

# Thanet District Council Draft Housing & Homelessness Strategy

November 2019

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, curved bands in shades of blue and teal, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# Contents

<b>Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose of the Strategy</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The national strategic setting</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Local Context</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Corporate Statement</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>District Profile</b>	<b>10</b>
Economic Growth	11
Our population	11
Social Indicators	12
Housing Need & Demand	13
“Affordability Challenge” and Supply	14
Homelessness	17
Cost of emergency accommodation	20
Private Sector Housing	21
Empty Properties	23
<b>The council as a landlord</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Our finances</b>	<b>24</b>
Capital Funding streams	25
<b>Our Priorities</b>	<b>26</b>
Improving access to and supply of housing	26
Improving standards and safety across all tenures	33
Enhancing the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities	36
Preventing Homelessness and tackling rough sleeping	38
<b>Monitoring the Housing Strategy</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Action Plan</b>	<b>46</b>

# Foreword

## Executive Summary

This housing strategy for Thanet District Council has been developed at a time of major political change to the UK and national housing landscape. The Fair Funding Review puts more pressure on local authorities to deliver existing services and do more with less financial resources. In recent years, government policy has changed with the introduction of neighbourhood planning and the Housing and Planning Act 2016, changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, welfare reforms, increased regulation in the private rented sector, the tragedy of Grenfell Tower in 2017 and the most fundamental change in homelessness legislation in many years, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The Government also published its rough sleeping strategy which aims to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it by 2027. Whilst local authorities are not required by Government to have a formal housing strategy, there is a statutory requirement to adopt a strategic approach to preventing homelessness and addressing local needs through increased provision, which is contained within this document.

The trends which informed the Housing Strategy 2014, continue to drive the need for review and action in this revised strategy. Population is increasing and housing demand, especially affordable homes for those on low incomes, remains high. Housing costs have risen unexpectedly fast when compared to median incomes and local housing allowance rates, creating an affordability gap, which presents a real challenge for households seeking to buy or rent a home, as well for the Council's costs in accessing and providing temporary accommodation for homeless households. The high cost of home ownership has also resulted in a tenure shift and a significant increase in the number of people in privately rented accommodation.

The Grenfell Tower fire disaster in 2017 underlined the fundamental importance of safe and secure homes and the need to ensure residents living in social housing are not marginalised. The Green Paper, a *new deal for social housing*, aims to rebalance the relationship between landlords and residents, tackle stigma and ensure social housing can act as a stable base and support social mobility.

The Council is in the process of updating its Local Plan which will translate our housing priorities into a statutory planning policy framework and establish a five year land supply. The Housing Delivery Test requires an increase in housing to meet the current and future need, placing the onus on the Council to enable growth at a quicker pace than has been achieved to date. The council embraces this, as illustrated by its "housing business ready" status with the Housing & Finance Institute. The Housing Strategy will help to implement the Local Plan's objectives of ongoing responsible and sustainable development in the district.

This Housing Strategy 2020-2025 has been developed as a response to the emerging policy landscape and guides how we approach the housing needs of our residents, the future delivery of new homes and the management of existing accommodation. Partnership working is key to increasing access, supply, quality and management of all homes regardless of tenure and ownership. We know that housing is so much more than just bricks and mortar. The impact on health associated with poor housing is well versed, and the functionality of mixed and sustainable communities is crucial in terms of social interaction and residents' health and wellbeing. Ensuring

our parishes and villages remain vibrant and sustainable are high priorities for the District. For many residents living in rural villages access to good transport is an issue, and where possible we want good transport links and access to services and facilities. **A key partnership priority over the next five years is the delivery of the Parkway Station which has the potential to unlock growth and provide much needed homes over the life of this Housing Strategy and the council's Local Plan.**

Our objectives cannot be achieved in isolation and working closely with a wide range of partners is essential to the success of the Strategy.

In order to meet the challenges facing the district, the council has therefore identified four key housing themes that it believes the Housing Strategy needs to focus on.

