



Dorset
Council

Housing – Current Position

- *At present, Housing is run as a relatively small function within the Council.*
- *The overall revenue budget is around £3.5 million, with most of the focus being around statutory responsibilities relating to homelessness, housing needs and housing standards.*
- *The aspiration and intention has been laid down in the Corporate Plan to develop our position as a bold and ambitious Housing Authority, able to use our influence and position, as well as our services, to enable and facilitate housing solutions across the County.*
- *Much of our funding has been reliant on short-term Government grants, with a relatively small draw on the Council's General Fund.*
- *Our focus on homelessness and acute housing pressures means that there has been less emphasis on what we can do to tackle wider need – such as the barriers facing people on average or low incomes when finding an affordable home to rent or buy*

Community Safety

- *We lead the Community Safety Partnership for the Dorset Council area, holding leadership responsibility for tackling critically important areas such as Domestic Abuse, Violent crime, Homicide, Anti-Social behaviour, Modern Slavery and Preventing terrorist related activity.*
- *This costs £195k per year (2.5 fte). To develop community safety services and deliver on the extended duties, some further investment is required (circa £115k). A small investment in this area can deliver multiple savings across council and partner services (NHS, Police, Fire & Rescue etc).*
- *Dorset is a relatively safe area, but we need to understand the costs and benefits of investing in keeping it safe, and tackling problems as they exist or arise. For example, despite the relative safety of the area, Domestic Abuse incidents have risen by 1000 in the past year so is a focus of our work and the implementation of new legislative requirements.*

Housing - Investment

- *There is a financial imperative in establishing our strength as a Housing Authority.*
- *This has been strongly supported through recent discussions at the Budget Café and the Leadership Performance meeting of all Cabinet members.*
- *We save money if we invest well in activity which prevents homelessness, find alternative homes at an affordable price, address need beyond the statutory requirements and enable the development of the right kind of new housing. #*
- *For example, we currently have 95 people in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation.*
- *This is expensive and costs us around £12,000 per year for each placement, due to the cost being above the amount we can recover from Housing Benefit.*
- *If we prevent ten people from being homeless, or enable ten additional new homes to be built, we save £120,000.*

Housing – Doing More

- *We also have the potential to do far more to tackle housing need in other areas of Council concern, such as finding settled homes for young people leaving care, foster families, vulnerable single people and key workers.*
- *At present, our reliance on what can be provided by local Housing Associations, through the Housing Register, leaves a shortfall and mismatch between housing demand and supply and leads us to be offering homes only to those high on the Register's priority list.*
- *Investment in increasing the supply of available homes, either through better access to the private sector, getting more from the social housing sector or using our own assets has the potential to save high revenue costs relating to homelessness, adult social care and children's services.*

Plan and Budget

- *The housing team have developed a proposal for a five-year invest to save service strategy.*
- *By increasing the £3.5 million annual expenditure budget for Housing to £4.5M, the service will reduce other costs and thus payback the investment over a 5 year period.*
- *The financial details are being finalised but it is anticipated that this investment will be incorporated into the 2022/23 budget.*

Outcomes – Delivering a strong Housing Strategy

- *The enhanced service would deliver homelessness prevention, better value accommodation and support into settled accommodation where needed (such as Rough Sleeper Initiative grants).*
- *It will also support the ability to link strategic and commissioning priorities into the delivery of new homes and services – including the key role to enable and deliver the best use of capital investment for housing – including options for Council capital investment, as well as Homes England, Housing Association/Registered Providers and private sector finance.*
- *Our plan will pay back through better prevention of homelessness, better value temporary accommodation/getting out of B&B and developing more affordable housing.*
- *Our plan supports a strong and ambitious Housing Strategy to deliver across the council's range of priorities.*

Outcomes – Delivering a strong Community Safety Strategy

- *A service which supports all priorities of the Community Safety Partnership and meets our statutory obligations*
- *Domestic Abuse, Violent crime, Homicide, Anti-Social behaviour, Modern Slavery and Preventing terrorist related activity. All of these priorities are also subject to new areas of legislation, initiatives and drivers of change.*
- *Keeping ahead of Community Safety challenges, strategically and operationally, keeps Dorset safe.*
- *Our plan supports a strong and ambitious set of Community Safety strategies to deliver across the council's range of priorities.*