

Portfolio Holder Priorities 2013/14 Housing and Communities

Help me find somewhere suitable to live

Build communities where everyone has a home

- o Continue to offer a professional and flexible approach to developers seeking to build new homes in the City and to negotiate the provision of affordable housing that meets the identified housing needs of local residents.
- o Provide new affordable homes across the city and in the urban extensions at Newcourt , Monkerton and Alphington.
- o Seek to deliver at least 5% of all new affordable housing stock to meet the Council's wheelchair design standards and we shall produce a wheelchair housing strategy for the city.
- o Continue to assist in the facilitation and development of 150 Extra-Care homes across the City.

Use a range of measures to solve housing problems

- o Continue to investigate and encourage innovative schemes to deliver affordable housing without public subsidy
- o Review and monitor the pressures on the council's existing housing stock and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) from the new discounted Right To Buy proposals.
- o Ensure that we make best and prudent use of any funding that becomes available through the new HRA, to maintain existing stock and build and acquire new units.
- o Maintain and enhance our existing good work through the Tenants and Leaseholders Committee, Exeter Homes Partnership and Performance Review Committee.
- o Manage additional pressures and work loads from the cuts and changes to housing benefit, government imposed reductions in council tax benefits, and the Coalitions back to work agenda.
- o Work with the Environmental Health staff to monitor and drive up standards in private sector properties, especially for vulnerable groups and young people.
- o A partnership has been developed with the National Landlord's Association to provide accreditation training to Exeter Landlords. Training sessions will be run up to 4 times per year. The first 15 landlords were accredited in April 2013.
- o The private members bill to give greater rights and protection to park home owners has now been enacted as the Mobile Home s Act 2013.
- o Make the best use of the new funding streams from the revised planning systems for both housing and community initiatives.
- o Continue to grow the Private Sector Leasing and EXtralet schemes to provide a wider pool of affordable accommodation in conjunction with the private sector
- o Provide advice and a range of affordable housing options designed to help local people solve their housing needs

- o Transform how the council works with people to help them with their housing and financial problems
- o Develop our approach to reducing street begging including the introduction of an alternative giving scheme, improved access to accommodation and treatment services and more robust enforcement
- o Transform how the council maintain its properties and provide a better service with improvement value for money
- o Provide up to £400,000 in renovation grants to those most in need to make private sector homes fit for habitation (this was cut some time ago)
- o We will build upon recent work to cut down the time it takes to install Disabled Facility Grant adaptations in private dwellings by use of approved builders lists and modular pricing of standard works.
- o We will continue to work to strengthen to Protocol all the Devon Councils have with Registered Providers (Housing Associations) through which they undertake to contribute to the cost of disabled adaptations to their homes. New governance arrangements have been put in place to maximise sign up.
- o Wessex Home Improvement Loans have employed a marketing manager in order to encourage greater take up. We will also seek to expand the work of Wessex to include debt advice to clients in need.

Provide homes for rent that people can afford

- o Ensure that we continue to take a lead role on the issue of homeless in Exeter and neighbouring areas, and when needed advocate for more funding, resources, and understanding of the often complex issues that are affecting people.
- o Implement the recently approved Empty Homes Enforcement Policy to return privately owned empty homes to use and ensure they are fit for habitation
- o Build on our existing good work with the private sector to expand our portfolio of private properties which we manage on behalf of private landlords and use to proactively prevent homelessness.
- o Use increased flexibilities with allocations policies to ensure our social housing always goes to those most in need with a strong local connection to Exeter.
- o Introduce flexible tenancies in our own stock to optimize the potential for council-owned homes to be available for people in most housing need

Retain current system of setting council rent

- o Set Council rents in line with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Provide 25% of all new build development as social housing

- o Where viable, make 25% of all new homes built across the City affordable

Introduce a co-operative and mutual model of home ownership where people are given stability and equity while retaining housing stocks

- o Continue to explore opportunities for introducing cooperative and mutual models of home ownership.

Install solar panels on council houses

- o Identify and maximise opportunities to increase the Council's own housing stock to high energy sustainability standards.
- o Install solar panels on up to 55 council-owned homes in Hawthorn Road
- o We will continue to work in partnership with E.on to deliver energy efficiency grants and loans schemes to maximise take up of Green Deal and Energy Commitment Obligation (ECO) measures. A pilot ECO scheme is to be launched, in the 6 most deprived wards, in June 2013 to pilot ECO delivery

Enable me to have my say and be heard

Empower residents to have a greater say

- o Build upon the community grants scheme and ensure new homes bonus funding enables community groups to provide activities and resources to build strong and sustainable communities
- o Work to support more joined up cost effective work between the city and county councils through the new Exeter Board on community and housing issues, such as supporting people funding, community facilities etc.
- o Work within the localism agenda to give communities powers to do things for themselves, such as neighbourhood planning.
- o Work in partnership with resident and community groups to ensure communities have the opportunity to influence services and new resources for their neighbourhood.
- o Ensure that we continue to work with and support other partner organisations to promote social inclusion, tolerance and diversity in Exeter, and also work to tackle poverty.
- o We will further develop the Residential Park Forum in order to support those many Exeter householders who have additional housing challenges to deal with as park home residents
- o Develop a new Housing Strategy in consultation with our residents, communities, tenants and wider stakeholders.