

October 2021

Housing Strategy

Our commitment
to our communities

2021-2026



Foreword



With an overarching BCP Council vision for **‘vibrant communities with an outstanding quality of life where everyone plays an active role’**, this strategy has an underpinning role of ensuring a safe and secure home as a cornerstone outcome towards the delivery of that vision. It reflects and responds to the priorities that have been identified by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole residents and businesses following the successful consultation process that ended on 21 May 2021. It also supports the scale and ambition set out in ‘Our Big Plan’ for BCP Council to be one of the best coastal places in the world for people to live, work, invest, and play.

We want everyone to have a good quality home that they can afford and that meets their needs. Housing strategies play a key role in delivering against this objective, supporting equality, and creating effective place-making, informing housing investment and service delivery and ensuring the delivery of the right homes in the right places.

This new strategy continues its journey following a successful 10-week public consultation representing the resident’s voice of this relatively new unitary authority but also those colleagues and staff that were previously solely representing Bournemouth, Christchurch, or Poole. Responses through the consultation have helped shape the vision and priorities we will be focusing on.

Challenging times and uncertainty may be with us but the resources we bring to bear, and our clear ambitions put BCP Council in a good position to deliver against what you have said should be a priority, these include:

- Meeting future growth needs (directly delivering new homes as a council)
- Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Improving housing options, opportunities and choice for all.

Through 2020 and 2021 homes have become our sanctuaries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but with The Grenfell Tower disaster reminding us to be ever vigilant of the resilience of our homes, as does climate change.

Housing strategies do not work alone, they influence and are influenced by many other complementary strategies. Individuals and families enjoying good quality, well managed housing is essential to health and wellbeing, enhancing the lives of adults and the life-chances of children. Housing not only provides shelter but promotes stability and a sense of wider community identity. Strategic planning through this strategy for the continued and effective provision of housing and related services in BCP Council will also remain a key priority.

Nationally, housing as an issue is more high profile than it has been for many decades. Central government announced a series of policies to ‘fix our broken housing market’, to accelerate construction and tackle infrastructure barriers. The Building Safety Bill was published in July 2021 and there are proposed planning changes for building beautiful and green homes.

This strategy sets out BCP Council’s ongoing commitment to its communities, to shape the agenda and create the very best housing outcomes for our area. Your feedback has helped inform our **Housing Strategy – our commitment to our communities.**

Councillor Robert Lawton, Portfolio Holder for Homes

Content

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Our vision | 5 |
| Our challenges | 7 |
| Our evidence | 10 |
| Our consultation | 13 |
| Our priorities | 14 |
| 1. Meeting future growth needs | 15 |
| 2. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping | 16 |
| 3. Improving housing options, opportunities, and choice for all | 17 |
| 4. Empowering and co-creating neighbourhoods where residents wish to live and be part of the community | 18 |
| 5. Improving safety and sustainability across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's housing | 19 |
| Our action plan | 20 |
| Appendices list | 21 |

Introduction

This strategy is a high-level document which sets out a clear vision with strong leadership for BCP Council to ensure that housing, planning, economic development, and regeneration work together and are integrated to best influence the housing market. It sets out our vision, challenges, evidence and consultation approach which has all been used to inform this document.

This is a key document that frames our partnership work together, drives place shaping and contributes to health and wellbeing of our population. It provides evidence of housing needs and demands and will set out the council's strategic approach to inform how it will move forward to achieve its ambitions and attract funding opportunities to support that work.

BCP Council is the 10th largest urban authority in England, currently serving a population of almost 400,000 which is expected to grow. With this comes high demand for council services against a backdrop of unprecedented challenges that has seen core funding for local services continue to decline.

Housing is a crucial component of wellbeing. Good quality housing, which meets an individual's or family's needs, provides a sound platform to build a good quality of life. Poor quality or inadequate housing tends to be associated with poorer outcomes for people, whether that relates to the health impacts of living in damp or overcrowded conditions or the impact poor housing can have on children's attainment at school.

