

A Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2019-2024





Foreword

Having a place to call home is fundamental to our way of life. The aim of this strategy is simple; to meet the housing needs of the district and boost the supply of affordable housing, particularly options for our young people, single households and families whilst also meeting specialist needs and the needs of an ever ageing population.

To do this we will continue to look at best practice up and down the country and build on our relationships with key stakeholders, such as developers, landowners, registered providers, private landlords, businesses, other public services, parish councils and the voluntary and community sector. Through effective partnership work we will make a difference.

Councillor Phillip King

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Regeneration

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Introduction

A New Strategy

The Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping ('the Housing Strategy') is the core document setting out Harborough District Council's approach to meeting local housing needs. The strategy highlights the key housing issues facing the local community in the short and long term and identifies what we are doing to tackle these issues.

This strategy combines a traditional five year Housing Strategy with a five year Homelessness Prevention Strategy and a five year Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy. This recognises the complexity and interdependency between homelessness, the local housing market and the supply of affordable homes.

The role of Harborough District Council

Harborough District Council has an important strategic and enabling role in relation to housing and homelessness prevention.

This work involves;

Producing a Local Plan, which identifies long-term housing and employment needs

Delivering required housing through the planning system

Working with Developers and Registered Providers to provide affordable homes

Setting the policy on how to allocate social housing

Providing housing advice and preventing homelessness

Using powers and tools to help minimise empty properties

Offering grants, loans and assistance to adapt properties

Enforcing housing standards in the private sector

Corporate Vision and Priorities

The Council's vision and priorities are set every three years and shape the delivery of our functions and local policy framework during that time. The current Corporate Plan runs from 2018/19 to 2020/21.

The Council's vision is:

'To secure a prosperous future for the people of Harborough District'

The Council's priorities are:

The Place: An enterprising vibrant place

The People: A healthy, inclusive and engaged community

Your Council: Innovative, proactive and efficient

Local Policy Framework

There are a number of specific policies, strategies and partnership arrangements which set out how we will deliver the housing functions of the council. The Housing Strategy will form part of this interdependent framework to help ensure we are coordinated and focussed on the right areas.

The framework includes:

Local Plan Submission 2011-2031	Neighbourhood Plans	Planning Obligations Policy	Harborough Housing Fund (Commuted Sums)
Capital Investment Strategy	Economic Development Strategy	Property Strategy	Private Sector Renewal Policy
Empty Property Strategy	Community Safety Plan	Allocations Policy	Tenancy Strategy

National Policy Framework

The Housing Strategy will also need to take account of developments in Government housing policy. Some recent policy announcements include;

That home ownership is the Government priority	At least 10% of new homes must be 'affordable ownership'	More options/products for affordable ownership	Introduction of 'Starter Homes' with a 20% one-off discount
Social rents are reducing by 1% for four years from April 2016	Right to Buy also extended to Registered Provider tenants	legislation to drive up standards in the private rent sector	All Councils must have a Rough Sleeping Strategy by Winter 2019
Tax increases for buy to let properties and second homes	Councils have more duty to prevent homelessness	Welfare reforms challenging for some, especially under 35s	Standardising the way viability of housing sites is calculated

Profile of the District

Harborough is the quintessential rural district often ranked as one of the best places to live in England. There are challenges but it is a great place to live and work. It is important that our Housing Strategy is driven by local and national data and insight and that we properly understand the needs of residents and communities, particularly those struggling to meet their housing needs.