### **1. Improving access to and supply of housing**

### **2. Improving housing standards and safety across all tenures**

### **3. Enhancing the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities**

### **4. Preventing homelessness and tackling rough sleeping**

Housing supply focuses on delivering more homes of all tenures, increasing our affordable housing supply and accelerating economic growth. We intend to deliver on these objectives:

- Maximising delivery by building upon all sources of housing supply
- Using council owned sites to deliver affordable homes, some of which could be developed through a council owned Housing Company
- Developing a flexible approach to the distribution of affordable housing and introducing new ways of increasing home ownership, such as exclusive marketing for local residents.

Improving standards across all tenures, is about raising quality and safety across homes owned by the Council, private landlords, owner occupiers and Housing Associations. We intend to deliver on these objectives:

- Taking robust action to tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector
- Exploring opportunities for using discretionary licensing schemes to improve conditions and management standards in the private rented sector.
- Provide support for Landlords to improve the quality of housing and management in the Private Rented Sector and promoting tenants' awareness of their rights
- Tackling the blight of empty homes through informal and enforcement action
- Improving standards in social housing, with Tenant Health and Safety at the forefront.

Supporting our residents is about developing effective partnerships with stakeholders, residents and tenants to tackle health inequalities. We intend to deliver on these objectives:

- Increase partnership working and align provision with Kent County Council and health and social care partners, in line with the Better Care Fund approach

- Meet the adapting needs of an ageing population and people with disabilities through the Disabilities Facilities Grant programme and the council's Housing Assistance Policy.
- Deliver an Ageing Well strategy to address the housing needs of an older population and supporting house moves for under-occupancy

Preventing homelessness is about assessing people's housing needs earlier to reduce the risk of homelessness and ensure that those who lose their home can access appropriate and timely support. We intend to deliver on these objectives:

- Utilise the Housing Allocation Policy to widen housing options, giving priority to those in housing need for council and Housing Association homes
- Work with private landlords and other partners to expand the potential options for finding suitable and affordable accommodation
- Ensure a holistic and personalised approach to assessing housing need and providing targeted accommodation support
- Work across a wide range of partner organisations to coordinate a network of prevention and crisis services.

## Purpose of the Strategy

The Strategy helps to bridge a range of existing strategies and plans, providing a framework for decision making in relation to housing issues. For new homes it complements the existing Local Plan, to help inform planning decisions, particularly on affordable housing provision. The Strategy will be a material consideration in making planning decisions on affordable housing.

The Strategy will also help to inform the development of joint housing related Supplementary Planning Documents to support the Local Plan. The Strategy does not address the overall number of new homes required for the area or allocate land, as this is the role of, and has already been agreed through, the Local Plan.

We recognise that infrastructure is critical to the success of development in the area and the Strategy acknowledges the inter-relationship of both sustainable transport and infrastructure to housing. The strategy aims to identify and mitigate the challenges faced by a range of customers, which are summarised below.

What are the challenges for our residents?

- Accessibility to housing for all tenures. Due to the lack of development taking place there is a reliance on existing stock which has a low rate of turnover across all tenures, resulting in people living in poor quality accommodation, overcrowding or under-occupancy.
- Housing options. There is an increased need for one and 2 bedroom homes to tackle undersupply, with Thanet having the largest mix of 4+ bed properties across Kent.
- Affordability - welfare reform has put more pressure on household budgets and those not on benefits are unable to access mortgages; due to rising house prices and low earnings, which means having to save for longer to access housing,
- Risk of homelessness as a result of increasing rents in the private sector
- Rogue landlords taking advantage of tenants
- Accessing social care to live independently in their own homes

What are the challenges for housing providers, developers and contractors?