The council's housing responsibilities cover a broad range of issues, from identifying land for new homes to improving old ones and meeting the wide variety of housing needs of our communities. More detailed strategies and policies sit beneath this housing strategy, setting out our aims and delivery plans in specific areas. As housing is cross cutting across so many services – (Hierarchy diagram setting out links to wider BCP strategies and policies is at the end of this document under Appendices) sets out some of the key documents it will align with and there are many other corporate plans and strategies – such as Children and Young People's Plan, and the 2050 Climate Action Plan, that this document clearly needs to complement.

The housing sector has faced many well documented challenges. In recent years a lot has changed in respect of government funding combined with national housing, planning, and welfare policy. Taking this into consideration along with the consultation feedback that we received the priorities we have set out reflect local need and seek to find a balance responding to national policy change. This is to ensure negative impact is mitigated whilst setting out a housing approach which is flexible, able to take advantage of opportunities and above all in line with the council ambitions set out in the Corporate Strategy and The Big Plan.

This document is complemented by a Housing Strategy Action Plan which sets out a summary of actions and more detail as to how those actions will be carried out to ensure they link to BCP Council's fundamental strategies, policies and plans.

Our vision

Our proposed vision is:
to provide a **safe, secure** and **sustainable**
home where it is needed and thereby
enabling people the opportunity to **live well**

This vision highlights the proactive role that we collectively need to take on the housing agenda with the ultimate outcome of the right homes in the right places. In arriving at this vision, BCP Council has set out clear values supporting vibrant communities with commitment for sustainability, investment, and wellbeing. The ambitious objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy require housing to provide a significant contribution to help achieve those objectives.

The delivery plan includes several actions to address poverty and other deprivations whilst implementing robust strategies - such as this one - that strives to increase growth, improve health and wellbeing, safety, and reduce inequalities.

BCP Council is committed to growing and nurturing a healthy, functioning local housing market that provides high quality decent homes to support communities. The council is expanding its own development and will work closely with developers, private landlords, communities, and other participants in the sector to achieve its vision.



Our challenges

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole has many challenges to overcome in terms of being able to deliver the future housing supply required. Our geographical location is a beautiful and desirable place to live, and it has, over time, created high property and land values which can test the financial viability of many developments.

In December 2020, the government confirmed that the Housing Standard Method for calculating new homes would remain.



The area's target figure

- ...● initially set at nearly **2,500** (Oct 2019)
- ...● currently is proposed at nearly **2,637** homes, subject to final confirmation from Government

This is linked to yearly affordability ratios.

A new Local Plan with adoption scheduled for 2023 will seek to identify a range of new allocations to improve the supply of new housing. A number of homes within the new supply will need to be affordable as the council continues to have over 5,000 applicants on the housing register.

Housing affordability presents challenges in meeting its housing needs. House prices across the area have consistently remained high and continue to remain difficult to attain for many households. Further information is detailed under 'Our evidence' section.



The overall number of homeless applications has **risen sharply by 15%** during 2019/20 compared to the previous year.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented pressure on homelessness situations and rough sleepers and exposed a number of hidden homelessness through households staying with others on a temporary basis which is known as sofa surfing. This pushed up B&B numbers which had previously been relatively stable, with an average of 75 per quarter before a large COVID-19 related rise in quarter 4 to 185.

During this latter period, and in the time since March 2020 a new rough sleeping pathway has been developed; a multi-agency team which has reshaped the provision, primarily using hotels as places to assess, stabilise and support people with planned move-on housing and support pathways. Approximately a fifth of applicants are under the age of 24 and it is also worth noting that this age group also faces other disproportionate disadvantages such as lower mean incomes or salaries and increasing job insecurity, with disproportionate reliance on renting.

Rough sleeping numbers had been consistently rising since 2010 in the BCP area, in common with much of the country, but are now much lower. A considerable amount of intervention work and outreach services were implemented to reduce numbers.



The count in January 2021 was **13**, the **lowest** for over a decade and an **82 per cent reduction** since the peak in Sept/Nov 2019.

It is still an ongoing challenge to ensure both outreach and prevention services are employed to keep numbers down. These figures have risen slowly in the first half of 2021, and the most recent count in July was **24**.

This remains relatively low for the high peak of the summer season. (July 2020 was 30, July 2019 was 67).