Key data from the Housing Economic Development Needs Assessment 2017

85,382 residents in 2011 which is a 11.5% increase since 2001	There are 15,200 young people under 15 and 16,900 people over 64	92.8% White British; 2.4% White Other, 4.5% BAME	Trend for more, smaller households
Over 34,898 households in 2011 which is a 18% increase since 2001	Half of residents live in Mkt. Harborough, Lutterworth and Broughton Astley	A quarter of residents live in key rural centres	A quarter of residents live in the 80 smaller villages and settlement
Excellent transport links - road and rail but bus services very limited	Highest land values and house prices in Leicestershire	Highest house price to income ratio in Leicestershire- 9 times income needed.	Very high employment and high average earnings
Half go to work outside the district and half of jobs are filled from outside the district	Those who live in the district earn more on average than those who work here (£607 to £519 respectively)	Income of £709 per week needed to access Starter Homes (which have 20% discount)	50% reduction in under 35s owning a house between 2001 and 2011
42.4% of the population hold NVQ level 4 (degree) or above	Biggest job growth in transportation & storage, and administration	Up to 664 people interested in self-building in the district	Council investment to bring super fast broadband to many rural areas
High levels of under occupied households in Leicestershire (87%)	Health is generally good but pockets of inequality exist	Projected 95% increase in 65+ population by 2036	Projected 200% increases in 85+ population by 2036
7300 over 75s predicted to live alone by 2030 (up 100% from 2010)	11400 people over 65 predicted to have a limiting illness by 2030 (up 85% from 2010)	1 in 12 homes in fuel poverty (2011)	13000 homes outright owned 14000 with mortgage 3500 social rented 4,000 private rented (2011)
Outright ownership increased 25% between 2001 and 2011	Private rented sector increased 120% between 2001 and 2011 - across all ages	Social rented increased 13% between 2001 and 2011	

Key issues arising from the English Housing Survey 2017/18

Over 2/3 of homes are owner occupied	Most owner occupied homes are also under-occupied	Home owners are older	36% households include someone with a disability
Home owners likely to be in higher income groups	Lower quartile house price earnings ratio is 9.75	On average mortgages are 19% of income	After a decade of decline the proportion of 35-44 year olds in owner occupation has increased
Average First Time Buyer (FTB) is 33	Most common FTB deposit is £25,000	Over 1/3 of FTBs have help from family	Just over half FTBs bought with partner
After a significant rise, the proportion of households in PRS is holding steady	Private Rental Sector (PRS) now account for 19% of all households	PRS rents can be 46% of income	9% of private renters have been in arrears in last 12m
PRS has highest churn rate of any tenure and is increasing	Average PRS rent is £836pcm	Social Rent Sector (SRS) accounts for less than 15% of households	Half of social rent households have a long-term illness or disability
1/4 in SRS expect to buy a house in the future, a decline	Over 60% of social renters are in work, an increase	SRS has the highest level of overcrowding	SRS has lowest rate of under-occupation
Average SRS rent is £446pcm		Over 60% SRS households receive Housing Benefit	25% SRS households have been in arrears in last 12m

Key Themes

Theme 1: New Housing

This first theme in this strategy is about new homes and ensuring that new homes are built to meet the long term needs of the district. This includes both market sale housing and affordable housing. The key role of the Council is to identify and deliver this need through the planning system. New homes are typically built by national and regional housing developers but there are some smaller scale developers and registered providers also building in Harborough. The Council has also recently built several market sale homes through redeveloping garage sites and has an ambition to be more active as a house builder in addition to our role as the local planning authority.

Local Plan Submission 2011-2031

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires every local planning authority to have a clear, up to date local plan, which will help deliver sustainable development, conform to the NPPF, meet development needs, and reflect local aspirations.

The Harborough Local Plan is the central document in delivering new housing and sustainable development in appropriate locations and in helping protect the countryside, important green spaces, and the built and natural heritage from inappropriate or insensitive development, thus enhancing the quality of life for people and communities.

Headline total housing trajectory



Places and sites to deliver housing need to 2031



Affordable Housing

The Council transferred its social housing stock to a Registered Provider in 2007 and therefore develop new affordable housing by working with housing developers and Registered Providers. The definition of affordable housing can include a number of low cost products offered for sale or for rent to those whose needs are not met by the market. This includes rented homes which are a maximum of 80% market rent and low cost home ownership products which are a maximum of 80% market sale.

Headline affordable housing trajectory



Specialist Housing

Specialist housing refers to forms of sheltered or extra care accommodation where the occupiers receive care and assistance of some kind, but live in self-contained dwellings and have a degree of independence. Residents who need specialist housing may include people of all ages with physical disabilities, learning difficulties or mental ill health. The Council work with a number of partners to provide housing and support for those who have special needs or require special housing.

