

APPENDIX 2

Key Achievements

Our housing achievements over the course of our 2012-2017 strategy are as follows:

- In 2015 we completed a Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) Analysis, which compared different LCHO products and concluded that shared ownership remained the best option locally at that time
- We published a new Tenancy Strategy in 2017 providing guidance to Registered Providers (RPs) operating in our district. This specifies that tenancies in rented affordable housing should for a minimum of 5 years (rather than the national 2 year minimum standard), lifetime tenancies should be offered to tenants with certain vulnerabilities or those that have been involved in self-build or self-finish, affordable rents (and service charges where applicable) should be capped at local housing allowance rates, Registered Providers should not convert more than one third of their social rented properties to affordable rent and that the council will discharge its homelessness duty into the private rented sector when a suitable, affordable tenancy is available.
- We revised our Allocation Scheme in 2018 to ensure it meets the housing needs within the district and complies with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- We implemented a new nominations agreement in 2017, which we will review annually. This has improved the way in which household information is passed to housing associations, helping to establish sustainable tenancies.
- We established an Empty Property Officer Post in April 2016 and have established a number of incentives to bring empty properties back into use. Since 2012, 47 long-term empty homes have been brought back into use as a consequence of our interventions.
- We produced and promoted a Technical Advice Note laying out standards for affordable housing.
- We contracted Citizens Advice North Oxon and South Northants to provide debt and money advice to our residents for two years from April 2017, and we then extended this arrangement to the end of March 2020. A total of 6591 people have been helped since April 2017 with £5,106,658 raised in income. Additionally, over £400,000 worth of debt has been written off and almost £550,000 worth of payments rescheduled.
- We extended the help we can give to disabled people by introducing specific discretionary grants in addition to the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) we already provide under the Government's scheme.
- In 2018 we conducted a second Stock Modelling Project to provide an update on the local housing stock including: tenure, condition (in terms of hazards), energy-efficiency, remediation costs, the number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and the extent of fuel poverty.
- From 1st October 2018, HMO licencing requirements have been extended to include all HMOs with five or more residents regardless of the number of storeys. We have sought to bring this change to landlords' attention through press-release, targeted letters, our Landlords Newsletters and Forums. We have also developed an on-line application form to streamline the licencing process.
- We undertook 5 successful prosecutions in relation to property standards (2 concerning failure to licence an HMO, 1 for breach of a Prohibition Order, 1 for breach of Management Regulations and breach of HMO licence conditions and 1 for failure to provide information.)
- We introduced Self-Certification for better-run HMOs so that resources can be targeted at poorer premises and landlords.

- We provided 100 'Cherwell Energy Efficiency Project' (CHEEP) grants to improve private rented accommodation
- We continued to support the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Network (OAWN), funding it jointly with County partners. This secured British Gas Energy Trust funding for a Better Housing Better Health health-referral initiative in 2016-17. The scheme delivered grant aided home-improvements to 17 Cherwell residents suffering with particular health issues, achieved runner-up status in National Energy Action's Energy Impact Awards 2017, and will provide the basis for further funding bids.
- In 2018 we introduced new policies dealing with the enforcement of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the private rented sector and Civil Penalties for certain housing offences.