The private rented sector in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole accounts for 23% of the overall housing numbers compared to 18% as a national average.



Private rented sector's overall housing numbers



The population projections linked to the standard method show that the population in the BCP area aged 20 to 39 will increase by a significant 28,793 people which is an increase of around 29.3%. Most private rented households are in this age bracket which means our housing supply needs to ensure there is sufficient growth in the private rented sector to accommodate this.

The need for private rented options combined with affordability means that Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) feature strongly in our area. They can present challenging management issues and can impact on the community.

The council has c10,000 properties retained in ownership across Bournemouth and Poole. The housing stock is currently managed differently across the two areas. A proposal is currently being developed to create one new combined 'hybrid' service, the 'best of both worlds', within the council.

The council needs to deliver the current un-met need for older person accommodation as stated in the emerging Extra Care Housing and Care Home Commissioning strategies to reduce the dependency upon care home provision. There is a need for better ongoing intelligence around other unmet specialised housing needs.

As part of the Domestic Abuse Bill, BCP Council is committed to reviewing support and accommodation commissioning arrangements across the area. The annual needs assessment will provide the opportunity to establish the support and accommodation needs of local victims and families who wish to stay in the area and remain safe, as well as those fleeing from other areas.

BCP Council has made commitments in the local offer for care experienced young people to include priority for housing that best meets their needs, using local letting plans on new developments and increased supply of suitable move-on accommodation.

The prevalence of mental illness in the population is anticipated to rise as the population increases. A review of housing for clients who experience poor mental health is timely and necessary to ensure that the provision is adequate to meet the demand. For Learning Disabilities and Autism there is a need to increase accommodation that meet the needs of young people with as they prepare for adulthood. A specific matter relating to autistic young people and adults is meeting future needs, especially given the number of people with a diagnosis is growing.



Housing adaptations and technology enabled care, remain key services that need to be delivered so that disabled people and people with mobility impairments can continue to live independently in their own homes.

Partnership working with appropriate organisations to ensure that sufficient support is available for those at greatest risk in our communities, including young people, families with young children, young people leaving care, ex-offenders, those suffering from domestic abuse, and asylum seekers.

Building new communities in which people want to live requires considerable master-planning to ensure we have the right mix of homes in terms of sizes, types, and tenures. We also need to ensure early provision of appropriate infrastructure, retail, leisure and other services; green spaces; and links to the natural environment, to enable residents to live settled healthy lives from the outset. The council is committed to working with communities to enable them to become established, supporting community cohesion and long-term sustainability.

The council needs to review any improvement required for both fire safety and for carbon reduction efficiencies for its existing housing stock to contribute towards its climate emergency commitments. There is also work ongoing to assess the construction of any private buildings over 18m within the conurbation, as required by government. Formal notices will be used where necessary on non-compliant properties under Housing Act 2004. They will require remediation any flammable cladding and/or insulation systems to ensure the safety of the occupants. Lack of available funding for this work will present challenges in some cases.

Proposed changes to legislation through the Building Safety Bill will place additional duties on landlords to ensure that there will always be someone responsible for keeping residents safe in complex buildings and will introduce additional processes to improve standards of safety for residents. We need to continue to make sure this is delivered across the BCP area across all tenures.

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource, depriving people of a home and contributing to the need for more housing. They can be a blight on local communities and may prevent investment in the area.



Recent figures reported to government from our council tax records suggest that there are approximately

311 empty properties in BCP that have been empty between **two** and **five** years and a further **81** have been empty for **more than five years**.

Our evidence

Over the past eight-years (since 2011) the population of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole has grown by 4%. A bespoke projection method suggests that population growth might be expected to be higher than suggested in the latest official projections and that the age structure changes will proportionally include more people aged over 65.