The Local Plan submission identifies a need for 51 new housing units per annum to 2031. Provision of at least 10% of specialist housing units on sites of 100 or more dwellings would yield approximately 400 specialist housing units throughout the plan period. In combination with the provision of specialist housing on dedicated sites, this requirement will make a significant contribution to meeting identified needs.

Our Strengths

The key strengths of Harborough District Council in delivering new housing include:

Continued housing development in the district, which is meeting market needs	A clear policy that 40% new homes should now be affordable	It is viable to deliver affordable housing need to 2031 through new Local Plan sites
Type of affordable housing is determined on a case by case basis	Type and tenure is influenced by needs of those on the Housing Register	Shared ownership options have helped people get a foot on the housing ladder
In total Help to Buy equity loans have helped 643 households 2013-2018	Help to Buy equity loans have helped 433 First Time Buyers 2013-2018	Provision to meet Gypsy and Traveller needs is identified in the new Local Plan
Committed sums totalling £740k enabled 85 more affordable units 2011-2017	Committed sum balance in 2018 of 800k to invest	£1.6 million committed sums in approved planning consents
We have good operational links with developers and 13 Registered Providers	We have built homes on former garage sites supported by the Help to Buy scheme	We work with partners to release pockets of our land where this will enable redevelopment
New affordable housing for rent is offered to local residents through Choice Based Lettings	We are working with other bodies e.g. MoJ to bring forward land for development	We work with Platform Housing (stock transfer org) to bring forward sites
We have a policy on the provision of Specialist Housing as part of developments	We recognise this is an important need for some young, working age and older people	We ensure that new provision meets the relevant industry quality standard where applicable
Private schemes being built for older people who can afford to meet own needs	Leicestershire CC has a Supported Accommodation strategy for working age and older people	We request that all new affordable homes meet the Lifetime Homes Standard

Our Challenges

The key challenges for Harborough District Council in delivering new housing and particularly affordable housing include:

We are dependent on s106 planning obligations to deliver affordable housing

Applications for 10 or less dwellings do not have to include AH due to viability of small sites

The existing policy that 30-40% of new housing must be AH has not been viable in some cases

There have been 21 AH viability challenges from developers after planning consent has been issued

Due to larger land footprint an affordable bungalow is provided in lieu of 2 general needs affordable homes

More costly Specialist or Extra Care units are provided in lieu of a larger amount of general needs AH

The high cost of land means AH schemes are not viable without subsidy

We offer commuted sum subsidies reactively to RPs which requires RPs to be active

Registered Providers (RPs) are not widely coming forward with requests to subsidise AH schemes

The Council has few land assets to develop

There is not always community support for AH

The Government focus is on ownership but we still need social and affordable rent properties

We have no influence on the sale of shared ownership homes - may or may not be to local residents

Data from RPs on new shared ownership homes is patchy so we may underestimate affordable delivery

There is a growing number of affordable products which can be confusing

Over a dozen RPs own stock in the district, adding complexity to partnership working

There is a need for 1,267 specialist housing units between 2011 and 2031 (51 per annum)

We have limited data on specialist houses provided in the private sector

It is a challenge to balance general affordable housing need with specialist provision

There is a particular lack for complex needs due to cost and support required

There is a particular specialist housing gap around Lutterworth area for working age

Theme 2: Existing homes

There are around 35,000 properties in the Harborough district. In an environment of high demand and pressures on housing supply it is essential that we make full use of duties, powers and tools to make the best use of existing stock. This may be through improving standards, reducing empty properties or adapting homes to meet the changing needs of their occupants.

