



Homes Strategy 2020-2025 (summary)



Foreword from Cabinet Member

I am very pleased to commend this strategy document to residents in Lancaster district and in particular the members and officers of Lancaster City Council. The document brings together a full overview of the housing achievements of the last strategy with aspirations of the current council administration and the new requirements of our Local Plan and government strategy.

The context in which this strategy has been written has changed hugely since the last document was written. We now take into great account factors that include the effects of flooding, rising air pollution, extremes of weather, and the desire for this district to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Covid-19 lockdown is reflected in the changing need for indoor and outdoor space and for greater attention to housing quality, especially for older people and for those in private rented accommodation. Community links have been hugely strengthened by the lockdown experience and we now see listening to the community voice as a very significant influence in decisions about new homes.

New housing continues to be important in order to meet the undersupply of social and affordable housing. However, this document also recognises the urgent need for retrofitting current homes for thermal efficiency both in social housing stock but also in the high number of privately owned homes with low EPC rating. Workplace skills in this sector are low everywhere and the strategy will support extra jobs, apprenticeships and the skilling of the council workforce in order to reach climate change objectives more quickly and stimulate the local economy.

Providing homes is more than a roof over someone's head and this strategy develops the city council's long standing commitment to support the health and the social benefits of our housing expressed through new extra care schemes, regeneration of private and social housing in areas suffering from anti-social behaviour, community-led schemes and specialist accommodation for vulnerable young people, those with disability, veterans and ex homeless people.

The city council has never stood alone in providing homes for those in need in this district. It has always worked with developers, Registered Providers and other agencies including the county council to provide housing of all types and tenures. We expect these relationships to continue and strengthen through the Local Plan and the Local Plan Review. However the strategy also acknowledges the council's need to provide leadership and excellence in building standards, in retro-fitting and in letting properties for affordable rent so I welcome the discussion of the establishment of a council-owned trading company to allow us to achieve these aims.

Many thanks are owed to our Strategic Housing officer and many in the Housing and Planning teams for the production of this excellent document. It maps a way forward that is exciting and innovative and deserves the widest support.

**Councillor Caroline Jackson,
Portfolio Holder for Housing**

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Strategic Context	6
3. Local Context	7
4. The Lancaster Housing Market	8
5. Achievements at a Glance	9
6. Housing growth regeneration priorities and climate change	10
7. Regeneration Priorities	13
8. Summary of the council's housing and regeneration ambitions/standards	15
9. Our Homes Vision	16
10. Affordable Housing Growth	17
11. Improving Housing Quality	20
12. Promoting Independent Living (including Homelessness and Housing Options)	23
13. Creating Sustainable Communities	27
14. Improving Health through Housing	29
15. Meeting the Needs of Older People	31
16. Implementation Delivery and Monitoring of the Housing Strategy	33

1

Introduction



The Lancaster City Council Homes Strategy sets out the strategic direction for housing activity in the Lancaster district taking account of the identified housing need and supply alongside the quality of new and existing housing stock, by establishing a strategic framework which contributes positively towards the district's growth.

“The context in which this strategy has been written has changed hugely since the last document was written. We now take into great account factors that include the effects of flooding, rising air pollution, extremes of weather, and the desire for this district to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Covid-19 lockdown is reflected in the changing need for indoor and outdoor space and for greater attention to housing quality, especially for older people and for those in private rented accommodation. Community links have been hugely strengthened by the lockdown experience and we now see listening to the community voice as a very significant influence in decisions about new homes.”

Councillor Caroline Jackson, portfolio holder for Housing

Lancaster City Council's Ambition plan sets out the vision and priorities to allow Lancaster district to thrive as a vibrant regional centre in the north of England and by ensuring it is a great place to live work and visit. The council's objective is to care for and improve the lives of our residents and diverse communities across the district and, in particular to protect those who are the most vulnerable.

In January 2020, the council re-affirmed its priorities:

A SUSTAINABLE DISTRICT

AN INCLUSIVE AND PROSPEROUS LOCAL ECONOMY

HAPPY AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

A CO-OPERATIVE KIND AND RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL

2

Strategic Context



Housing has a critical role in helping the Council achieve its vision and priorities linking directly to the Local Plan by making sure there is a sufficient supply of good quality housing to meet the needs and requirements of our district population. Increasing the supply of affordable housing is fundamental to this, and the council has already developed a range of planning and housing policies that helps us to grow the existing affordable housing portfolio across the district, as well as ensuring that new homes are built to better space standards and can be adapted more easily to meet the changing needs of our diverse communities.

Since the last Housing Strategy was published in 2012, there have been a series of national policy changes which have directly impacted on housing. The thrust of government policy was initially set out in Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England published in November 2011 whereby the coalition administration sought to increase the supply of housing nationally. The policy changes include: -

- A series of incremental reforms to the Planning system - with more to come in later www.rtpi.org.uk/media/5036/priorities-for-planning-reform-in-england.pdf
- Accelerating house building through a number of measures and providing access to loan finance for building and construction projects as well as infrastructure funding.
- Offering incentives for home ownership such as First Buy and Help to Buy and the Right to Buy extension (which was subsequently put on hold).
- Implementing changes affecting the social and affordable housing sector including the continuation of the Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAP).

Welfare reform

Welfare Reforms will continue to reduce the income of many households in the city, particularly households who are already facing financial exclusion.

Lancaster district became a Universal Credit (UC) full service area in July 2016; with evidence suggesting that the implementation of UC has reduced the willingness of private sector landlords to accept people on benefits and that delays with UC payments has led to increased evictions as a result of arrears.

The freezing of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates from 2016 suggests that the gap between average rents and the LHA reduces the affordability of decent quality accommodation in the private rented sector for those dependent on benefits. This is a particular issue for the majority of those aged 35 and under who are only entitled to the Single Room Rate of the LHA.

Overcoming Challenges with Opportunities

Whilst drawing attention to a range of national policy drivers and challenges that have directly affected the need and demand for affordable housing, this has also given rise to Local Authorities thinking differently about how they can directly contribute towards the supply of new housing after a long period of inactivity. This has come about through the setting up of Local Authority Housing Companies. The 2011 Localism Act gives councils the powers to establish their own private companies, enabling them to borrow money more cheaply and avoid government-imposed restrictions. These freedoms could provide the catalyst to allow Lancaster City Council, for the first time in many years, to commence a programme of house building in Lancaster district, making a strong contribution to the volume and quality of housing to meet a local need, and positively contributing to climate change.

3

Local Context



Lancaster Population

Lancaster has a population of 142,500 people. The presence of two universities in the city reflect a larger than average rate of people aged 15-24. There are estimated to be around 17,000 higher education students in the district.

The district is a popular place for older people to retire with higher than average people aged 65 and over. By 2033 the number of residents aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 30%. The ageing population is an important consideration for us in developing this Strategy and so there is a dedicated theme on how we will meet the housing needs of older people.

Pre-Covid data suggests that out of work claimants are higher in the district at 3.0% of residents aged 16-64 compared to 2.2% for Great Britain.