- Viability and market risk in a challenging economy. Landowners have unrealistic expectations for market values which hinders sites coming forward.
- Engagement with the planning system to develop proposals that are policy compliant for strategic infrastructure and affordable housing
- Pace of delivery - the build out of homes remains slow due to a lack of confidence in the local sales market.
- Land assembly due to fragmented ownership and land trading, which has created a two tier development industry in the district; with promoters land banking and housing associations becoming more selective about the size of schemes

## The national strategic setting

There have been considerable changes to the national policy framework in recent years which affect both housing and planning. The changes include:

**Localism Act 2011** – changes introduced by the Localism Act 2011 gave local communities more influence over development in their local areas and policies. The act also gave local authorities the power to set their own eligibility criteria on their housing registers in relation to residency requirements. Significantly, the act fundamentally reformed the rules of local authority housing finance and allowed the council to become “self-financing”.

**Welfare Reform & Work Act 2016** – introduced 4 year 1% per year rent reduction across the social housing sector

**Housing and Planning Act 2016** – this legislation introduced an initiative for “starter homes” which are available to first-time buyers between the ages of 23 and 39 at a discount of 20%. The government continues to support and encourage other low cost home ownership options such as Help to Buy and shared ownership. The legislation also extended the right to acquire to housing association tenants to give them the similar rights as council tenants. New measures were introduced in the private sector such as rent repayments orders, civil penalties as an alternative to prosecution, landlord Banning Orders and a proposed national rogue landlord’s database. A number of measures proposed will no longer be implemented such as forcing council’s to offer fixed term tenancies, forcing the sale of higher value council homes and the “pay to stay” proposals for tenants earning over £31,000 per annum in the district.

**Housing White Papers – Fixing our broken housing market (February 2017) The right homes in the right place (September 2017)** – recognised the failure to build enough homes to meet people’s housing needs. It recognised the need to build more homes and diversify the housing market and that changes needed to be made to the planning system to facilitate development and build homes faster. It encouraged support for smaller builders, local authorities and registered providers to build and supported custom and self-build initiatives.

**Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** – fundamentally changed how local authorities respond to homelessness in their districts. The legislation made homelessness prevention and relief a statutory duty and increased the duties owed to households who do not have a priority need or are intentionally homeless. Councils are now required to develop personalised housing plans with clients and to ensure advice and information is available to the most vulnerable households.

**National Planning Policy Framework 2019** – defines major development as a



development consisting of 10 or more properties and requires that at least 10% of affordable homes are for sale through low cost home ownership schemes.

Housing Green Paper – a new deal for social housing 2018 – proposes the need for more investment in existing stock and to increase the supply of affordable housing. Proposals are also included for improved handling of tenant complaints and management performance indicators. The green paper also proposes measures to tackle the stigma of residents living in the affordable housing sector.

**Homes England Strategic Plan 2018-2023** – our relationship with Homes England encompasses strategic growth, grant and loan finance and market engagement. We support registered provider bids for funding in Thanet to enable additional homes and we also have the capacity to apply for funding for our own development projects. The Homes England Strategic Plan commits to unlock public and private land to get more homes built where they are needed and to provide investment to support housebuilding and infrastructure. There is an emphasis on supporting smaller builders which could improve employment opportunities in the district.

There have also been a number of **welfare reforms** in recent years that have impacted on the housing market and the lives of residents in the district. They are:

- Universal credit which was rolled out in the district in the Summer of 2018
- The benefit cap which capped the maximum amount of benefit a family could receive.
- The introduction of council tax support which removed 100% council tax benefit for eligible households
- The bedroom tax or spare room subsidy which reduces housing costs for working age adults who have more rooms than required

## Local Context

There are 67,000 homes in the Thanet District area with currently 3016 homes in Council ownership. The majority of the homes are in private ownership with the district being one of the highest locations for second homes in Kent. Thanet is a great place to live, work and visit but it has some distinct challenges which the council recognises can only be addressed by working with partners across health, the housing sector and national agencies such as Homes England.

Thanet was the most deprived local authority in the Index Multiple of Deprivation (IMD) for Kent in 2015 and despite significant improvement, remains Kent's most deprived local authority district in IMD 2019. Nationally, Thanet is ranked at 34 out of 317 authorities. In terms of Rank of Proportion for barriers to housing and services, Thanet ranks 229 and 21% of neighbourhoods in Thanet were among the most deprived 10%.