Our Strengths

The key strengths of Harborough District Council in making the best use of existing housing include;

We support private sector renewal via loans, grants and assistance	We top-up government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants to ensure support is available	We ensure Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) are licenced and safe	We actively enforce private sector housing standards when we are told about concerns
We have held engagement events with private landlords in the recent past e.g. Landlords Forum	We are proactive in reducing long-term empty properties from 514 (2012) to 310 (2017)	We work with partners to promote domestic energy efficiency measures across all tenures	Energy efficiency has increased considerably across tenures in last 20 years, but has slowed since 2015
We are responding to legislative changes around licensing HMOs - 6 licenses to end 2018	768 sheltered units across the district in 2017	434 private sales retirement units in 2016	We are part of the Lightbulb project which has integrated our help with wider Health & Social Care support

Our Challenges

The key challenges for Harborough District Council in making the best use of existing housing include:

We need an updated picture of the stock condition in the private sector	Reducing long-term empty properties can be resource intensive	Overcrowded houses increased 35% to 3,200 between 2001 and 2011	1 in 12 homes is in fuel poverty
Levels of concealed and shared households have increased inline with national trends	Private rent homes, particularly Houses in Multiple Occupation are most likely to fail housing standards	Registered Providers are reluctant to adapt properties for people who may move in future	Estimated 20,275 Households with long-term health problem or disability by 2036. 66% increase on 2011.
Up to 2,661 residents estimated to have dementia by 2036 - 144% increase from 2011	There are 6,316 residents estimated to have mobility problems by 2036 - 121% increase from 2011	Big increase in 85+ population will place even greater demand on resources to support independence	Different needs require different specialist housing options ,which is challenging

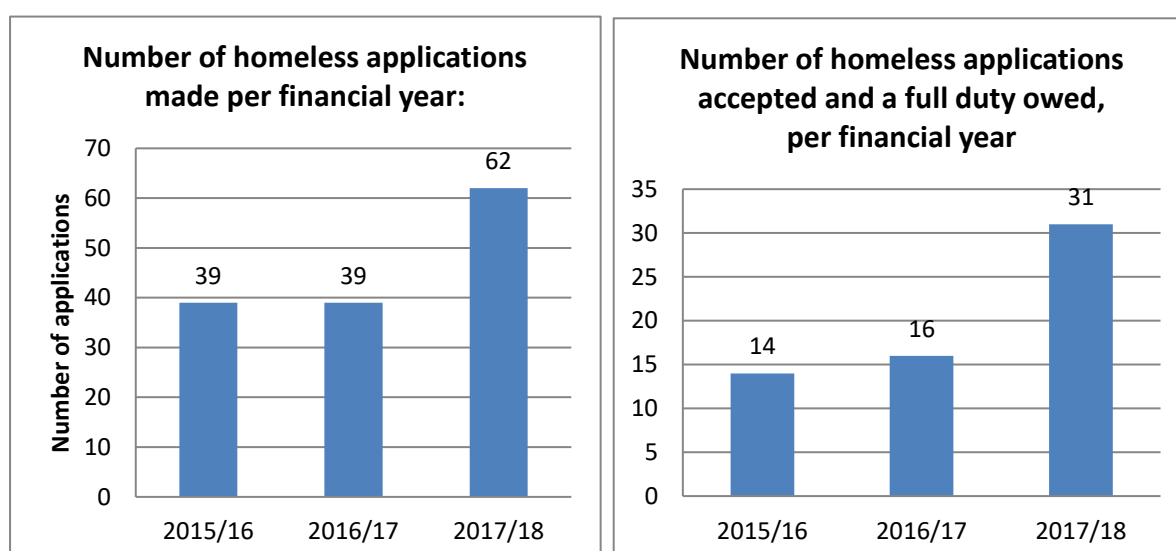
Theme 3: Housing Options, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Preventing homelessness and assisting people to find sustainable housing solutions are key statutory functions of Harborough District Council. Despite our proactive work there has been an increase in homeless applications, which is in line with national trends. Reasons for homelessness are complex and successfully preventing homelessness often requires strong partnership work with other supporting agencies. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has extended the duties of the Council to intervene earlier and provide more hands on assistance to households potentially at risk of homelessness. To help people to secure an affordable home the Council operates a Choice-Based Lettings scheme underpinned by the Housing Allocations Policy. The allocations policy ensures that available social housing is prioritised for those in greatest need to move. Finding affordable options in the private sector remains a key challenge. In addition to the advice and support offered by the Council's Housing Options Team the Council has access to a variety of temporary accommodation options to meet short-term needs whilst a longer-term solution is found.