13.0% of the Lancaster population live in fuel poverty compared to the national average 11.1%

There is a difference of 10.5 years for males and 7.0 years for females in life expectancy between the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas.

Meeting the housing needs of those in the most deprived areas is integral to this strategy to achieve happy, healthy and sustainable communities.

4 The Lancaster Housing Market



5 Achievements at a Glance



Post Brexit, it is not yet clear how household and international migration patterns will change across the UK. However, previous studies have consistently identified Lancaster as a self-contained housing market area with over 85% of residents living and working in the district with notable links with South Lakeland, Wyre and Preston in relation to migration and travel to workflows.

There are a total of 65,695 dwellings across the Lancaster district. Homeowners represent the largest percentage of tenure type with almost 70% owning outright or owning their home with a mortgage.

However, the private rented sector, at 27.8% is significantly larger than the national average of around 20%. This is in part due to the presence of the universities but is also due to people being unable to afford to buy their own home and as such, should be a key factor in this strategy.

The average house price in the Lancaster District is £196,200 compared to a regional average of **£208,800**. Average house prices are 6 times higher than average single income in Lancaster.

The Housing Land Monitoring Report illustrates the number of new dwellings completed. 3428 new dwellings (including student accommodation) were completed in the district over the period between 2011 to 2019. 789 of these were affordable housing, equivalent to 23%.

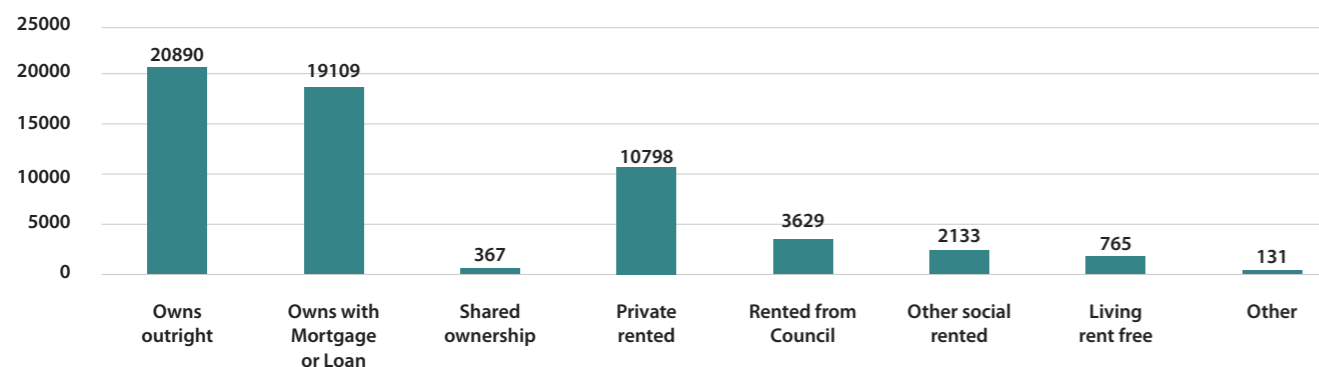
Lancaster City Council is a stock holding authority, owning **3702** homes. Registered Provider stock portfolio within Lancaster district is currently around **3,100** units with 35 different organisations owning stock. Despite these numbers, it is estimated that at least 6000 households are in need of affordable housing (10% of the population).

It is clear from the analysis of the council's social housing stock and the waiting list data that there is a mismatch between existing supply and presenting need. In recent years, Registered Providers have been encouraged to bring forward schemes which include one bedroom accommodation in response to the historic under-supply and also the impact of the bedroom tax which has affected all social housing providers although this continues to be a key challenge in levelling out the supply and local need.

Since the previous Housing Strategy 2012-2017 was published, the following achievements have been made: -

- 2898 new residential dwellings have been built
- 760 affordable housing completions across Lancaster district
- A new accommodation and support facility for women fleeing Domestic Violence has opened
- A new 23 unit supported housing scheme for single homeless people was delivered in partnership with Adactus Housing Group
- A new supported housing scheme for people with learning disabilities was delivered in partnership with Impact Housing
- £760K collected from new developments as financial contributions towards affordable housing
- The council provided grant funding to directly support 6 affordable housing schemes provided by Impact, Great Places, Guinness and Adactus (with 15 units achieving wheelchair standards)
- The council provided 2 sites to support the delivery of affordable housing schemes by Guinness and Adactus
- The council created a new Empty Homes Officer post to take a strategic approach to tackling empty properties in Lancaster district and an Empty Homes Strategy was approved in 2017
- With funding received from central government, the council has directly supported community led housing in Lancaster district and provided funding for two new community led housing schemes.
- £700K grant funding was provided to homeowners to make their properties more flood resilient

Tenure Split in Lancaster district



6

Housing growth regeneration priorities and climate change



The Lancaster District Local Plan sets out plans for regeneration and growth of the district. It includes measures to ensure housing growth is planned and delivered in a sustainable way, secures opportunities for regeneration and plans for infrastructure.

The Housing Strategy and the Local Plan are intended to work together to manage housing and ensure that local needs are met. Both rely on the same evidence, most notably, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The Local Plan sets out the overall development planned for within the district; and the Housing Strategy provides more detail around the housing needs of local communities.

Whilst not a formal planning document and consequently not part of the Statutory Development Plan, the Housing Strategy will be a material consideration in planning decisions. The 'Supplementary Planning Document – Meeting Housing Needs' and the 'Affordable Housing Practice Note' set out in more detail the expectation of affordable housing provision.

The Local Plan seeks to ensure the delivery of 10,440 new homes between 2011/12 to 2030/31. 2,595 of these homes had been completed by April 2018. The delivery of new housing through allocations in the Local Plan cannot fully address the objectively assessed need of around 620 homes per year due to constraints in the area. These constraints include areas liable to flooding, environmental designations and highway/accessibility factors. The Local Plan includes the release of land in the Green Belt.

The plan allocates four strategic housing sites, Lancaster South including Bailrigg Garden Village (Policy SG1), East Lancaster (SG7), North Lancaster (SG9) and Lunsfield Quarry, Carnforth (SG11). Together they will provide in the region of 5,380 homes.

LCC Climate Emergency statement:

'Lancaster City Council has already committed to reducing carbon emissions to zero by 2050, but the recent IPCC report shows it is imperative that this target is reached much sooner. Lancaster City Council can play its role. Business as usual is clearly no longer an option. We need local wisdom to increase our resilience and to prepare for climate changes already in the system. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 1.5c report, published in October 2018, humanity has 12 years for ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities to deliver rapid and far-reaching transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport and cities is needed to turn this around, so we can avoid reaching a tipping point where we no longer have the ability to avoid extreme weather events. It is vital that rural communities play their part in reducing carbon emissions. Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, new income streams and localising wealth generation; as well as improved well-being for people locally and worldwide.'