Overall, in the 2021-38 period, delivery in line with the Standard Method is projected to see



- an increase in population of **21%** in the BCP area

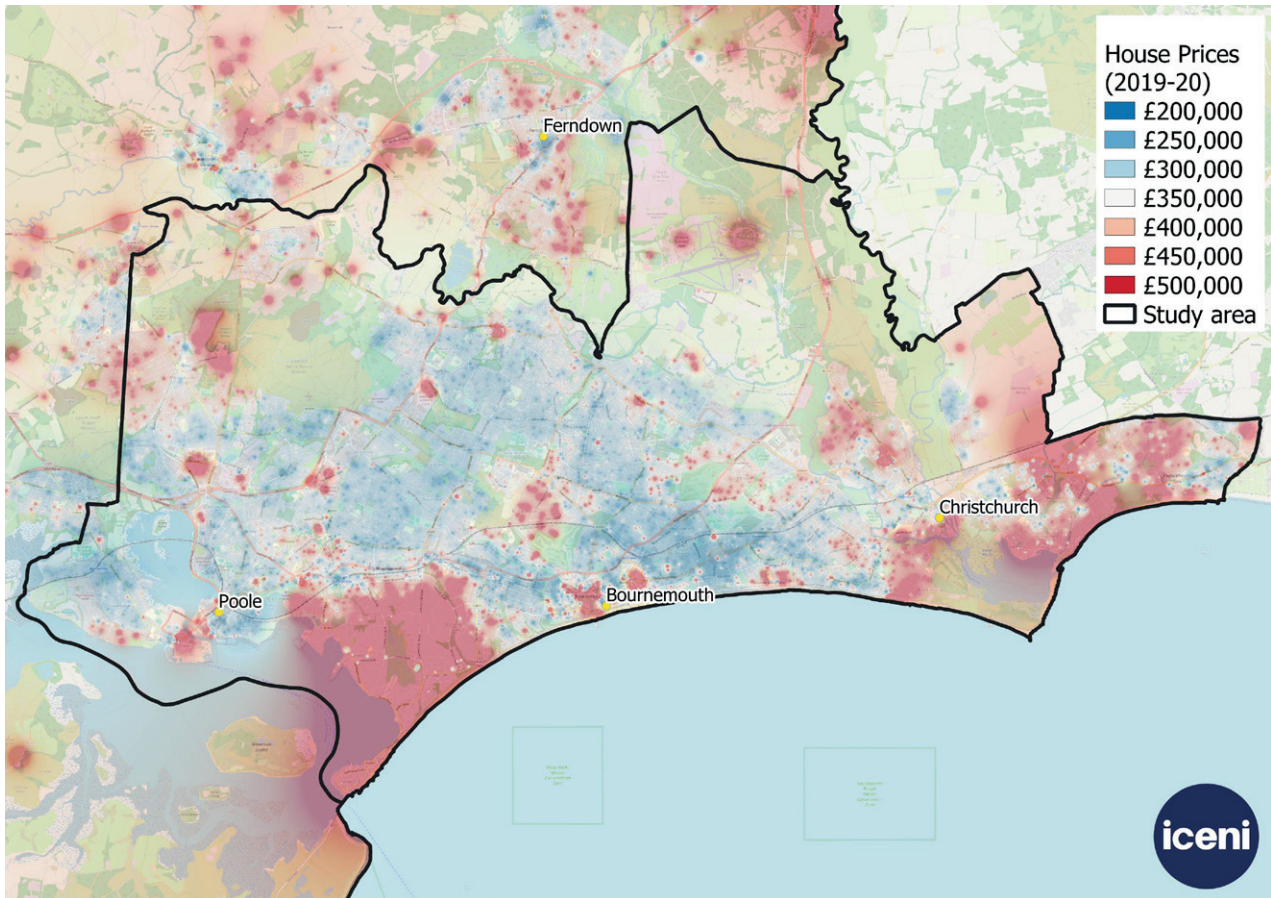
- the majority of this increase will be in the **over 65's** representation.

- In 2020, the median house price in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole was **9.76** times average earnings (higher than across all wider comparator areas).

- Median house prices in the year to September 2020 were around **£285,000** in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. This is above the South West regional median (£260,000) and further above the England and Wales median (£243,000).

