year olds and Surrey Protocol.	From March 2020	Existing and key partners	SCC NHS Services Further education college
70	Investigate feasibility of an emergency fund for travel costs to access hostels, etc., and keep under review.	January 2020	Existing FHSG	EBC Walton Charity
71	To develop a response to rough sleepers who are within LGBT client group to include appropriate support alongside additional training for Council staff to assist this client group.	January 2021	FHSG	EBC
72	Carry out a regular review of Personal Housing Plans completed to ensure quality and to monitor positive outcomes.	July 2020 and ongoing	Existing	EBC

73	Establish a Council and partner response to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness but have no access to public funds.	December 2021	TBC	EBC & Surrey County Council and CAB
74	Target referrals to support services, such as Look Ahead, to those in most need maximising referrals to other support agencies as appropriate to the case.	Ongoing March 2020 and beyond	Existing to investigate appropriate agencies.	Look Ahead Transform
Objective 5: Tackling homelessness through partnership working				
75	Continue in working positively with partners to address homelessness within Elmbridge, to look at funding and opportunities for joint working.	Ongoing to 2024		EBC and all partners
76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Social Care – set up 1/4 review meetings with management about when appropriate to refer, response to requests for assessments and sharing information on common clients Agree with Adult Social Care appropriate remedial action Agree timelines for target response and information pertinent to the referral. 	From September 2020 and ongoing		SCC EBC
77	Agree and keep under review a planned discharge policy from hospitals. Proactive outreach to discharge co-ordinators of the accommodation limitations, with a view to reducing emergency placements.	From February 2020 ongoing on review to 2023		EBC NHS Community Mental Health Teams
78	Review how high-risk cases, including those subject to MAPPA procedures are assessed and decisions made on whether to assist and types of accommodation secured.	September 2023	Existing - depends if capital funding is needed or new property/ conversion.	EBC Probation Service Police
79	Conduct a review every 6 months of the 'Duty to Refer' to ensure these are dealt with appropriately and outcomes monitored.	April 2020 and ongoing/	Existing	EBC& duty to refer relevant partner
80	Improve real time communication between local agencies so they are aware of what is happening locally and criteria for and how to access services. Provide a platform to advise of any changes or additions to services targeted to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.	July 2020	Existing – investigate	Rentstart CAB Walton Charities

			secure platform	Transform
81	Maintain Homelessness Network Group (HNG) meetings at least twice a year for monitoring and review of the action plan.	Ongoing June 2020 and beyond	Partners & agencies	EBC

Priority 5: Nobody left behind – arranging support for those who need it most

Ref.	Action	By when	Resources	Lead agency (& partners)
Supporting the Universal Credit rollout				
82	To continue close liaison with JobCentre Plus and partner agencies in relation to the ongoing rollout of Universal Credit (full service) in Elmbridge, to support its implementation, monitor its impact and seeking to minimise any adverse impacts on residents.	Ongoing	Existing	EBC, JobCentre Plus, Citizens Advice
83	When the local timetable for the “managed migration” to Universal Credit is known, to work with JobCentre Plus and partner agencies to support affected residents in preparing for the change.	To be advised	Existing	EBC & JobCentre Plus
Delivering the council’s remaining responsibilities around Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (CTS) to a high standard				
84	To adopt a revised Council Tax Support scheme to tie in with the introduction of Universal Credit.	April 2020	Existing	EBC Finance