In declaring the emergency, Members called on the Council to undertake nine actions. These can be read in more detail via the full Council papers. However, of significance to the plan-making system was the second objective, which stated that the Council should:

'Support the setting up of a Climate Change Advisory Board which involves Councillors, residents, businesses, experts from the two universities and other relevant parties. Over the following 6 months the board will revisit and update the 2010 Lancaster City Council Climate Change Strategy and help the Council develop a new carbon budget, taking into account both production and consumption emissions and set a target date to:

- Make the Council's activities net-zero carbon;
- Consider systematically the climate change impact of each area of the Council activities;
- Increase local resilience to climate impacts already in the system;
- Maximise local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as health, agriculture, transport and the economy; and
- Support and work with other relevant agencies toward making Lancaster District zero carbon within the same timescale.'



In light of the climate emergency declaration, the Local Plan Review Action Group, was established in Terms of Reference agreed in October 2019. Five key ambitions have been set out: -

AMBITION 1	Achieving low/ zero carbon homes & improving the existing housing stock <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting of Districtwide Low Carbon Targets • The Spatial Distribution of Development • Energy efficient: Standard in New Development (Zero Carbon Homes) • Heritage Conservation considerations
AMBITION 2	Reducing car use and increased availability of public/ green/ active transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycling, Walking and modal Shift • Ultra-low emission vehicles • Air quality
AMBITION 3	Regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising brownfield development
AMBITION 4	Minimising flood risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water management, drainage and flood risk
AMBITION 5	Increasing on-shore wind power generation/ renewable energy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable energy • Green Infrastructure

Flooding

The City Council will explore ways in which to make properties more resilient to flooding, such as the inclusion of flood barriers, raising the height of electric and other services above flood levels and water resistant, easily cleanable surfaces. Where possible, measures will be included within future planned maintenance programmes and we will keep under review areas/housing stock that could be particularly at risk of flood. Landlords will also be encouraged to make properties resilient to protect tenants. Residents in areas at risk of flooding are encouraged to sign up to the Environment Agency's Flood Warning. This will give residents, time to prepare for flood events, to install flood barriers and move belongings upstairs where possible. £700K grant funding has been provided by Lancaster City Council to those homeowners previously affected by flooding to make their properties more flood resilient.

Priority 1 - Canal Quarter

- The council's aim and vision is to redevelop the area to create significant and wide-ranging economic benefits to the city and the wider district. It will include housing and business opportunities with arts and culture at its heart. More information <http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/sites/canal-quarter>

Priority 2 - Morecambe

- A bid for the Future High Streets Fund has been submitted to support the regeneration of Morecambe Town Centre. The funding will support the delivery of a regeneration programme that would bring wide ranging improvements and deliver a mixed-use scheme including commercial, retail, leisure and residential development opportunities. The residential element of the scheme would be another opportunity for the council to invest in housing delivery and increase its existing portfolio.
- The Chatsworth Gardens scheme taken forward was formulated in two distinct phases matching the physical presentation of the terraced housing – later named West End 1 and West End 2. West End 1, completed in 2016, remodelled 29 long term empty guest houses creating a collection of 51 refurbished townhouses and apartments blending the old with the new. Plans for West End 2 were submitted in 2017 seeing 23 long term former guest houses being extensively refurbished to create 45 modern homes providing a mix of two and three bedroom houses and apartments and following approval of the scheme, the project commenced on site and is still currently being completed.

- Lancaster City Council is keen to explore what potential exists to deliver a housing programme in Morecambe's West End, and one which not only seeks to increase the choice of good quality affordable housing in the area, but a programme which is developed working in partnership with the existing community. A number of positive links have already been established with community groups as a platform for further engagement and feasibility work that will allow the council to explore options and investment opportunities.

Priority 3 - Mainway Estate

- In 2019 the council commissioned a series of structural survey work on Mainway estate to robustly test the structural integrity of the existing apartment blocks. Although the surveys confirm that the blocks are currently structurally sound, the council will need to take preventative steps to improve and maintain the existing apartment blocks in their current form.
- The council could undertake a programme of external refurbishments across the estate which would meet the immediate need to ensure properties continue to be safe secure and fit for purpose for a further 25 years. However, the council would like to consider whether a more comprehensive regeneration programme could be undertaken on Mainway which could potentially deliver some dramatic improvements to the whole area by providing homes in a surrounding environment that are likely to meet the aspirational needs of our existing tenants. The council is fully committed to extensively consulting existing tenants and understanding their experience of living in the area, tenants wishes, views and expectations, and this will then formulate the regeneration programme undertaken for Mainway

Priority 4 - Ridge Square

- This is a small mixed tenure scheme which consists of commercial properties including two retail units, a community centre on the ground floor and 8 x first floor deck access residential apartments above, 5 of which are in the ownership of the HRA and 3 sold under right to buy and with the council granting a lease on the retail units. The construction type is dated and the design of the square has lent itself to recurring issues with anti-social behaviour. Residents of the first-floor apartments feel vulnerable due to the existing concrete staircases to each property.
- The council will conduct a detailed consultation and undertake a full options appraisal to understand the true costs of a regeneration programme and how this could be achieved and one which can retain the existing key services for the local community.

Priority 5 – Mellishaw Caravan Site

- In November 2019, the council approved the transfer of the existing Mellishaw Traveller Site from Lancashire County Council to Lancaster City Council, as a result of the county council declaring the surplus as part of a budget saving exercise. The site needs major investment estimated to cost £1.2M to improve the amenity blocks, sewerage and electricity infrastructure. Full council authorised a programme of capital works to be phased over a four-year period with full engagement planned with existing residents to agree suitable design and layouts.

8

Summary of the council's housing and regeneration ambitions / standards



New build

- Schemes are developed using the National Design Guide to create well-designed places and communities that are beautiful successful and sustainable and contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents
- The council will aim to build ultra-low carbon homes as part of its identified housing and regeneration priorities
- All new homes will meet Nationally Described Space Standards
- The council will seek to exceed the requirement of 20% of new homes meeting Building Regulations M4(2) accessibility standards wherever possible
- The council will have regard to Secured by Design Standards
- New build homes acquired by the council should meet a minimum of EPC* B with scope to increase to EPC A through future investment programmes

Acquisitions of existing housing and retrofitting

- Properties acquired by the council should either meet EPC C or be capable of achieving EPC C through a fundable retrofitting programme and contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents
- Retrofitting of council housing stock will seek to bring all properties up to a minimum of EPC* C
- Planned refurbishments will seek to achieve Secured by Design Standards

*EPC ratings are expected to be reviewed and any changes to the ratings system should still achieve or exceed the minimum ratings set out. Higher standards to those outlined may be required if changes in central government guidance take place.



Effectively meeting affordable and social housing need, promoting independence and creating happy, healthy and sustainable communities to make Lancaster district a great place to live.

Affordable Housing Growth	Maximising the amount of affordable homes available to rent and buy
Improving Housing Quality	Improving the quality and energy efficiency of homes, particularly in the private sector and reducing the number of empty homes
Promoting Independent Living	Minimising homelessness through greater focus on prevention and supporting vulnerable residents to live independently
Creating Sustainable Communities	Creating confident and sustainable communities through effective management of neighbourhoods and tackling anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and crime.
Improving Health through Housing	Promoting healthy lifestyles, reducing health inequalities, tackling poverty and supporting people to meet health needs through housing options
Meeting the Needs of Older People	Ensuring that the right housing options are available which allow older people to remain active and independent in their homes and communities



The Strategic Market Assessment suggests that around 6000 district households are in need of affordable housing (10% of the population).