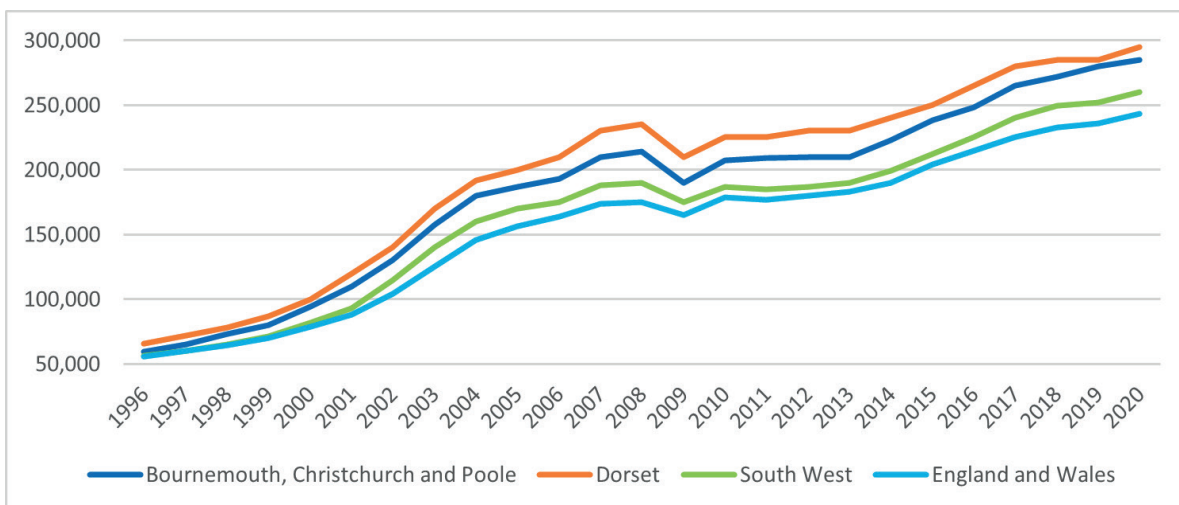


House prices (2019-2020)



