

Chichester District Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 September 2020

Housing Standards Financial Assistance and Enforcement Policy 2021-2026

1. Contacts

Report Author

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2. Recommendation

2.1 That committee considers the draft Housing Standards Financial Assistance and Enforcement Policy 2021-26 and make any comments prior to consultation with stakeholders.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 permits local housing authorities to provide financial assistance to private sector residents to enable property repair and improvement providing they first adopt a policy.
- 3.2 In early 2020 the Council commissioned the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to undertake a housing stock condition survey of all property within the district to establish overall condition and areas of concern that required improvement.
- 3.3 The stock modelling exercise carried out identified that an estimated 14% (6768) of all private sector stock (rented and owner occupied) and 12% (1281) of the private rented sector had a Category 1 Housing Health and Safety hazard for Excess Cold. Furthermore 13.2% (6,535) of private sector dwellings and 9.9% (1,063) of private rented dwellings in Chichester were estimated to have an Energy Performance Rating below Band E.
- 3.4 In the private sector stock, there were an estimated 12,107 dwellings with un-insulated cavity walls and 7,232 dwellings with less than 100 mm of loft insulation. Analysis of the energy efficiency variables indicated that the owner occupied stock had the highest average figures for the majority of variables including CO2 produced, energy and heat demands and energy and heat costs.
- 3.5 Whilst the Council endeavours to assist and support residents to maintain and improve their properties, there may be instances when homeowners or landlords will resist undertaking required works to the detriment of their own, or their tenant's health and safety. Therefore alongside the financial assistance policy it is proposed that a new Housing Standards Enforcement Policy will be introduced to provide inspecting officers with the full range of

powers to help raise property standards. The full draft policy is attached as an appendix to this report

4 Outcomes to be achieved

- 4.1 The committee to consider the draft Financial Assistance and Enforcement Policy and make recommendations prior to stakeholder consultation followed by Cabinet approval
- 4.2 The adoption of a new Financial Assistance and Enforcement Policy which enables financial resources to be made available for those residents most in need, and to improve housing standards.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee make any comments or recommendations on the draft financial assistance and enforcement policy before consultation with stakeholders in October, and final consideration by Cabinet in November.

6 Alternatives Considered

- 6.1 The Council must have an adopted strategy if it wishes to provide financial assistance to residents to assist them with property repairs and improvements. Following the results of the stock modelling survey 2020 it is necessary to review the existing strategy and update the focus to target excess cold and fuel poverty in the worst affected areas.
- 6.2 Another alternative could be to dispense with the financial assistance policy but this would be contrary to the Council's Housing Strategy 2020-25.

7 Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 The financial resources required over the five year life of the policy have already been allocated as part of the Housing Strategy approved by Council in March 2020.
- 7.2 The Housing Standards Team consists of Environmental Health Officers, Housing Standards Officers and a Licensing Assistant. As a result of an increase in government funding to deliver disabled facilities grants a new Senior Housing Standards Officer funded by the grant monies was recently appointed. The Licensing Assistant post was introduced in 2018 following a change in legislation causing licence applications to significantly increase and the cost of this post is met by licensing income. The team has two Senior Environmental Health Officers who are primarily responsible for delivering all aspects of housing standards work, and specifically Housing Health and Safety Rating System and enforcement issues in the district. Any significant increase in enforcement action would require additional resources.

8 Consultation

- 8.1 The draft policy is the starting point of the consultation process and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider the document prior to stakeholder consultation. The final document will then be subject to a cabinet report in November to seek approval for its immediate introduction.

9 Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1 When the strategy is adopted it will have the potential to have a positive impact on the community by ensuring improvements are made to the quality of the poorest housing stock and reducing fuel poverty.

10 Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		√
Climate Change and Biodiversity The new policy will provide an increased funding threshold for the Chichester Warm Homes Initiative to ensure renewable heating options can also be provided under the scheme. There will also be a focus on more targeted projects in the worse affected parishes.	√	
Human Rights and Equality Impact The policy looks to improving housing conditions and address disadvantages affecting those who are vulnerable, of retirement age, disabled or on low income.	√	
Safeguarding and Early Help		√
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		√
Health and Wellbeing It is well known that cold home have a significant impact on health and increases the risks of certain conditions. Every year cold homes are a significant contributor to the level of excess winter deaths in the UK. Therefore by reducing the number of cold homes and fuel poverty improvements in health and wellbeing should be evident.	√	

4. Appendix

- 1.1 Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal and Enforcement Policy 2021-2

5. Background Papers

- 1.1 Chichester Stock Modelling Report 2020