We are working proactively with developers and housing associations via strategic land sales, advice and enabling to maximise affordable housing growth across Leeds, including affordable housing through market led housing development via Section 106 agreements. We have developed a range of policies to secure and maximise opportunities to increase the supply of affordable and social housing within Lancaster district whilst ensuring that new developments provide the right type and size of housing across tenures.

The requirement for affordable housing provision within development is summarised for each housing market area in the table below:

Lancaster, Carnforth and Rural West (the wards of Ellel and Bolton & Slyne)			
Greenfield	15 units and over	On-site	30%
Greenfield	10-14 units	On-site	20%
Brownfield	10 units and over	On-site	20%
Morecambe, Heysham and Overton			
Greenfield	10 units and over	On-site	15%
Rural East (Halton-with-Aughton, Kellet, Lower Lune Valley, Upper Lune Valley, excluding the Forest of Bowland AONB)			
Greenfield	10 units and over	On-site	40%
Brownfield	10 units and over	On-site	30%
Forest of Bowland (Policy DM6)			
All sites	2-5 units	Financial contribution	50% in lieu of on-side provision
All sites	6 units and over	On-site	50%
Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB (Policy AS03)			
All sites	2 units and over	On-site	50%

Affordable Housing is generally categorised into two main types: intermediate affordable housing and social housing. The council's existing planning policy require that on new developments requiring on-site affordable housing detailed on Table 8.2, the affordable housing is provided as 50% intermediate housing and 50% social housing (either affordable rented or social rented units). This ensures that the tenure provided on each development will meet the widest range of need but also contributes positively to the creation of sustainable communities and neighbourhoods.

Intermediate Housing

In the Lancaster district, shared ownership has been deemed the most suitable form of intermediate housing because it provides the scope and flexibility to align to the lowest income requirement of any other form of intermediate housing. First Homes are akin to discounted market sale units, but unlike Starter homes, would provide a discount in-perpetuity each time the property is sold on to a qualifying household. The model could provide scope for local authorities to set the level of discount that should apply aligning to local need and affordability. If there is a mandatory requirement for Local Authorities to implement first Home, then the council will need to overhaul the existing affordable housing policy and carefully assess the impact of setting the level of discount alongside the types /amount of affordable housing that can be provided.

Affordable Rented

Up until 2010 Registered Providers were typically providing social housing in the form of family housing. However, in the last decade and through continuous dialogue with the council, measures have been taken to increase the supply of social housing available for single people.

It is clear from the analysis of the council's social housing stock and the waiting list data that there is a mismatch between existing supply and presenting need. In recent years, Registered Providers are encouraged to bring forward schemes which include one bedroom accommodation in response to the historic under-supply and also the impact of the bedroom tax which has affected all social housing providers although this continues to be a key challenge in levelling out the supply and local need.

New Build Council Housing

The council's new administration remains very committed to bringing a programme of new build council housing forward utilising the council's borrowing headroom and any external subsidy that can be drawn down to support schemes to assist with affordable housing and infrastructure. In order to increase our portfolio of social and affordable housing, early indications suggest that the council can comfortably borrow around £25 Million to invest in new build schemes and regeneration programmes. Furthermore, the council can also make use of prudential borrowing through the General Fund and set up a housing delivery vehicle such as a Local Authority Housing Company as a means of generating development funding to bring forward mixed tenure schemes offering a wider range of housing tenures.

Community Led Housing

In 2016/17 we received £770K from the central government Community Housing Fund – a direct award given to local authorities most effected by second homes ownership to help promote and develop community led housing. A community-led approach to housing development galvanises local support and is driven by the commitment and energy of the very individuals and communities that it will benefit. As a result of the close engagement and creativity of local people, the community-led model typically delivers high design quality, high standards of construction and energy efficiency, and uses progressive, innovative building techniques.

Through grant funding and officer assistance, we are currently supporting two Halton based community groups to develop 40 new homes including 26 affordable, on the Mill Lane site in Halton. Senior Co-Housing Group Ltd is

seeking to build 20 homes for older people which is 14 homes for sale and 6 affordable homes. Lune Valley Community Land Trust is working in partnership with South Lakes Housing (a Registered Provider) to bring forward 20 affordable homes on the adjacent site which will include a mix of property types and sizes to meet local need. Both proposed schemes will provide zero carbon homes subject to obtaining planning permission later this year and will complement the existing Lancaster Co-Housing development which was built to Passivhaus standards.

We are also exploring options to deliver a community led housing project in Morecambe's West End having engaged positively with community groups over the last 6-9 months. Further work is required to investigate a suitable community led model and to establish the objectives and scope of what could potentially be achieved, although the ultimate aim is to improve access to good quality affordable housing in the area to meet a local need.

Self-Build

Planning applications for self, custom or community-led housing, built by individuals or groups of individuals for their own occupation will be supported by the Council where they are located in sustainable locations. The Council will seek to identify plots for self and custom build housing where the need is clearly identified via the Self Build Register.

WE WILL

- Set up a housing company wholly owned by the council to support the delivery of housing and regeneration priorities
- Explore and deliver a regeneration programme for the Canal Quarter which includes mixed tenure residential housing and the possibility of community led schemes.
- Identify options to provide a comprehensive regeneration scheme for Mainway following detailed consultation with tenants, residents and key stakeholders.
- Explore and bring forward a purpose-built extra care scheme in north Lancaster.
- Explore and take forward a new programme of housing acquisitions in Morecambe.
- Provide at least one new development officer post to lead on and support existing staff on all key housing projects identified.
- Develop a new social lettings agency either delivered in house or through a new partnership.



Private Sector Housing Stock

Improvements in the private rented housing stock continue to focus on Morecambe's West End, which has been a well-established regeneration priority, and which continues to address some of the worst housing conditions in the district, balance the housing market and increase the choice of tenures available in the area.

The private rented sector represents around 20% of the housing market in Lancaster, and with increasing barriers around affordability and access to deposits for newly forming households unable to buy their own home outright, it is likely to be a growing sector. To encourage and promote responsible renting, we have delivered a range of measures but will also use enforcement and legal powers to deal with poor property conditions and management standards.

Mandatory Licensing already exists for houses in multiple occupation (HMO), and the government recently broadened the definition of HMO's in 2018 to include properties let to 5 or more people or 2 or more households, and also applies to blocks of purpose built flats where there are up to two flats in the block and one or both are occupied as a HMO. We have around 480 properties currently under license.

We successfully bid for government funding to tackle rogue landlords in 2019.

The funding is intended to provide local authorities with additional resources in increase capacity and create new digital tools. The funding has allowed us to create a training programme for existing enforcement staff across the Lancashire region. The first round of training has been provided and this has increased the skills and knowledge of staff as well as creating a platform for best practice and shared learning across local authorities in Lancashire. A further programme of training is planned for 2020.

