

Report to:

LEVELLING-UP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Relevant Officer:

Vikki Piper, Head of Housing

Date of meeting:

8 November 2023

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS ANNUAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 To update the Committee on key pieces of housing and homelessness work being undertaken, service performance, and progress made

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To note the Housing and Homelessness update, and identify any areas for additional scrutiny, or support.

3.0 Reason for recommendation(s)

3.1 To ensure that the Committee retains oversight of the housing and homelessness issues

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered

4.1 Not applicable

5.0 Council priority

5.1 The relevant Council priority is:

- 'The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool'
- 'Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience'

6.0 Background and key information

6.1 This is the third annual Housing and Homelessness report to Scrutiny Committee, following the review of 2019/2020

6.2 **Progress against Housing Strategy:**

There are 4 priorities within the current Housing Strategy for Blackpool:

- 1) New Housing supply
- 2) Improving the Private Rented Sector
- 3) Stabilising Lives
- 4) Increasing Delivery Capacity

Since 2018, when the strategy was first developed, we have:

- Put in place measures to restart the stalled development at Foxhall Village
- Continued to grow stock within our private rented housing company (Blackpool Housing Company) who now have 669 units
- Established an RP subsidiary of Blackpool Housing Company (Lumen Housing) allowing for greater intervention in the inner areas and the new offer of social housing. Lumen now have 53 units
- Developed 75 new quality council homes at Troutbeck, with a provision of accessible homes.
- Completion of Queens Park, providing 191 new quality council homes for rent.
- Started a new development on Grange Park which will provide 131 new homes for affordable rent, comprised of 2 to 6 bed houses, bungalows and new sheltered housing, all of which will have a variety of energy saving measures and technologies, including 30 ground source heat pumps.
- Introduced “The Blackpool Standard” within the selective licensing scheme in the Central area of Blackpool, designed to encourage landlords to improve their stock above the statutory minimum standards
- Continued to lobby government for more support in addressing PRS housing quality and raise standards, resulting in the current Decent Homes Pilot
- Successfully lobbied government for a review of supported housing – Blackpool is one of 20 LA’s currently piloting new approaches.
- Developed a Positive Pathway for young people leaving care and homelessness
- Developed a Multi-disciplinary approach within Housing Options, and as part of Changing Futures, which includes physical health, mental health, substance misuse services, and people with lived experience.
- Made the most of the opportunities brought about by the Levelling Up White paper to work with government and Homes England on plans to increase capacity and scale of intervention. These positive discussions have been possible due to the Council’s track record on delivery in housing services.

6.3 Housing Supply and Demand

Blackpool's housing market is characterised as having a higher than average proportion of private rented sector (PRS) housing than the national average, and a lower proportion of social housing:

	Blackpool	England
Social Housing	11%	17%
PRS	31%	21%
Owner Occupier	58%	62%

Levels of PRS have increased in the last 5 years from 26.5% and in some of our most deprived inner wards, are as high as 57%.

There are over 12,000 active households registered for social housing, with just under half of these having being assessed as in some form of "housing need" and awarded priority on the register. The largest demand is for 1 and 2 bedroom homes and the top 3 reasons for people being awarded priority on the register are due to overcrowding, homelessness, and medical/disability needs.

It should be noted that the housing register data has not been recently cleansed, and so the overall total may not be wholly accurate, however just under 2500 households applied for social housing in 2022/23 alone which shows considerable recent, and sustained demand.

There are approximately 6000 social housing homes in Blackpool, with just under 5,000 of these being Council houses. New Council housing schemes, such as the scheme currently underway at Grange Park, are funded through the Council's Housing Revenue Account, normally with some grant support from Homes England.

6.4 Homelessness data and Performance

All local authorities are required to provide quarterly uploads on homelessness data to DLUHC. This data is published for transparency and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>.

A number of national comparisons can be drawn from this data.

	Blackpool 21/22	Blackpool 22/23	England 21/22	England 22/23
Homeless households with support needs	83%	81%	51%	52%
Homeless households securing accommodating	55%	48%	39%	36%
Households for whom homelessness is prevented	60%	51%	56%	52%

This data shows that Blackpool is broadly in line with national performance on homelessness prevention, but performance is more positive than national averages in helping people secure alternative accommodation when homeless.

Blackpool also has a number of local PI's contained within the Homelessness Strategy. There are no national comparators for these, but these are further indicators that Blackpool is performing well, despite the significant pressures:

- 87% of clients receiving tenancy support maintained a tenancy for 12 months or more
- Only 8% of clients re-present to the service with a 12 month period
- Average length of time spent in temporary accommodation is still only 38 days

Blackpool has seen some increase in rough sleeping since 2022, but has still managed to maintain relatively low rough sleeper numbers post Covid. Current estimated single night figure is 10.

