

PRIORITY 7

IMPROVE HOUSING STANDARDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT WE LIVE IN BY USING HOUSING INVESTMENT TO CREATE STABLE COMMUNITIES

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In **Priority 7** we say that we will **improve housing standards and the environment we live in by using housing investment to create stable communities**. This means that we will have:

- Better quality housing;
- Less population movement from property to property (transience); and
- More stable communities with reducing anti-social behaviour.

Challenges 2014/15

Our focus this year will be to:

- Rebalance the town's housing supply;
- Drive up housing standards; and
- Tackle poor quality and poorly managed private rented properties through enforcement activity.

Current Activity

Rebalance the town's housing supply:

Two major housing developments are underway to increase the quality and availability of family housing in the inner areas of Blackpool.

The redevelopment of the Queens Park estate will see the creation of nearly 200 new family homes; mostly Council homes for rent managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing. The redevelopment will provide a mixture of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes. A proportion of the one bed apartments have been designed to be capable of easy conversion to family homes at a later date. The first phase of redevelopment involves the demolition of 2 tower blocks and the creation of 92 homes with the first homes due to be handed over in February. Overall completion is delayed by approximately two months due to the service providers and final units will now be complete in June 2015. The development has provided construction apprenticeship opportunities through Blackpool Build Up, providing jobs and training placements for local unemployed people.

Preparations are now well underway to commence phase two of the Queens Park development. Funding has been secured from the Homes & Communities Agency to support the delivery of 78 units to be commenced in the first quarter of 2016.

Remediation work has been completed to the Rigby Road / Tyldesley Road sites and development of 400 family homes is now well underway. The development will provide a mixture of 2 and 3 bedroom, energy efficient, family homes and a range of green spaces, which will help to regenerate a large part of South Shore, create jobs and provide accommodation for many Blackpool families. The first 70 units will be completed by March 2015.

The Council is also working to improve the quality of Council properties to meet the Decent Homes standard. The standard ensures that properties are fit to live in, are in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and are reasonably warm. We are on track to complete the Decent Homes programme by the end of the year; this means that all Council homes, with the exception of those earmarked for demolition, will meet the Decent Homes standard by the end of March 2015. An Asset Management Strategy is now being developed in partnership with Blackpool Coastal Housing to ensure stock is effectively maintained and estates continue to be improved to create higher quality environments.

Drive up housing standards:

Significant steps have been taken to improve conditions within private sector housing.

Strategic Housing has been successful in working with private developers and owners of poor quality houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) and guesthouses. With the support of £1.6 million of funding from the Department for Communities & Local Government, 100 good quality homes have been developed.

A substantial programme of home energy efficiency is underway targeting private homes that are expensive to heat. More than 640 homes have had external wall insulation installed and many of those have been fitted with modern efficient boilers and other measures to make the homes more energy efficient. A scheme for a further 80 homes has been secured that will be implemented over the next few months. This has been achieved with very minimal Council funding.

Blackpool is leading plans now well underway to create a Lancashire wider home energy efficiency organisation that will seek to maximise opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of homes. This will ensure effective coordination across Lancashire to ensure that we are best placed to benefit from national initiatives and secure economies of scale that can be achieved by working across a wider area.

Blackpool's housing market however continues to be dominated by poor quality private rented accommodation, particularly in the inner areas of the town. Whilst a broad range of action continues to be taken to address this issue and substantial improvements have been made to individual properties, the overall market remains unbalanced and provides poor housing offer to many residents. As part of a comprehensive approach to address this problem the Council has agreed to establish a wholly owned housing regeneration company.

The company will consider existing HMOs and redundant guesthouses and then refurbish them to a good quality standard. Properties will then be let at open market rents and will be intensely managed. The Treasury have offered support to this concept and have offered the Council financial support as part of the Growth Deal. It is proposed to have the company established and operational in the early part of the next financial year.

Strategic Housing has been successful in securing funding to roll out the Transience Programme across the rest of the town's inner areas. A successful pilot was undertaken in South Beach whereby multi-agency teams undertook comprehensive inspections of all privately rented property in the area alongside Selective Licensing. This enabled the Council to ensure that landlords complied with their obligations at the same time as engaging with residents. Individuals were assessed and support was provided where necessary. The objective of the programme is to provide early help where it is needed and help people settle into the community in order to reduce transience, and over time, reduce the burden on public services.

Tackle poor quality and poorly managed private rented properties through enforcement activity:

The South Beach Selective Licensing Scheme was implemented in April 2012. Following its success, a Claremont Additional and Selective Licensing Scheme commenced in March 2014 with approximately 1,400 private rented properties to be licensed. 220 of these still require a licence and enforcement action will commence in March 2015 to prosecute those that have still not been licensed. Proposals are underway to implement a further Additional and Selective Licensing Scheme in the inner wards including Brunswick, Talbot and part of Bloomfield which will ensure approximately 3,000 private rented properties will require a licence in these wards. Consultation in these areas will commence late 2015.