Selective Licensing is a scheme which allows a local authority to introduce licensing conditions to all other private rented housing within a designated area. Selective licensing can only be introduced if certain conditions are present, such as low housing demand, the area experiences significant and persistent problems around anti-social behaviour and some or all of the private sector landlords are failing to adequately manage anti-social behaviour within their tenancies. In 2017 a consultation around selective licensing was undertaken in the Harbour and Heysham North wards, the findings of which indicated an overwhelmingly positive response to the introduction of selective licensing. At the time cabinet members felt that further engagement with landlords should be undertaken first.

Social Housing

In 2010, the government set the minimum standard that all social housing must meet known as the decent homes standard, which means homes: -

- must be fit for human habitation
- they must be in reasonable state of repair
- they must have reasonably modern facilities
- provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

All dwellings owned and managed by the councils Housing Revenue Account (HRA) already met the decent homes standard, so we set our own "Decent Homes Plus" standard, set above that of the decent homes standard. Decent Homes Plus provides a commitment that tenants will be properly consulted and have a degree of choice about planned works such as kitchen layouts and finishes. Since 2010, capital investment of the council stock has averaged £4M per year. In addition, we have our own dedicated budget for adaptations to council stock which is circa £300K per annum.

Green Homes Grant

The government recently made funding available to local authorities under the Green Homes Grant LAD scheme. The grants for a minimum of £250,000 are to be targeted on properties at EPC D and below and works need to be completed by September 2021. The city council is now in discussions with other neighbouring authorities in Lancashire to explore a consortia bid to be submitted by December 4th.

Cladding and Fire Safety

A joint initiative with the Fire Service has been undertaken in 2019 to identify issues with cladding and fire safety, and whilst the initial inspections did not highlight any significant issues with cladding, a number of fire safety measures have been implemented.

Carbon reduction

We have undertaken a series of pilot projects to measure the practicality, cost and effectiveness of measures to improve thermal performance in our social housing stock. In advance of planned works for a major refurbishment of 60 properties in Beaumont avenue and Hill Road, a retro-fit pilot project on 4 properties will be completed in the current financial year. The aim of the pilot is to assess what specification delivers the most cost effective improvement in thermal performance in conjunction with the planned renewal of doors and windows, re-plastering and essential repairs to the building fabric, which are the drivers for the project. The projects have allowed the council's Repairs and Maintenance Team to increase their capacity and knowledge to undertake, supervise and manage energy efficiency works and to develop those skills further in devising suitable retrofitting systems.

The Lancaster district is part of the Cosy Homes in Lancashire scheme (CHiL) which launched in 2014 leveraging in Warm Homes Funding. Over £10million funding has allowed more than 10,500 residents to save money through energy saving advice and measures. Since 2018, 41 measures to improve homes have been undertaken in Lancaster district including new boilers and loft insulation.

The Government has recently announced a package of funding through a National Green Homes Grant Scheme which seeks to tackle the worse performing dwellings rated at EPC E or below. The Green Homes Grants will largely focus on primary measures such as different forms of insulation, heat pumps and solar thermal. Higher levels of grant (£10K) will be means tested to low income households who are homeowners with £5K available for all other households including social housing tenants.

WE WILL

- Review the introduction of the **selective licensing** scheme in Morecambe's West End, assessing (and where necessary mitigating) likely impact on supply of affordable housing for those experiencing/ at risk of homelessness.

Student Accommodation

There has been a significant increase in the amount of purpose-built student accommodation in Lancaster. 332 student bedrooms were completed between 2018 and 2019. Student completions will increase significantly with developments at Bulk Road and Luneside East.

We endeavour to ensure that new purpose-built accommodation is located in appropriate locations and does not adversely affect the amenity of communities. New accommodation should be built on campus or within or directly adjacent to Lancaster City Centre.

WE WILL

- Take a more strategic approach to the provision of student housing in Lancaster district, working collaboratively with the two Universities and existing student housing providers, and make use of existing planning powers to control applications that seek to provide more student housing in residential areas.

Empty Homes

When we re-affirmed our housing and regeneration priorities in 2011, one of the priorities identified was to tackle empty homes. A new officer post was initially created in 2013 to allow the council to take a more strategic approach to tackling empty homes creating a dedicated resource to compile comprehensive and reliable data on empty homes and to use a range of methods, tools and incentives to bring

empty homes back into use. Since 2013, a total of 459 empty homes have been brought back into use with officer intervention.

However, there are still approximately 858 long-term empty homes in the district which represents close to 2% of dwelling stock, therefore further work is needed to bring these vital homes back into use.

WE WILL

- Purchase the BRE housing stock condition module - To obtain comprehensive data on the existing dwelling stock which will allow detailed analysis and the targeting of poorly performing properties
- Create a new Retrofit Advisor officer post within the Homes Improvement Agency and allow existing Council Housing (Repairs and Maintenance staff) to undertake Retrofit Assessor training to gain the PAS2035 accreditation.
- Continue to pro-actively reduce the number of empty homes and explore funding opportunities wherever possible.
- Create a new Energy Advice Officer within Council Housing Services - To support tenants by providing advice on heating systems, budgeting and implementing new energy measures to combat fuel poverty.

12

Promoting Independent Living



Impact of COVID-19 on homelessness

Lancaster City Council took immediate action to bring all rough sleepers indoors utilising a range of vacant council housing stock, supported housing and hotel accommodation. Sustaining rough sleepers in those settings is a constant challenge and an effective Health and Wellbeing partnership has been created bringing local authority, NHS and criminal justice departments together. The focus of this group is to develop bespoke health pathways to improve access to health services and improve the health of the homeless population, recognising that other groups, particularly the Homeless Advisory Group and Homelessness Forum, are working on the wider housing, economic and welfare issues

Following a pledge from government to increase the support to local authorities with the next stage of the Covid-19 rough sleeping response, in July 2020, the next steps Accommodation Programme was launched and we were awarded £192K. The award takes account of the direct costs to the council for provision of temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, funding for winter provision, funding to set up the Help2Rent Landlord Incentive Scheme to increase access to private rented accommodation to house rough sleepers, additional funding to facilitate timely

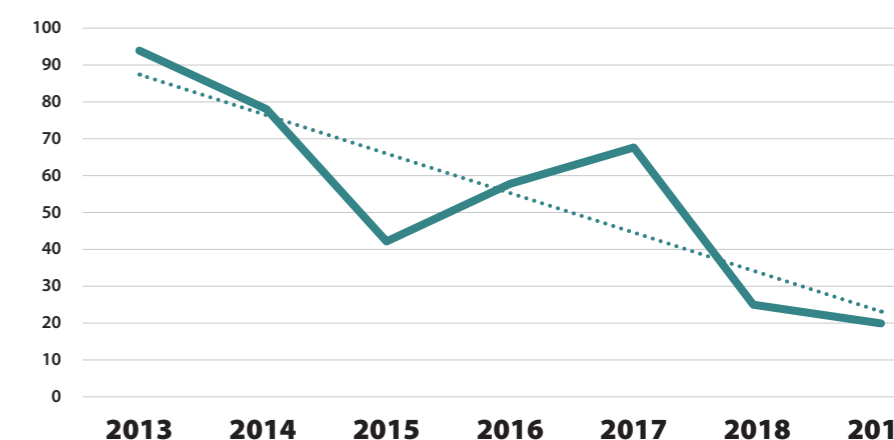
moves from supported housing and funding that allows the council to extend the new intensive floating support service. In future bidding rounds, the council will be seeking to secure funding for longer-term move-on accommodation as well as revenue funding to provide the necessary support packages which are critical to tenancies being sustained.

