

Supplement for

Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

On **Wednesday 3 July 2024** At **6.00 pm**

Minutes Supplement for Housing and Homelessness Panel 03 July 2024

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Minute 5: Annual Review of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

Action	Response
<p>The Panel requested that the Head of Housing Services provide a written update on the Council's intended approach, definitions and timescales in relation to First Homes and affordable homes.</p>	<p>The First Homes Policy Statement provides more details regarding First Homes and the Council's intended approach. This can be viewed on the Council's website here.</p> <p>In summary, First Homes are a new affordable housing scheme introduced by the previous Government offering help to low income working households with a qualifying connection to Oxford (or the Local Authority area they are built) to purchase homes at a discounted rate. Existing developments with planning permission in place were not affected but for new developments this means the proportion of homes let at social housing rents is decreased and instead used for First Homes. The tenure split of affordable housing is still required to be 50% of homes delivered on sites of over 10 units but instead, on mixed tenure schemes, will be 25% First Homes, 70% Social Rented and 5% intermediate housing forms (most likely to be shared ownership).</p> <p>The draft Oxford Local Plan 2040, which is seeking approval from the Planning Inspectorate, proposes that an exception to National Planning Policy is agreed. In summary, it proposes there are no First Homes in Oxford due to affordability challenges and the impact on providing much-needed social housing in the City, particularly 1-bedroom social rented housing which is in highest demand from homeless households in Temporary Accommodation.</p>
<p>The Panel requested that the Head of Housing Services provide a written update on current uptake/spend in relation to the HUG2 grant.</p>	<p>The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) is administered on our behalf by the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENGH) and their appointed managing agent Agility Eco. The grant period runs from 10 November 2023 to 31 March 2025. The HUG targets low-income households residing in properties with a low EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) (D-G) that are not heated by mains gas. The original target</p>

	<p>allocated to Oxford City Council was 46 properties, but this has now been reduced to 32 reflecting programme delivery problems nationally. The approximate capital target is 32 x £18,000. There is the opportunity to exceed the overall target by 20% without needing to submit a change request to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).</p> <p>Officers are working with Agility Eco and GSENGH to target eligible households. Marketing activity to promote the scheme has included three rounds of targeted mailouts and other marketing activities. Properties have been identified using Parity Projects and Urbantide data to identify low EPC properties not heated by mains gas. These were then matched with fuel poverty data and Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) areas. Those in receipt of certain qualifying benefits have also been notified about the grant funds. Other marketing activity includes social and print media campaigns as well as attendance at in-person events and stakeholder training.</p> <p>In June 2024, the figures were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 applications received • 14 passed eligibility • 12 surveys booked • 0 completions to date
<p>The Panel requested that the Head of Housing Services provide a written update on the implementation of the Panel’s recommendation on the strategy from the previous year: <i>‘That the Council works with OX Place to consider how it might move towards having a higher percentage of new homes let at social rent level than a simple majority.’</i></p>	<p>Oxford City Council seeks to maximise the number of social housing units delivered by OX Place/Registered Providers of social housing in any new development within Oxford.</p> <p>There is a corporate objective of delivering 1,600 affordable homes within 4 years and in the Housing, Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 a Service Level action to “continue to deliver affordable homes at social rent to meet target of 850 by March 2026”.</p> <p>With all new developments there is a balance between delivering as many social housing properties as possible, with the developer/OX Place needing to ensure financial viability by selling some</p>

	<p>properties. With rising costs this is becoming more of a challenge for all developers/landlords. The existing Oxford Local Plan for 2016 to 2036 states for new builds there is normally the expectation 50% are affordable – with a split of 80% social rented and 20% affordable rented/shared ownership. However, this could be reduced to 40% affordable due to rising costs and to unlock more development sites in Oxford in the future if the draft Local Plan 2040 is approved by the Planning Inspectorate.</p>
<p>The Panel requested that the Housing Strategy and Needs Manager provide a written comparison of the Year 1 and Year 2 action plans.</p>	<p><i>Officers are working on this and will circulate in August.</i></p>

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Minute 7: Housing Performance Monitoring Q4 2023/24

Action	Response
The Panel requested that the Head of Housing Services provide a written update on the total standard re-let time before the next meeting.	<i>A written update will be provided before the next Housing and Homelessness Panel meeting.</i>

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Minute 9: Report back on recommendations

Action	Response
The Panel requested that the Scrutiny Officer seek confirmation that the tenant communications campaign in relation to Selective Licensing would include accessible and inclusive communications, including forms of communication which were not digitally based.	A tenant communications campaign in relation to Selective Licensing is planned for September 2024. Communication channels will include various methods, digital and non-digital (all methods subject to budget).
The Panel requested that the Scrutiny Officer seek confirmation in relation to what would happen if the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol budget was not sufficient to cover costs in any given year; and whether there was any contingency funding.	In recent years, the Council has delivered the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) within budget using allocated funds from the Preventing Homelessness Grant and through annual grants issued by Central Government. It is likely that this will continue in future years, with an increase in the Council's budget for SWEP in 2024/25 agreed to support this. In the event that Government grant did stop or if the cost of providing the SWEP exceeded the existing budget and grant within the current financial year, we would not fail to provide SWEP services. In these circumstances officers would review budgets and unallocated grant funding or other unspent budgets in first instance.

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