Rough Sleeping

Harborough District Council is committed to reducing rough sleeping within the district. There are occasional instances of rough sleeping in the district although numbers are very low compared to other places. The Council recognises that the causes of rough sleeping are complex with individuals more likely to have a mental health illness, more likely be involved in substance misuse and at higher risk of becoming victims of violence and premature death. For these reasons the Council is working with stakeholders from across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland towards providing suitable temporary accommodation and/or support to all rough sleepers in the district.

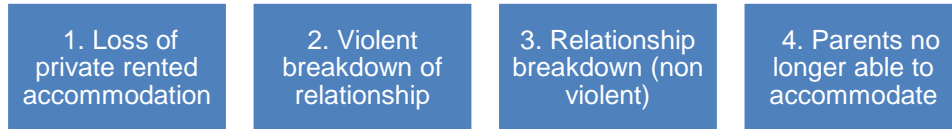
Homelessness trend



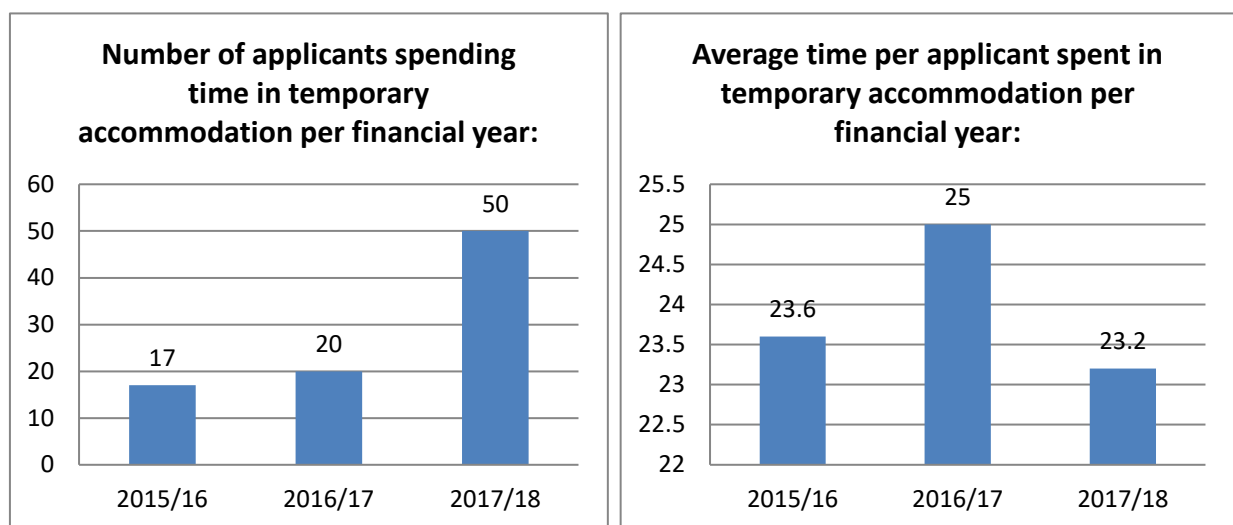
Top 4 reasons for homelessness where a full duty owed (in rank order)