In order to create happy, healthy and sustainable communities where people can thrive independently, access to suitable housing and support is vital. Therefore, it is a priority for us to ensure that residents are able to live independently in homes where they feel safe and supported.

We are currently reviewing our allocation policy and will be undertaking public consultation later in the year. Going forward, we are seeking to extend the functionality of the Ideal Choice Homes scheme by including other forms of housing, such as private sector and all forms of affordable housing and is seeking to make the system more user friendly and interactive. We are also considering the merits of having a dedicated shop unit to have a more prominent high street presence for the Choice Based Lettings Team.

Homelessness

Analysis of data from the previous five years shows there has been an overall downward trend in households presenting who are owed a duty under the Housing Act 1996 section 193. Over 50% of those owed a duty continue to be single adult males. **Applications - eligible, unintentionally homeless & priority need.**



WE WILL

- Upgrade our housing options software so it is fully compatible with MHCLG H-CLIC system and start monitoring statutory work in more detail.

Housing Related Support

Since the last strategy we have created a new Household Intervention Service with two officer posts being created in 2017 and then a further post created in 2018. The team support up to 20 council tenants referred by the Housing Option Team, Estate Managers or the Income Management Team. The service is designed to assist with straight forward tenancy set up, debt issues, supporting tenants involved with multi-disciplinary teams and working with tenants who have complex needs i.e. chaotic lifestyles, mental ill health including issues around hoarding and substance issue issues. The support will remain in place for as long as it will be required although there is an expectation that the level of support will reduce over time and taper off. The creation of this type of support has been invaluable and has directly resulted in tenancies being sustained that would otherwise fail and has positively impacted on rent collection.

A new Rough Sleepers' Support Service is being commissioned by Lancaster City Council to provide intensive housing floating support to those recently rehoused by the council as part of the government "Everyone In" campaign to bring all rough sleepers in off the streets and into safe accommodation to protect vulnerable rough sleepers from the COVID-19 virus.

Homelessness Strategy 2020-2023

In 2019 we commissioned an independent social research consultancy Imogen Blood & Associates (IBA) to conduct a Homelessness Review which involved relevant partners, including statutory partners, voluntary sector and specialist providers, and people with lived experience. This review formed the basis of the new Homelessness Strategy which identified 3 key priorities:



1. Preventing homelessness at key transitions:

Develop our initial contact services both in-house and through outreach to ensure that anyone facing homelessness is aware of their rights, knows what help is available and that our staff are adequately trained and resourced to deliver an excellent quality of service.

Promote our services through partnership work. We recognise that we cannot solve homelessness alone, our partners are key to ensuring we reach each and every individual in the district who is at risk of homeless.

Provide a smooth transition from hospital/prison/care settings to home. Individuals leaving prison, hospital or the care system are at a significantly increased risk of homelessness whilst also being some of our most vulnerable people in housing need. LCC is committed to ensuring all those leaving prison/hospital or the care system, are prevented from becoming homeless.

2. Tackling rough sleeping and supporting people out of homelessness

To ensure we continue to provide support to those recently housed as well as those who newly present on our streets we will enhance our outreach services to include Navigators and Supported Lettings Officers with MHCLG funding to provide additional support and a more flexible approach for those with more complex needs. In addition, we will explore the feasibility of a high-fidelity Housing First offer (non-time limited support alongside ordinary housing, based on principles of choice, harm minimisation and linking into healthcare and other relevant services) for this cohort.

To provide the most effective, sustainable, person-centred offer to individuals who present in need, we must ensure all support services in the district and beyond work together cohesively and are clear and transparent about what they can and can't offer.

To ensure our services continue to evolve to meet the needs of those who present on our streets we will develop a number of ways to evaluate and improve our services.

We recognise that investment in our accommodation and support provision is necessary to continue to meet the specific needs of those who are homeless as well as offer a sustainable package of support to help them maintain their accommodation. To achieve this we will:

- Open a new 23 bed refuge for those who have experienced dv, including 6 spaces for people with complex needs
- End all use of B&B by year 2, by increasing prevention activity and access to a range of leased, hostel, and supported lodging accommodation.
- Continue plans to develop a multi-agency one-stop hub for complex needs/rough sleepers in partnership with CGL/Inspire. (At Feb 2020, capital secured – planning applications submitted)
- Fund and deliver a flexible floating support service, which can support resettlement. This should be able to offer one-off or ongoing support as needed.

3. Improving access to settled housing

To improve access to settled housing we will:

- Continue funding the Calico Accommodation Finder offer and explore a more robust rent bond offer within this.
- Explore the feasibility of a new Social Lettings Offer for Lancaster and Morecambe. Explore within this the feasibility of a managed shared offer for under 35s.

Training and Employment

In the context of housing and other forms of development, we have recently implemented a requirement for all major developments to include an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) as a requirement of planning permission working closely with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). The ESP seeks to ensure that wherever possible, local labour/local suppliers will be used during the construction phase and that local people will be provided with the opportunity for training and apprenticeships.

A critical element of supporting the National Green Homes Grant Scheme is accessing local contractors who meet the required accreditations for measures (either Trustmark or PAS2035) and there is a clear role for the council to provide the necessary advice support and infrastructure to make use of the funding available and to create the local labour force needed. A number of staff employed by the Council's Repairs and Maintenance Team are already trained in Domestic Energy Assessments with scope to become Retrofit Assessors, training to create an in-house team to because qualified installers is being investigated as well as partnerships with local contractors for deep retrofitting schemes. Undertaking retrofit assessments across all tenures could be critically important to ensure local residents are given impartial advice and directed towards the most appropriate measures.

Kickstart - The government have recently announced the Kickstart programme which can be used to create new six-month job placements for young people (16-24) who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Job placements should support the participants to develop the skills and experience they need to find work after completing the programme. The Council is committed to support this initiative within its Housing Services in partnership with other organisations, with job placements due to begin from April 2021.



People with disabilities

After the last Strategy was prepared, the lead commissioner for Learning/Physical Disabilities at Lancashire County Council commenced a series of engagement sessions with district councils across the county called "Keeping it Local". This was an initiative designed to align previously commissioned services into a refreshed strategy.

People with Learning/Physical Disabilities/Mental Health

Current supply of Housing with Care and Support is not equitable across Lancashire – there are too many properties for shared households and not enough modern apartment schemes which is restricting choice and the ability for people to live more independently.