A multi-agency inspection programme involving Housing Enforcement Officers, the Police, the Fire Service and Support Services, commenced in July 2012 to improve and remove substandard accommodation where necessary. This involves a proactive inspection programme within the designated Selective Licensing areas ensuring that all private rented properties are tackled regarding poor condition and poor management. Enforcement action is taken at the point of access which may result in a Prohibition Order to close the property.

Planning Enforcement and Housing Enforcement Officers also commenced a dedicated multi-agency inspection operation targeting problem landlords in February 2014. This ongoing programme of inspections is targeted on a risk-based approach using previous history and any intelligence held. Landlords with large portfolios were targeted first, with warrants obtained to inspect as many of their properties as possible within the same day. This has resulted in a large number of Prohibition Orders being used to close down properties in poor condition, action taken against unlawful use and a number of prosecutions being submitted.

The South Beach and Claremont designated Selective Licensing areas both have a dedicated ASB Officer to proactively work with landlords to reduce anti-social behaviour and tackle poor management of the private rented sector, thereby further reducing anti-social behaviour. The Housing Enforcement team and the ASB Officers work collectively and are now utilising the new powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act with Community Protection Notices currently being processed and evidence being gathered with regard to Closure Notices. The South Beach ASB Officer has to date issued 13 Community Protection Notices. With regard to South Beach, the crime statistics show a reduction as follows:

Crime Category	Reduction
All crime	9.5%
Burglary dwelling	12.5%
Vehicle crime	37.3%
Domestic assaults	16.8%
Assaults with injury	17.9%
Domestic abuse crimes	8.8%
Domestic abuse incidents	14.3%
Anti-social behaviour	7.4%

** Performance for Apr – Sept 2014 compared with last year*

Strategic Risks Related to this Priority

The following risks are being monitored through the Strategic Risk Register to ensure that the necessary controls are put in place to effectively manage each risk.

Strategic Risk	Type	Risk Level
Lack of availability of affordable housing	Local	Low Priority

Details of the specific actions being taken to mitigate these risks can be found in the Strategic Risk Register.


Key Actions & Performance Indicators for this Priority


Details of the key actions and performance indicators for this priority can be found below.



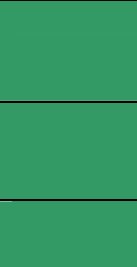


Priority 7 Key Actions

Key – Overall Progress:

 On track

 Not on track but being managed by the department

 Not on track and needs support from outside the department to bring back on track

Objective	Key Action	Milestones	Deadline	Dept	Lead Officer	Overall Progress	
Rebalance the town's housing supply	Redevelop Queens Park estate	Phase 2 delivery timetable agreed with developer	Aug 2014	PL	Steve Matthews		
		Reserve Matters planning permission approved	Feb 2015				
		92 homes completed	Mar 2015				
	Redevelop Rigby Road / Tyldesley Road	First phase complete	Mar 2015	PL	Steve Matthews		
	Implement Decent Homes programme	Programme complete	Mar 2015	PL	Steve Matthews		
Drive up housing standards	Private rented sector market	Firm business plan proposals prepared	Jun 2014	PL	Steve Matthews		
		Delivery structures established	Dec 2014				
		Initial actions made	Mar 2015				
	Support existing owners to convert guesthouses / HMOs to good quality accommodation	100 homes brought in to use through Clusters of Empty Homes fund	Mar 2015	PL	Steve Matthews		
	Energy efficiency programme implementation	Study of LA role in Green Deal / ECO completed	Jun 2014	PL	Steve Matthews		
		200 additional solid wall insulations	Dec 2014				
Tackle poor quality private rented properties	Extend Selective Licensing scheme	Commence Selective Licensing scheme in Claremont	Apr 2014	CES	Tim Cogan		
		Licence 1,300 properties	Jan 2015				
	Improve / remove / close down substandard properties	1,500 properties removed	Mar 2015	CES	Tim Cogan		
		1,000 Category 1 hazards removed					
300 units removed							
	Intervene to reduce ASB at targeted private rented properties	200 interventions to reduce ASB	Mar 2015	CES	Tim Cogan		

Priority 7 Performance Indicators

Key – Performance Trend:

- ✓ Performance is improving
- Performance is staying the same
- ✗ Performance is getting worse
- Data not due to be reported this quarter

Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2014/15		2013/14 Total	2012/13 Total	Trend	Comments
					Total	Target				
No. of new dwellings commenced						162				
No. of Council properties improved to Decent Homes standard						100%				
No. of substandard properties improved	550	1,283	1,559			1,500	2,132	New PI	✓	Claremont inspections commenced in Q2 2014/15
No. of Category 1 Hazards removed	365	698	715			1,000	1,620	New PI	✓	
No. of substandard units removed	21	203	52			300	221	New PI	✓	Rogue landlords operation during Q2 2014/15
No. of selective licences granted	372	520	195			1,300	886	New PI	✓	Claremont Selective Licensing scheme commenced April 2014
Number of selective licences referred for court action						n/a	9	New PI		Enforcement for Claremont will commence in March 2015
No. of interventions to reduce ASB	114	133	245			200	New PI	New PI	✓	Additional ASB Officer for Claremont