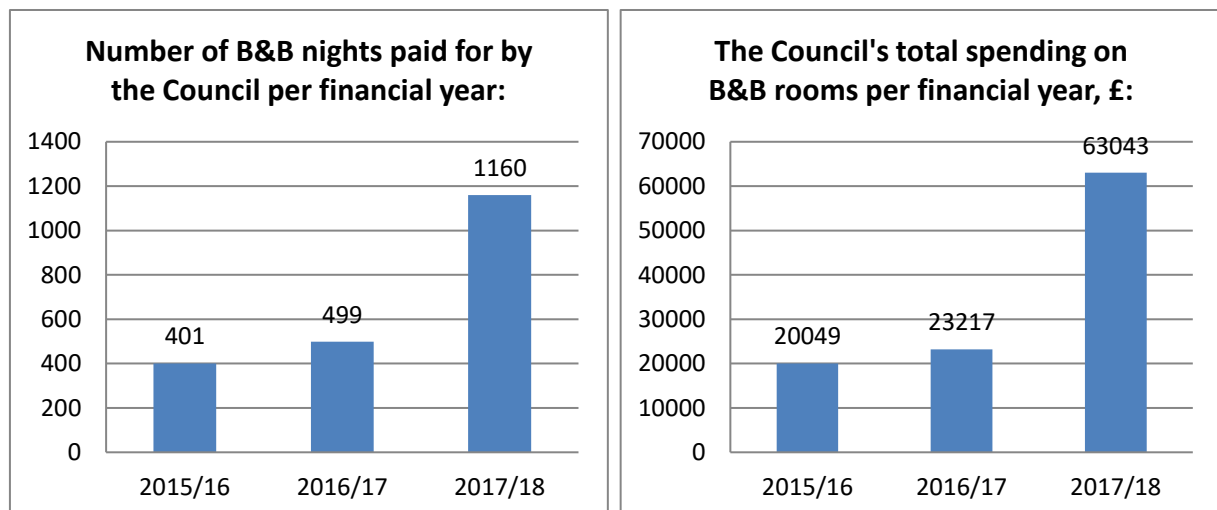
Top 4 reasons for seeking housing advice (in rank order)



Use of temporary Accommodation



Use of bed & breakfast



Our Strengths

The key strengths of Harborough District Council in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping include;

Our Housing Options and Homelessness service performed well in a 2016 Peer Review

We helped with 375 Housing Advice issues in 2017 (8% increase on 2016)

We helped prevent or relieve homelessness in 79 cases in 2017

89% of Homeless decisions are made within 33 working day guidance

We are helping more singles under 35 to rent a room in an HMO as an affordable housing option

We meet government guidance not to accommodate families longer than 6 weeks in Bed & Breakfast

We have two 2 bed flats available for families in need of temporary accommodation

We have increased resources to ensure we meet new Homelessness duties

We are part of a County Trailblazer project to support Rough Sleepers from 2017

We are part of a County project to coach clients in difficulty to build resilience skills to sustain tenancies

We are part of a project to develop a Smartphone App for Housing Options

We have offered emergency gas, electricity credit, and furniture/ white goods to those in housing need - funded by the LCC

Allocations Policy reviewed in 2016 to further prioritise local residents for scarce affordable homes

Tenancy Strategy in place to guide RPs on approach the Council wishes to take to new tenancies

Choice-Based Lettings meets the business need of RPs to let properties fast (reduced void times)

We offer a No Second Night Out model to provide supported accommodation to help rough sleepers off the streets

We accommodated 10 rough sleepers in Winter 2017/2018 through our Cold Weather Provision

We are working with the Hospital Discharge Team to prevent bed blocking and homelessness

Our Challenges

The key challenges for Harborough District Council in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping include;

There has been a year on year increase in homelessness

Substance abuse, mental health issues and domestic abuse are key contributors to homelessness

We are dependent on Registered Providers to provide accommodation to prevent and relieve homelessness (68% of cases in 2017)

A private rent offer was only able to prevent homelessness in 2 cases 2017

High private rents are not affordable to those on a low income/ without a deposit

Gap between social rent and private rent is over £50 per week

Registered Providers have reduced the proportion of vacant stock advertised through CBL - often 70% or less

66 households spent an average of 54.2 days in temporary accommodation in 2017

32 households spent an average of 26.3 days in Bed & Breakfast accommodation in 2017

4 families/ pregnant applicants spent an average of 4.21 weeks in Bed & Breakfast in 2017

Ongoing welfare reforms put pressure on some household budgets

Further increase in single homeless expected, aggravated by welfare reforms

Housing Benefit for single under 35s is now restricted to shared room rate

Pressure on temporary accommodation budget, significantly overspent in 2017

There is no single body representing private landlords which makes engagement difficult

Priorities

Priority 1: Meeting the housing requirements of the District in full

- A commitment to enable a range of market and affordable housing types, tenures and sizes in appropriate and sustainable locations to meet local needs. We recognise the specific accommodation requirements of the young and the elderly populations, including starter homes to help first time buyers, shared ownership and rented housing to help those who cannot afford to buy, and specialist housing such as sheltered and extra care accommodation.