The target agreed with Lancashire County Council in the formulation of this Strategy is to provide 60 new apartments by 2025. At the present time, three new services are planned in Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham, subject to planning permission being granted and as new provision comes

forward, there will be a need to review the existing group home provision and agree a decommissioning plan. The city council will continue to work very closely with Commissioning Leads to bring schemes already identified into fruition and identify other potential opportunities.

Purpose built Wheelchair Accommodation - Since the last strategy was produced, there has been a net increase of 22 wheelchair properties: 12 at Factory Hill Lancaster (Impact Housing Association), 3 at Riverview Close Lancaster (Jigsaw Homes) and 7 at The Globe, Westgate (Jigsaw). Lancaster City Council provided grant funding to directly support the delivery of 15 of these properties. Policy DM2 of the Local Plan requires that all new homes are built to the Nationally Described Space Standards and that 20% of all new homes (20% of both the affordable and market homes on a site) are built to meet the Building Regulation Requirement M4(2) (accessible and adaptable homes). The council will still actively explore opportunities to provide wheelchair accessible accommodation on new schemes wherever possible.

Safe and Secure Neighbourhoods

The council plays a fundamental role in achieving community cohesion through a range of activities. Planning for new homes seeks to provide neighbourhoods that meet the needs of the widest possible range of residents with social and affordable housing being integrated into market housing schemes. In design terms, the development management team regularly consult the Designing Out Crime Officer at Lancashire Constabulary. There are also very well-established links and close partnership working with the Lancashire Constabulary's Partnerships Officer who is consulted on proposals that may impact upon community safety within neighbourhoods, the City and Town Centres. This is particularly relevant for new housing services that seek to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

In order to bridge a gap between statutory nuisance and Police intervention, a new Anti-Social Behaviour Team was established in 2018, utilising funding from Transformational Challenge Award, Lancaster City Council and Morecambe Town Council. Whilst the initial focus was Morecambe, the ASB Team is now a mainstream function within Lancaster City Council's establishment with 2 full time officers and a seconded PCSO.

Community Connectors

In 2019 the council created a new Team of three Community Connectors. The aim of this service is for the community-based team to bring Lancaster City Council closer to residents who live and work within the district, and actively contribute to the council's key ambition of supporting healthy and happy communities. The community connectors have already engaged with a wide range of communities and organisations across the district to listen to resident's views about council services, to support communities to engage with each other and promote community work and activities as well as providing practical support.

Gypsies and Travellers

In 2017, Lancaster City Council commissioned a new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in Lancaster district. The overall objective was to form a clear evidence base to inform the development of planning policies relating to Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople. The study was commissioned in the light of regulatory changes made in the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites in 2015 which altered the definition of Gypsies and Travellers. The full report can be found at www.planningdocs.lancaster.gov.uk/NorthgatePublicDocs/00909789.pdf

Domestic Violence

Since the last Strategy was prepared, a six-bed refuge was commissioned for women fleeing domestic violence. Earlier this year, this provision has been expanded into a much larger 20-bed scheme, providing a safe setting for up to five women with complex needs and for up to 15 families.

Through the council's homelessness funding, a 'Sanctuary' and 'Haven' service is offered which provides a range of security works and equipment to the homes of 'at risk' clients suffering Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Violence, for victims who wish to remain in their current home rather than move to alternative accommodation.

The increase in provision is extremely timely in the light of Covid-19 which has seen a marked increase in the level of incidents of domestic violence nationally and arguably the ability to refer women with complex needs into a suitable service will clearly meet an identified gap.

WE WILL

- To work in partnership with Commissioning Leads at Lancashire County Council to bring forward supported living schemes for people with Learning and/or Physical Disabilities/Mental Health
- Increase the supply of purpose-built wheelchair properties where possible.
- Explore and bring forward a purpose-built extra care scheme in North Lancaster.



Refugees and Asylum Seekers

There are two resettlement schemes for Refugees: Lancashire County Council has primarily been the lead authority on both these schemes, and funding from central Government for each person accommodated accompanies both schemes. The council has committed to place 500 Syrian refugees and 75 vulnerable children, a total of 575 persons to be placed across Lancashire over a 5-year period.

In July 2015, the Home Office embarked on a widening dispersal programme with the Local Authorities that had not previously been engaged in supporting the dispersal of Asylum Seekers. The Asylum Seekers Dispersal Scheme has been ongoing in Lancaster since October 2015. Serco find accommodation in the private sector then consult with the Local Authority and police on standards and suitability. Currently there are 35 properties in use.

Young People

There are a number of designated services for young people summarised below:-

- Morecambe Foyer (Barnardos) – 25 bed spaces including some crisis beds. 24 hr staff.
- Dallam Avenue (Barnardos) – 4 bed spaces with visiting support.
- High Street (Barnardos) – 7 bed spaces, shared accommodation, 24 hour staff.
- Mariners View (Jigsaw) – 11 bed spaces, self-contained accommodation with visiting support.

A new shared house at Coulston Road was also commissioned in 2017 through a partnership between Places for People and Barnardos which is used as move on accommodation for young people who are ready to leave a supported housing setting and are working towards independent living.

Ex-Offenders

A new service at Oak Tree House, West Road, Lancaster was commissioned providing 23 units of purpose-built accommodation, a range of on-site services and round the clock staffing teams, the Stonham Project closed. Oak Tree House was originally intended to meet the needs of single homeless people over the age of 25, which included people with an offending background. Since service opening, the age criteria was reduced to 18 and above which was primarily to address the cuts to the Supporting People programme and to improve access to supported housing across Lancashire.

The Lancashire Strategic Reducing Reoffending Board has sought to develop housing pathways for offenders. A Reducing Re-Offending Task and Finish Group was set up to develop accommodation pathways as a direct response to the report findings of the HM Inspectorate of Probation citing that the lack of accommodation and support for offenders is jeopardising public protection and rehabilitation of offenders. Placing high risk/schedule 1 Offenders is increasingly problematic, and to address this, a commitment has been given by local authorities in Lancashire to create a pool of suitable properties across the county that all districts can potentially access.

Earlier this year, the council engaged in dialogue with staff at HMP Lancaster Farms to discuss options to improve the current operational practices and communication networks around prison release plans. Furthermore, Calico Enterprises is exploring a pilot scheme that would provide a guaranteed construction training placement and supported housing offer in Lancaster district for those leaving prison with a local connection, and this is something the council is very keen to develop and implement. There is a need to increase the supply of one-bedroom accommodation, ideally in a dispersed setting, for difficult to place offenders.

The provision of good quality housing is intrinsically linked to tackling health inequalities but must also form part of a wider framework of support and advice around maximising income, tackling worklessness, improving life chances and promoting healthy lifestyles and effective partnership working with a wide range of health and social care professionals and embedded in front line services.

Food Poverty

During the pandemic, Lancaster City Council and Morecambe Bay Foodbank launched a partnership, with the support of other local charities, organisations and volunteers, to co-ordinate and deliver emergency food parcels to vulnerable people across the district.