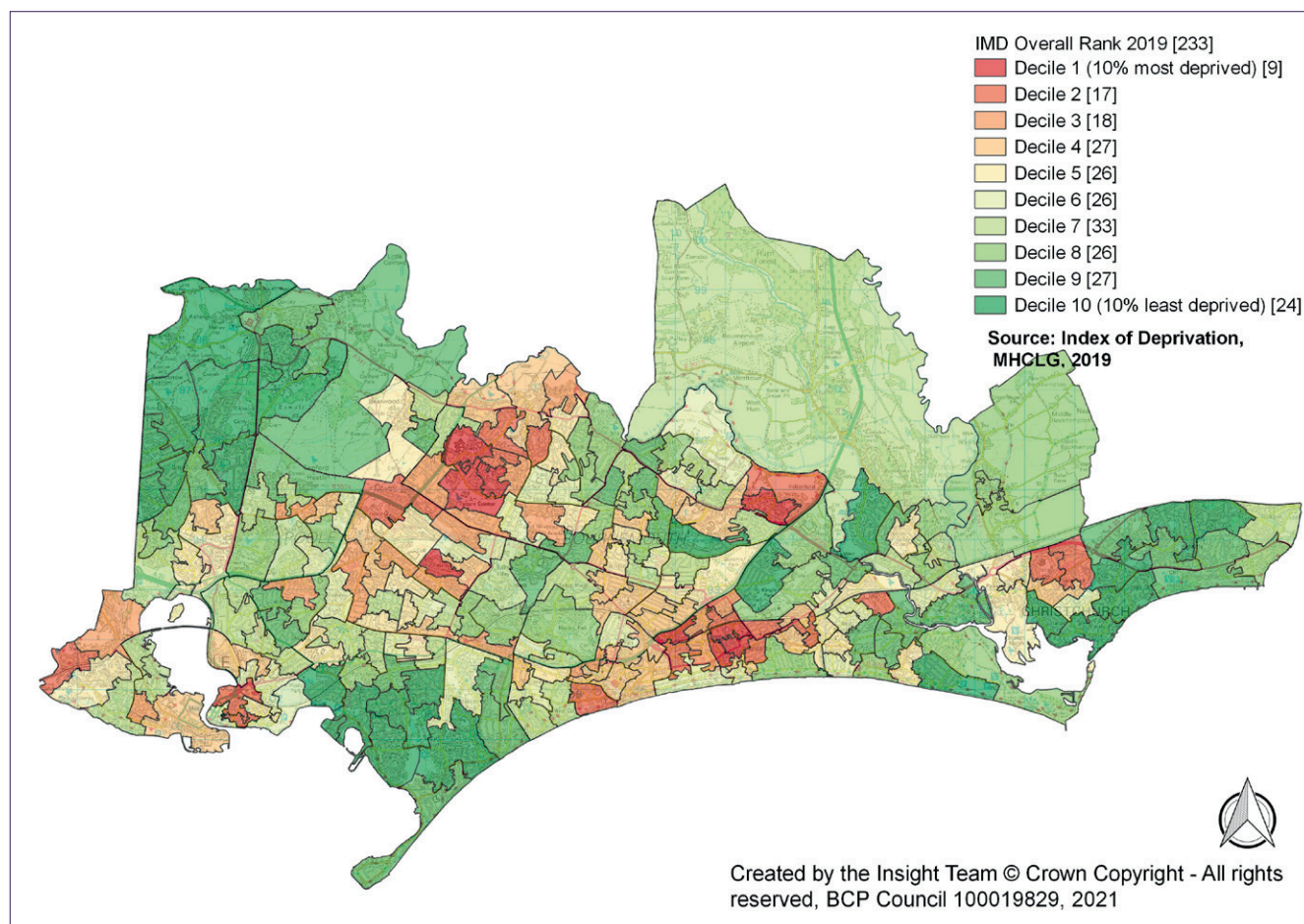
Source: HM Land Registry, 2021

Median house price change (Year ending September 1996-2020)



Source: MHCLG, 2021

In terms of deprivation the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area is ranked 160th out of 317 English local authority areas where one is the most deprived. However, although its overall ranking suggests the area scores within the mid-range across all English local authorities the more detailed data reveals that there are pockets of deprived areas with nine out of 233 of these smaller areas being within the most deprived 10% in England.



Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole has an older age structure, with **22%** of the population estimated to be aged 65 and over in 2019 (compared to a national average of 18%)

Using available figures on the local population projections and the Housing LIN formula shows that to meet requirements Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole should have 1,075 units of Extra-Care Housing now, rising to 1,312 in 2030 and 1,577 by 2040.



Older people with dementia in the BCP area is increasing by **45%** from 2021 to 2038 and those with mobility problem increasing by **42%** over the same period.

When related back to the total projected change to the population, the increase of 6,900 people aged 65+ with a mobility problem represents 8% of total projected population growth in the BCP area. It should be noted that there will be an overlap between categories (i.e. some people will have both dementia and mobility problems). Hence the numbers for each of the illnesses/disabilities should not be added together to arrive at a total.

Projected changes to population with a range of disabilities – BCP

| Disability | Age Range | 2021 | 2038 | Change | % Change |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|----------|
| Dementia | 65+ | 6,446 | 9,378 | 2,932 | 45.5% |
| Mobility problems | 65+ | 16,467 | 23,383 | 6,916 | 42.0% |
| Autistic Spectrum Disorders | 18-64 | 2,381 | 2,813 | 432 | 18.1% |
| | 65+ | 795 | 1,119 | 324 | 40.8% |
| Learning Disabilities | 15-64 | 6,064 | 7,155 | 1,091 | 18.0% |
| | 65+ | 1,777 | 2,441 | 664 | 37.4% |
| Challenging behaviour | 15-64 | 111 | 131 | 20 | 17.6% |
| Impaired mobility | 16-64 | 13,092 | 14,454 | 1,363 | 10.4% |

Source: POPPI/PANSI and Demographic Projections

Consultation

The public consultation for BCP Homes, our commitment to our communities, ran for 10 weeks between 12 March to 25 May 2021.

There were over 100 responses to the survey and 10 engagement events were held between January and May 2021. Almost 2,000 people viewed the project online and a number of respondents contributed to the ideas board on the Council's Engagement HQ online platform.

The detailed consultation feedback has contributed significantly to this final strategy document.