Many parts of the district suffer from deprivation and it is estimated that 1 in 7 people in the district live in a deprived area and 1 in 5 children in the district live in poverty. Good health begins at home and housing plays a pivotal role in addressing health inequalities and improving the health and well-being of the community.

Thanet has a high proportion of over 65s and the population projections shows this age group will continue to increase. Addressing the housing and other needs of the elderly will be paramount over the coming years. The council is committed to making sure everyone has a decent home to live in that meets their needs regardless of whether they live in social housing, are owner occupiers or renting in the private sector.

Thanet is an area where housing growth has stalled in recent years and the number of homes delivered has not met targets. Although we are now seeing more homes being granted planning and the signs for future delivery are encouraging, the number of affordable homes being delivered continues to be low.

Perception remains Thanet's biggest challenge to housing delivery. The council is working in partnership with Kent County Council (KCC) and a range of partners to change the perception and invites opportunities from all parts of the development sector to see the District's growth potential. Starting with a £22m commitment from KCC to deliver the Parkway Station which improves journey times direct into London at just over 60 minutes. The new station has the potential to unlock existing planning consents and accelerate up to 4,500 homes beyond 2033, which demonstrates an essential need for infrastructure to deliver affordable housing.

The emerging Local Plan has lowered the threshold for affordable housing from 15 to requiring sites of 10+ units to provide 30% affordable housing. The council also wants to build council housing and has successfully managed a development and acquisitions programme to facilitate this objective, which has helped to meet the housing needs of our younger and older residents.

The Council will need to balance the desire for more affordable homes with the need to create mixed and economically sustainable communities and agree how it approaches this within the Homes England funding regime. This will need to be managed carefully through the planning

process with Housing Associations to ensure delivery does not undermine the desire to change the perception and value characteristics of the district.

**The following strategic documents have informed the setting of the Housing Strategy**



## Corporate Statement

The council adopted a new Corporate Statement at its meeting on 10 October 2019, which included the following objectives:

- Plan to set up a housing development company, to work towards building the necessary good quality housing to meet the needs of existing and future communities.
- Improve standards and safety in homes across all tenures.
- Work to prevent homelessness and increase housing options.
- Aim to reduce the number of rough sleepers on our streets.

## District Profile

Thanet lies at the eastern end of Kent, with three main coastal towns of Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs. There are 32 kilometres of coastline with chalk cliffs and beaches and bays, many of which have been awarded European Blue Flag status. Much of the coast is also recognised for its internationally important habitats, including coastal chalk. Thanet is the fourth most populated district in Kent, with the second highest population density. Thanet is also a popular area for retired people to live with the highest number of 65 years old and over in the county.

## Economic Growth

Thanet is strategically placed to create co-ordinated growth and investment along the corridors of East Kent. The housing sub-markets of Thanet, Dover and Canterbury are interdependent in supporting sustainable economic growth, with the close functional relationship between the two areas recognised through the Local Plans. This is further evidenced through the evidence base for Parkway Station which creates additional benefits for the Enterprise Zone in Dover. Investment in sustainable transport and infrastructure is critical to securing the delivery of the region's economic and housing growth and to enable those living in more established communities to access jobs and services. We will continue to work with Kent County Council and MHCLG to secure investment for homes and infrastructure in the district. Alongside the need for good transport links, the energy grid and water supply capacity are identified as potential challenges to the delivery of housing and we will need to work with key partners, to explore innovative new technologies to secure the infrastructure required. Whilst strong economic growth brings with it great opportunities for international recognition, investment into the area and local employment, it also creates challenges in terms of high housing costs and the ability to find suitable affordable accommodation which will need to be balanced carefully.