A key component of health and wellbeing is maintaining a healthy diet and nutrition. Lancaster District Food Poverty Alliance (LDFPA) is a formal coalition of organisations including the city council, came together to campaign to reduce food poverty in the Lancaster district. LDFPA's core purpose is to establish a formal food poverty network that coordinates work locally, facilitates collaboration and develops a long term action plan for tackling food poverty locally, and to scope and identify a central base for a community food hub that can become a central point of information and activity for food poverty work locally. The City Council hopes to appoint an officer dedicated to food/fuel poverty.

Fuel poverty

13.6% of households in Lancaster district are estimated to live in fuel poverty, which is higher than the national England average of 10.9% with the main factors considered to include energy efficiency of housing, energy costs and household income.

Tackling fuel poverty links directly to the council's Happy and Healthy Communities ambition and is one which will require a strategic approach in the context of an absence of regeneration funding post 2011. More comprehensive targeting of the most poorly performing properties needs to be undertaken, making use of available funding to deliver measures will be critical, and the provision of appropriate support and advice to householders will be required from qualified retrofit assessments, identifying the most suitable measures for each property to practical help with fuel bills and budgeting.

A new Energy Advice Officer post is being created within the Council Housing Service to provide the necessary degree of support to existing council tenants to reduce incidents of fuel poverty. Further capital works to existing council housing stock is also planned to increase the provision of solar thermal and a pilot scheme is to be undertaken which will provide additional internal wall insulation on properties of solid wall construction.

The Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission

In 2016, the Morecambe Bay Poverty Truth Commission was established which includes representatives of those with lived experience of poverty, local councillors, the NHS, Lancaster University, faith groups, CVS and charities collectively seeking to bring lasting individual, social and cultural change. Presentations have taken place for a range of staff within the council to improve relationships, gain an understanding of the issues and to develop shared aims.

Substance misuse

In 2019, following the re-tendering of the Community Treatment Services, there has been significantly improved communication and partnership working across agencies. Inspire, the lead provider, have delivered direct support to housing providers (Oak Tree House in particular) and maintain very strong links with the City Council. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that access to treatment service is supported by an appropriate housing pathway and support plan, agreed between agencies.

Whilst recognising that our district offers a wide range of Treatment Services within the district, there is an intention to create a Housing First model which can accommodate the most chaotic individuals who can be supported in an appropriate setting to become abstinent and eventually go on to live in an independent setting.

People with Learning/Physical Disabilities/Mental Health

Lancashire County Council has developed a 'Housing Care and Support Strategy 2018-2025' the aims of which are to outline its vision for the modernisation of care and support across the 12 Lancashire districts and their plans to adopt partnership working with key stakeholders including District Strategic Housing Leads that can influence local Housing Strategies and ensure the needs of individuals with care needs are met.

A recent needs analysis was undertaken by Housing LIN on behalf of Lancashire County Council to identify need across all 12 districts for the next 10 years and this has highlighted the need in Lancaster and Morecambe of 22 additional units by 2021; 48 units by 2025/26 and 75 units by 2030/31 for young adults with care needs.

The target agreed with Lancashire County Council in the formulation of this Strategy is to provide 60 new apartments by 2025. At the present time, three new services are planned in Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham, subject to planning permission being granted and as new provision comes forward, there will be a need to review the existing group home provision and agree a decommissioning plan. The city council will continue to work very closely with Commissioning Leads to bring schemes already identified into fruition and identify other potential opportunities.

15

Meeting the Needs of Older People



A major strategic challenge for us is to ensure a range of appropriate housing provision, adaptations and support for the district's older population. The number of people across Lancaster aged 65 or over is predicted to increase from 28,500 in 2017 to 37,000 by 2033 (29.8%). Whilst it is too early to understand the national and local impact of Covid-19 the total number of deaths in our district at the end of August 2020 was 64 and therefore a marked change in population growth is unlikely.

We have over 1000 social housing units designated for older people. Older people in need of social housing generally have better choice and prospects than other groups who need rehousing. The most significant need identified for the district is to provide new purpose-built extra care housing that will allow our ageing population to remain in an independent setting for as long as possible.

Lancashire County Council's Extra Care Strategy, first published in 2014 and relaunched as The Housing with Care and Support Strategy 2019, seeks to increase the provision of specialist housing for older people and younger adults with disabilities. The main purpose of the Strategy is to: -

- To promote health, wellbeing and independence.
- Reduce reliance on residential care placements (admissions in Lancashire were 24% higher than the national average)
- To provide at least one purpose built extra care scheme for older people in every district in Lancashire by 2025.
- Wherever possible to bring forward extra care schemes that would provide a minimum of 60 dwellings for rent

A key priority is for us to work collaboratively with Lancashire County Council to bring new extra care schemes into fruition. An opportunity to bring forward a new extra care scheme on a site in North Lancaster is currently being investigated, along with a proposal to provide a new extra care facility on a site within the existing University of Cumbria's Lancaster campus which is currently submitted for planning approval with a decision pending.

Adaptations and increasing the provision of accessible homes

As part of our landlord function, we have maintained a specific budget to fund the cost of adaptations to council properties. The budget is circa £250K per annum providing around 60-80 adaptations each year such as wet room installation to more comprehensive physical alterations to properties.



Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

Our in-house Home Improvement Agency (HIA) aim is to enable vulnerable residents to maintain independence and to remain safe, secure and warm in their own homes. The agency is formally recognised by Foundations, the Government's body for Home Improvement Agencies and has won national awards for 'Adaptation service of the Year' in 2016 and commended in 2018.

The HIA work reduces social isolation, increases health and wellbeing, improves homes, reduces fuel poverty, improves neighbourhoods and reduces the need for residents to go into alternative housing. The HIA casework also seeks to increase resident's income, which indirectly improves the local economy.

In recognition of the ageing population and the rising need for adaptations, funding for DFG's has increased considerably over recent years (see below).

Lancaster's DFG allocation through Better Care Fund	
2017/18	£1,775,217 including £168k additional allocation
2018/19	£1,966,022 including £214k additional allocation
2019/20	£1,889,809

Services provided by the HIA include:

- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)
- Minor Adaptations
- Home Improvement Support
- Handyperson Service
- Sanctuary and Haven Service
- Warm Homes Service
- Hospital Discharge Support

The implementation and delivery of the Homes Strategy relies on the council taking forward its own housing priorities as outlined in this document, and through effective partnership working with a number of key stakeholders including Registered Providers, funding bodies such as MHCLG and Homes England, other public sector organisations such as Health and Social Care Commissioning Leads and Teams, the Police, Fire Service, Probation, HM Prison Service, House Builders, Developers and local contractors, Private Sector Landlords, a range of Third Sector Organisations, Community Groups and our communities.

In order to prepare a new Homes Strategy for Lancaster district, a cross party working group of elected members was set up in September 2019 with cross party representation, supported by council officers. This working group will form a new Housing Advisory Group, with representation from external bodies still to be identified, who will oversee the implementation and monitor the progress of this Strategy.