6.5 Homelessness Context and pressures:

All forms of homelessness increased across England during 2022/23.

Numbers of households in temporary accommodation (TA) have increased nationally by a further 10% in 22/23 and have now surpassed record highs. As at April 2023 there were 104,510 households in temporary accommodation, 64,940 of which have children, and the average length of time in TA for a household with children is between 2 and 5 years.

Blackpool has also seen a sustained increase in the use of temporary accommodation (TA). In November 2022 (time of last report) numbers in TA were 103, which was up from 80 the year before. At the time of writing, there are currently 128 households in TA.

Government data attributes 39% of the increase in homelessness nationally to loss of assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector (PRS)

Blackpool is particularly impacted by the increases in homelessness as a result of PRS accommodation ending due to our disproportionate levels of PRS stock. End of PRS accommodation accounts for 63% of all homeless presentations in Blackpool as opposed to 38% nationally.

This is further compounded by increases in PRS rents, which nationally are at the highest levels since 2016. This makes it much more challenging to source new, affordable, accommodation for those who do become homeless.

Although house prices and rents in Blackpool remain relatively low compared to some

parts of the country, wages in Blackpool are also low, and often insecure, meaning it is also particularly difficult for many people to secure a mortgage.

6.6 Homelessness Demographics:

Blackpool’s age profile for homelessness is broadly in line with national data,

<i>Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:</i>		
	<i>Blackpool</i>	<i>England</i>
16-17	1.2%	0.8%
18-24	17.8%	17.7%
25-34	27.8%	29.7%
35-44	24.7%	25.1%
45-54	14.7%	14.6%
55-64	9.4%	7.9%
65-74	3.1%	3.0%
75+	1.2%	1.1%
Not known ⁸	0.0%	0.1%

However when we look at our household composition there are some significant differences. In 2022/23 single adults made up 80% of relief cases (actually homeless) and 46% of prevention cases in Blackpool; compared with 68% and 49% respectively across England.

The higher level of single adults becoming homeless is not unusual and is reflective of our local population and issues such as transience, however data for the last quarter of 22/23 (most recent published data) is showing an increased proportion of family homelessness, both nationally and locally.

6.7 Key housing activities, priorities, and projects

6.8 New legislation:

This is a period of significant change in housing, and there are 3 key pieces of emerging legislation that the Council is watching closely:

Renters Reform Bill:

The Bill was preceded by the white paper “A Fairer Private Rented Sector” which contained a 12 point action plan. Key measures include:

- Halving the number of non – decent homes by 2030 by introducing a Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector.
- Abolishment of section 21 “no fault” evictions.
- Introduction of a new single housing ombudsman
- Introduction of a new property portal

The bill had its second reading on 23rd October, and has now passed to the first

committee stage

Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act:

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act received royal ascent in July 2023.

Key measures include:

- Introduction of national standards and licensing requirements
- Requirements for LA's to assess local need and develop a "supported Housing Strategy.

Full consultation on the new measures is expected shortly.

Social Housing (Regulation) Act:

The act received royal ascent on July 2023. Key measures include:

- strengthening the role of the Regulator of Social Housing to enable them to carry out regular proactive inspections
- additional Housing Ombudsman powers
- new qualification requirements for social housing managers

The act will have an impact for the Council as a landlord of almost 5,000 social housing properties

6.9 Housing Developments – key sites

Grange Park:

This scheme to develop 131 new homes for affordable rent, is well underway and the first residents have now moved in to their new homes. Although there are financial pressures as a result of increasing costs etc. the rest of the development is still on track

Foxhall Village:

Great Places are now on site and building out the final phase of the stalled development, with support from the Council (aim is for an additional 88 homes, and completion by August 2025)

6.10 Levelling Up

Blackpool Council was given Levelling Up pilot status in March 2022. A strong working relationship with Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities and Homes England is now embedded around the housing agenda, and work is now also beginning to take place with other government departments. On the housing front, Blackpool's pilot status has so far resulted in the funding of a 3 year programme to continue to improve standards in support housing, and £1.2 million in funding to conduct a proactive housing enforcement pilot. The pilot will inspect against current standards and utilize all existing tools and powers to address poor standards, and also assess properties against the future Decent Homes Standard, as outlined in the Renters Reform Bill. Work is also still in progress to secure capital funding for a first phase of physical housing intervention at scale via Homes England.

6.11 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of appendices

7.1 N/A

8.0 Financial considerations

8.1 None

9.0 Legal considerations

9.1 Please note information on emerging legislation at 6.8

10.0 Risk management considerations

10.1 None

11.0 Equalities considerations and the impact of this decision for our children and young people

11.1 The relevant strategies have had equality impact assessments

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations

12.1 The new housing at Grange park has had significant investment in carbon reduction technologies

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken

13.1 N/A

14.0 Background papers

14.1 None