Our priorities

The focus of our strategy involves five key priorities as follows:

- 1. Meeting future growth needs.**
- 2. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.**
- 3. Improving housing options, opportunities and choice for all.**
- 4. Empowering and co-creating neighbourhoods where residents wish to live and be part of the community.**
- 5. Improving safety and sustainability across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's housing.**

These are ambitious housing priorities in order that BCP can deliver the shared corporate and housing visions. The overall housing agenda is vast, cross cutting and place-shaping. It is important that we put our energy and resources into the right priorities over the next few years.

There are many priorities within each of these, as set out below in this document, but some of the key areas of focus over the next few years include the following:

- ➔ The council playing its part in directly delivering new homes by building out its programme of sites at scale and pace across all tenure types.
- ➔ Making sure that homelessness is prevented as much as possible through proactive early intervention and support needs.
- ➔ Proactively understanding unmet specialist housing, care and support needs for our most vulnerable, and bringing additional housing schemes forward to help meet needs.
- ➔ Making our 10,000-council housing stock even better in meeting the needs of our tenants whilst reviewing the governance model for this service.
- ➔ Making sure fire safety across all our homes continues to be top of our agenda.

The new strategy aims to help us deliver these important agendas, and much, much more.

Priority 1 – Meeting future growth needs

The council has ambitious plans to achieve this priority. There is more detail on this set out in the Council's 'Big Plan' to deliver at scale and pace and the Council's New Build Housing and Acquisition Strategy (CNHAS) will support this work.

- Support the actions set out in the Council's New Build Housing and Acquisition Strategy (CNHAS) to increase Housing supply, including additional extra care accommodation.
- Embracing opportunities presented by Seascope Homes and Property Limited (our wholly owned Housing Company) and other delivery vehicle options in scaling up development of homes including private sector homes on our own land and additional property acquisitions.
- Supporting housing delivery work generated from the council's Urban Regeneration Company who are tasked with development on complex regeneration sites across the area.
- Work in partnership with registered housing providers and developers to help increase the supply of all types of housing.
- Seek to attract investment into our area promoting Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole as an area open for business, and creating effective engagement with developers, funders and agents. With housing working jointly and proactively alongside economic development and growth and infrastructure colleagues.
- Proactive engagement and consultation on housing policy matters to ensure the emerging BCP Council Local Plan delivers the number and type of new homes the area needs.
- Develop a new affordable housing policy with supporting guidance, taking a more equitable approach to viability.
- To pursue opportunities and encourage the introduction of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) in developments where appropriate.
- Increase the housing choice in town centres including working with planning on the local plan to give consideration for change of use for existing surplus retail and office space and improving affordability by introducing a range of housing models and tenures.
- To use internal resources to focus on under-occupiers and create a targeted approach across our own stock to incentivise under-occupiers to downsize and make best use of our housing stock.

Priority 2 – Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

The following actions are directly in line with the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2025 which was adopted in April. Further details can be found [here](#).

- Ensure no one sleeps rough or lives in places which are not designed as a home, such as tents, vehicles, squats or non-residential buildings.
- That anyone staying in emergency or temporary accommodation has a rapid rehousing plan specifying their appropriate move-on housing which is suitable and affordable, and support being accessible and flexibly delivered.
- Everyone threatened with homelessness (whether over 56 days or more immediately) is provided with the advice, assistance and support they need to prevent their homelessness, and for people who leave institutional settings and survivors of domestic abuse to ensure that housing pathways are in place so that they do not become homeless.



Priority 3 – Improving housing options, opportunities and choice for all

This priority will require BCP Council to consider carefully all its housing needs in order to achieve the actions within this priority and provide solutions.