## Our population

The Office of National Statistics estimated that the population of Thanet in 2018 was approximately 141,800 which constitutes [67,000] households and is predicted to rise to 75,069 households in 2031 (SHMA Update 2017). There are more females than males living in the district. The population is primarily White British with only [2.4 %] of households coming from a BME origin. The mean age of Thanet residents is 42 years which is above regional and national averages. [26.9%] of the population is over the age of 65 compared to [18.3%] for the rest of Kent and 16.4 % for the rest of England. The population aged over 65 in the District is expected to grow by almost 32,000 by 2031, driven by improved life expectancy and an ageing of the population structure. This is expected to result in a need for 1,522 units of specialist housing for older persons over the period (equivalent to 76 dwellings per annum). This includes sheltered and extra-care housing and forms part of the full Objectively Assessed Need for 17,140 dwellings identified in the Local Plan.

Life expectancy is 78 for men and 82 for women which is lower than the regional and national average. Life expectancy is lowest in the most deprived areas of the district. Life expectancy is 14.1 years lower for men and 9.9 years lower for women in the most deprived parts of the district compared to the least deprived parts of the district. The percentage of working age adults and young people is lower than the rest of Kent and England.

The tenure distribution is set out below and shows the shift towards private rented accommodation since 2008.

## Number of Owner Occupied and Privately Rented properties in Thanet 2012-2017

Data ONS March 2019

Year	Owner Occupiers	% increase or decrease	Privately Rented	% increase or decrease
2012	44850		12430	
2013	43959	-2% ▼	13241	+6.5% ▲
2014	43197	-1.7% ▼	14553	+9.9% ▲
2015	42830	-0.8% ▼	15260	+4.85% ▲
2016	43822	+2% ▲	14478	-5% ▼
2017	45363	+3.5% ▲	13527	-6% ▼

1. Tenure (Data from 2003, 2008 and 2017 stock condition surveys/modelling)					
		2002	2008	2017	2017 (%)
1	Privately rented	9874	15929	17271	26
2	Owner occupied	42978	35617	39961	60
3	Housing Association	4478	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Council owned	3500	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Shared ownership	N/A	147	N/A	N/A
6	Would not disclose (private sector)	N/A	4224	N/A	N/A
7	Social rented	N/A	N/A	9660	14
8	Total number of dwellings in the private sector	52852	55917	57232	86
9	Total number of dwellings in Thanet	60830	N/A	66892	100

## Social Indicators

Thanet has a higher than average number of households who are claiming benefits or who constitute workless households. This is not surprising given the pockets of deprivation in the district, especially in Cliftonville. The number of unemployed households in the district is estimated to be 4.4% of the population compared to 3.3% for the rest of the Kent and 4.1% nationally.

The district also has concentrated areas of multi-generational worklessness. There are 6,800 workless households that have a child under the age of 16 which is the highest number in Kent. 12% of children under the age of 16 live in a workless household. 24% of children in the district live in a low income family which is the highest percentage in the county.

Thanet suffers particularly from health inequalities, especially in its most deprived communities. A high proportion of the district's population (67.5% of adults) are classified as overweight or obese and the district has the highest level of physically inactive adults in the county. Mental health and

wellbeing is another concern in the district. Thanet has one of the highest suicide rates in the county and also has higher than average admissions to hospital for alcohol-related harm.

Thanet has a high prevalence of mental health disorders in children, which is not surprising given the high levels of child poverty and deprivation in the district. Mental health disorders in children have an impact on educational attainment and Thanet generally ranks poorly compared to the rest of Kent in terms of educational attainment.

## Housing Need & Demand

In 2017, the Council commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) as part of the Local Plan process. The SHMA identifies the overall need for housing in the district to 2031, as well as particular housing needs. The SHMA indicates an overall need for 17,140 dwellings over that period, for which the draft Local Plan makes specific provision. There is also a need for specialist accommodation and residential care housing to meet the needs of older residents.

The SHMA indicates that the need for affordable housing in the district equates to 47% of total development. The draft Local Plan sets a target of 30%, based on development viability in the area.

The SHMA provides advice on the split of dwelling sizes required within the district (for both market and affordable housing).

The Council has a housing register which is used to allocate council and other registered provider accommodation. The housing register also gives an indication of the need for affordable housing in the district. In February 2019, the Council adopted a new Housing Allocations Policy. That policy sets a requirement for applicants to have at least 3 years residency and an assessed housing need before applying for housing. There are some exceptions to this rule prescribed by statute.

