

Housing and Health Committee	
Meeting Date	22 nd October 2024
Report Title	Affordable Housing Emergency - Update
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Classification	Open
Recommendations	The committee is recommended to: 1. To note the current progress on the Affordable Housing Emergency Motion.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Housing and Health Committee with an update on the Affordable Housing Emergency that was declared on the 3rd of April 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 On the 3rd of April 2024 Full Council unanimously declared an Affordable Housing Emergency, the Council resolved to carry out a number of actions in support of the motion.
- 2.2 The Housing and Health Committee at their meeting on the 1st of August asked to be updated on progress on the motion.
- 2.3 The table below details the actions agreed at Full Council and the current status of these actions.

No.	Action	Response	Status
1	Declare an Affordable Housing Emergency for the Borough of Swale.	This was declared on 3 rd of April 2024	Complete
2	Recognise and endorse the work of the Leader of the Council in working with District Council's Network in highlighting and tackling this issue.	This does currently form part of the Lobbying work being undertaken by District Council Network that we are a part of and will continue to be a focus.	Complete
3	Continue to work with the sector and try and engage Government to develop long term solutions to fix the national housing crisis.	Members and officers continue to engage and look for long-terms solutions.	In Progress
4	Call on the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the housing minister to urgently seek proper solutions to this crisis.	This has been actioned. However, since the change in Government it is proposed to write to the new Secretary of	In Progress

		State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the new housing minister, and Local MPs ahead of the Autumn Statement.	
5	Lobby government, for Local Housing Allowance Rates to be matched to Affordable Rent levels and to be linked to future increases in the Affordable Rent levels.	This forms part of the overall lobbying strategy.	In Progress
6	Policy and Resources committee to consider introducing and implementing discounts on planning fees for Registered Providers for land led schemes which deliver new social rent homes.	As fees are nationally set this isn't something that we can change locally.	Complete / Not progressed.
7	Policy and Resources Committee consider increasing the length of the council tax exemption period for Unoccupied properties owned by a charity to 12 months instead of 6 months to encourage registered providers to undertake works to bring existing social and affordable rent homes that are long term empty back into use instead of selling them off.	This will be considered when the policy is next reviewed. Consultation will take place with RP's ahead of the policy review to understand their views and if this would have a tangible impact.	Scheduled to progress.
8	That the Housing & Health Committee consider updating the rules for applying and use of the Community Housing Fund grants to allow applications for grants towards capital spend as well as for research.	The CHF Swale BC has is not available for capital spend as per the Conditions of Grant imposed nationally on the fund.	Complete / Not progressed.
9	Lobby for Government to update the rate at which housing benefit can be claimed for temporary accommodation costs to be set at current Local Housing Allowance rates and to be index linked.	This forms part of the Lobbying work being undertaken by District Council Network that we are a part of and will continue to be a focus.	In Progress
10	That the Property and Regeneration Committee review the land holdings of the council particularly in areas that were transferred under the stock transfer to "Swale Housing Association" to ascertain if the transfer of some of this land to registered providers or community led housing organisations could provide additional new social and affordable rent homes.	There are several small parcels of land that exist, these have previously been explored with Registered Providers and viability was an issue. The Property Officer working group will monitor this work as part of the Property Asset Strategy and bring a report forward to Property and Regeneration in due course. The working groups TOR have been updated to ensure that any	In Progress

		disposals also consider Affordable Housing as part of the options analysis.	
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3 Proposals

3.1 To note the current progress on the Affordable Housing Emergency Motion.

4 Alternative Options

4.1 None

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 None

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Health & Housing - To aspire to be a borough where everyone has access to a decent home and improved health and wellbeing.
Financial, Resource and Property	As an update report there are no additional financial, resource and property implications. There are implications related to some of the actions and these will be highlighted in relation to the individual decision making.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Housing Motion has been declared in relation to the challenge to be able to deliver our statutory responsibilities in relation to Homelessness Services.
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	There is a significant link between the impact of quality affordable homes and the wider determinants of health.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The TA budget has been identified as a corporate risk, due to demand on the service and the budgetary impacts. The Affordable Housing

	Emergency and its associated actions are in place to assist in controlling the risk.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 None

8 Background Papers

8.1 Affordable Housing Emergency - [Agenda for Council on Wednesday, 3 April 2024, 7.00 pm \(swale.gov.uk\)](#)