To achieve this we propose the following actions:

Securing affordable housing in s106 schemes

- Robust challenge of viability assessments; taking a problem solving approach and seeking expert advice as appropriate.

Influencing the right type of housing in the right place

- Balancing general needs house types with bungalows and specialist housing.
- Work in partnership to review and develop the Leicestershire Rural Housing Enabler project to bring forward viable Rural Exception sites.

Investing commuted sums to enable additional affordable housing

- Review Commuted Sum investment strategy to ensure maximum return.

Promoting all tenures of affordable homes to local residents

- Work with Registered Providers to ensure all new affordable rent homes are allocated through the Councils Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- Work with Registered Providers to ensure all new intermediate ownership homes are recorded by the Council and promoted to local residents.

Developing a specific delivery plan for specialist housing to meet current need and long-term demographic changes

- To work in partnership to better understand and meet the specialist needs in Harborough district covering older people, working age people and vulnerable young people. This includes needs related to physical disabilities, learning difficulties or mental health issues.

Working in partnership to bring forward new sites for housing or redevelopment

- Work with partners such as Ministry of Justice, NHS, Homes England and Registered Providers to review land assets and bring forward new or redeveloped sites for housing.

Priority 2: Getting the most out of existing homes

To achieve this we propose the following action:

Improving standards and promoting energy efficiency

- Continue to enforce standards in the private sector, taking advantage of the changes to Housing in Multiple Occupation regulations to engage and improve standards in this key sector which offers affordable housing solutions for single people.
- Promote energy efficiency and energy switching to householders thorough developing quality partnerships with private and third sector providers

Reducing Empty properties

- Continue current work to reduce empty properties, including monitoring the impact of the 50% Council Tax premium charged to long-term empty properties from April 2018 and culminating in a review of the Empty Property Strategy by 2020.

Developing housing options for residents with specialist housing needs in partnership with health

- Support and influence the development of the Lightbulb project and wider Regulatory Reform Orders.
- Develop the Councils wider offer to health
 - Offering tailored physical activity opportunities and encouraging healthy lifestyles try to prevent/ reduce or delay need for Specialist Housing.

Priority 3: Providing effective housing advice and homelessness prevention

To achieve this we propose the following action:

Providing Advice and Assistance To All

- Offer an accessible and inclusive advice service, including written advice, for all clients
- Agree Personal Housing Plans for all clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- Provide clear and concise advice and information online and in printed leaflets
- Regularly review the Allocations Policy 2017 ensuring this remains up to date and focussed on homelessness prevention and the allocation of local homes to local residents.

Proactively Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- Update our private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords.
- Develop an effective and streamlined Choice-Based Lettings system which enables and empowers clients to find suitable housing in the district.
- Review Tenancy Strategy 2013 to ensure this remains up to date and focussed on influencing landlords to adopt tenancy arrangements which support homelessness prevention.

Delivering Strong, Efficient Action to Relieve Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- Continue to support and deliver a successful No Second Night Out scheme.
- Develop pathways with key partners and client groups including appropriate accommodation and support services
- Work in partnership to continue to not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- Continue to not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.
- Review Temporary Accommodation provision to maximise the supply of good quality accommodation to meet the needs of homeless households, and reducing our use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

Working in Partnership

- Actively work in partnership with local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs within the district.
- Develop countywide protocols and partnerships to prevent and relieve homelessness ensuring that effective referral processes are in place across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
- Work closely with partner organisations, particularly those with a new statutory duty to refer homelessness to the local authority.
- Be part of a county-wide scheme to provide emergency bed spaces for rough sleepers and outreach services to help those who have been living on the streets transition to long-term accommodation.
- Work with the Hospital Housing Enablement Team as part of the Lightbulb Project to support homeless people leaving hospital.

- Work with the Multi-Agency Traveller Unit and the Local Area Coordinator for Travelling Families to provide support and assistance to travellers who are homeless or at threat of homelessness.