- To implement a new Tenancy Strategy across BCP which will seek to harmonise policy across all of our own housing stock.
- To work proactively with internal and external partners to identify unmet specialist and/or complex housing needs on an ongoing and structured basis and work to secure additional housing options to meet those needs, working with housing providers and developers.
- Work collaboratively across the housing sector to ensure a robust rolling specialist training plan for housing and other connected services covering a range of areas such as dementia, mental health, trauma informed care and safeguarding.
- Ensure there is an appropriate range and scale of housing options for the area's older population which promotes independence and minimises the need for costly residential and nursing care. This includes delivering the outcomes set out in the Extra Care Housing Commissioning Strategy which include the intentions for an extra care village and other related additional type homes.
- Working closely with social care colleagues to scale up and promote technology enabled care which includes new technological solutions and increase take-up to help more people remain independent in their homes.
- Integrate our Disabled Facilities Grant activity into one streamlined team, offering the wholly owned company Seascope South Limited as the contractor of choice to customers.
- To review internal processes and software to ensure accessible advertising of properties is available through choice-based lettings.



Priority 4 – Empowering and co-creating neighbourhoods where residents wish to live and be part of the community

The BCP area has an outstanding environment, with strong employment prospects. It also recognises that the profile of our communities is changing and has committed to connecting and empowering communities so that everyone feels safe, engaged and included.

- Encourage sustainable and resilient communities by having an enforcement service that seeks to target rogue landlords and address related anti-social behaviour issues.
- Ensure that BCP Council housing delivery is joined up working closely with colleagues outside of housing, including environment, communities and planning to achieve sustainable new developments.
- Continue to work creatively and proactively with partners and communities to improve the integration of housing, health and social care and to support service transformation.
- Ensure excellent service delivery for all of 10,000 housing tenants and leaseholders. This includes working closely with them for improved service as set out in the Government White Paper 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' and agree and implement a service that will create one new combined 'hybrid' service, the 'best of both worlds', within the council.
- To increase engagement opportunities with local landlords and private landlord groups to improve communication and promote partnership working with this sector on all housing related matters.
- Extend the existing acquisition programme of purchasing existing properties to help address the council's homeless and care leaver responsibilities, ensure good quality rentals for the area and generate additional income for the council to fund services for vulnerable people.



Priority 5 – Improving safety and sustainability across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole's housing

Everyone has the right to live in a decent and safe home. We must carefully consider how to meet this priority to address both new build and existing stock to achieve our commitments for both safety and sustainability.

- Ensure all housing stock across the BCP area meets new fire safety requirements in line with the national improvement agenda in terms of fire safety. To provide leadership and facilitate this agenda where appropriate across all tenures.
- To ensure the council's own housing stock continues to meet fire safety requirements as the Accountable Persons.
- Continue to robustly challenge poor quality housing (this includes licensing of HMOs). Work in partnership with the private sector to ensure that private rented sector housing stock is maintained and managed to a high standard and within the legislative framework.
- To ensure empty properties are not detrimental to communities (in terms of risk/nuisance/wasted resources) by resourcing proactive work to help address the most problematic.
- To lead by example on our new housing developments for sustainability by having a robust policy for design and approach. Also, agreeing our approach to retrofitting the council's own housing stock.
- To continue to work closely and regularly with registered providers (housing associations) to ensure their maintenance and management continues to meet required standards.
- Continue to resource efforts with partners to deliver free energy efficiency advice and measures to homes and continue to bid for funding from government and others to direct grant aid to households.
- To implement a minimum standard of Energy Performance certificates to achieve D for social homes and private rented homes across the area.



Our action plan

The implementation of this strategy will be led by a Housing Strategy Working Group comprising senior managers from across the council, but particularly housing, planning, regeneration, communities and social care including Children's Services.

Activities will continue to be supported by an evolving equalities impact assessment to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the local community.

An action plan will be developed, with a named officer to lead on each action, and an identified timetable for milestones and completion. This will be reviewed annually to provide the opportunity to respond to any emerging trends including changes in the housing market and levels of housing need. Lead officers will report progress against their actions on at least a six monthly basis.

The Director of Housing will report progress to the Portfolio Holder for Homes. An update report will be presented to the Cabinet annually. The progress report presented to Cabinet will be available to the public.



Appendices

Housing strategy hierarchy



Links

[Corporate Strategy](#)

[Our Big Plan](#)

[Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#)

Kerry Ruff
✉ kerry.ruff@bcpcouncil.gov.uk

Housing
BCP Council
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY

Published October 2021

bcpcouncil.gov.uk     