As at 30 September 2019, there are 2,354 households on the housing register. The housing and bedroom need is broken down as follows:

Band	Households
A Urgent housing needs	109
B Serious housing needs	200
C Reasonable preference	2000
D General housing needs	45

Bedroom need	Households	As % of register
1 bed	1190	50.5%
2 bed	531	22.5%
3 bed	446	18.9%
4 bed	154	6.5%
5 bed	31	1.31%

6 and 7 bed	2	0.08%
-------------	---	-------

The need for housing is clearly weighted towards 1 bedroom accommodation. However, of the households registered for 1 bedroom accommodation, 372 are households over the age of 60. This demonstrates that there is a need to address the housing needs of our older population especially as the trend is people are living longer and that one bedroom accommodation should be accessible and designed to meet long-term needs.

502 households on the housing register have a physical or mental health condition, made worse by their housing circumstances.

## “Affordability Challenge” and Supply

Thanet is becoming an expensive place to buy or rent a home for many local residents. High prices are fuelled by low supply, which itself is fuelled by the strength of the second homes economy and in-migration of higher skilled workers. For those on low incomes, the housing options are scarce with a reliance on social housing for rent. New ‘affordable rent’ at up to 80% of market rents is increasingly unaffordable to those on low incomes and the council’s Tenancy Strategy limits ‘affordable rents’ for new build homes to the relevant Local Housing Allowance rate to assist with this.

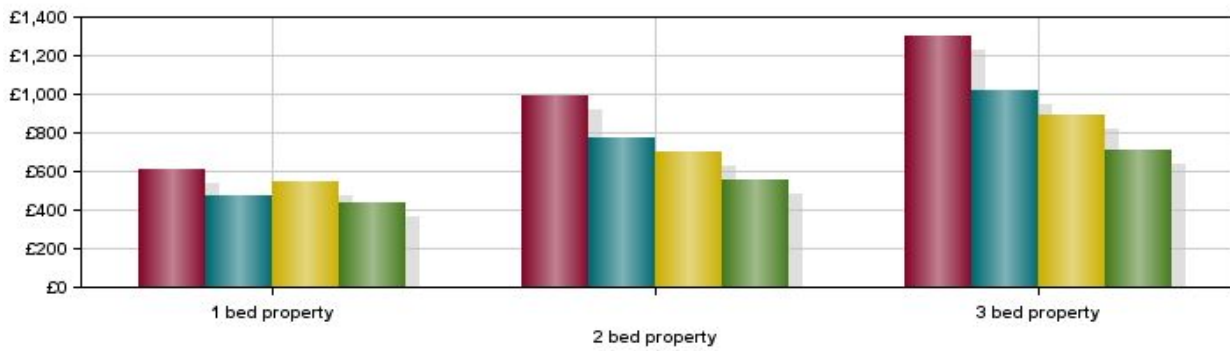
There is also a growing ‘affordability gap’ where middle income households are being squeezed out of the market; with limited housing options for low cost home ownership or the private rented sector. The difficulties in accessing home ownership and the increasing cost of rental accommodation, is resulting in more employed households making approaches to the Council.

Currently 19,471 households or 29% of the population are on a low income, which is defined as less than £15,988 per annum. On average earnings are £462.50 per week which is within the bottom 20% of the whole of England. Only 19.12% of households are in the lower managerial and professional occupations. This presents the challenge that more than 80% of the population in Thanet, cannot afford to buy an averagely priced terraced house and those who are renting in the private sector are spending over 50% of their earnings on living costs.

Shared Ownership is an affordable low cost home ownership product for those on median incomes. Shared ownership can be flexed to suit the income circumstances of households, with larger proportions being purchased. 25% is generally the minimum share possible. An alternative approach is Homebuy which assumes a 75% purchase with a 25% equity loan on which no rent payments are made.

The figure below illustrates that shared ownership is a more affordable product than outright market sale.

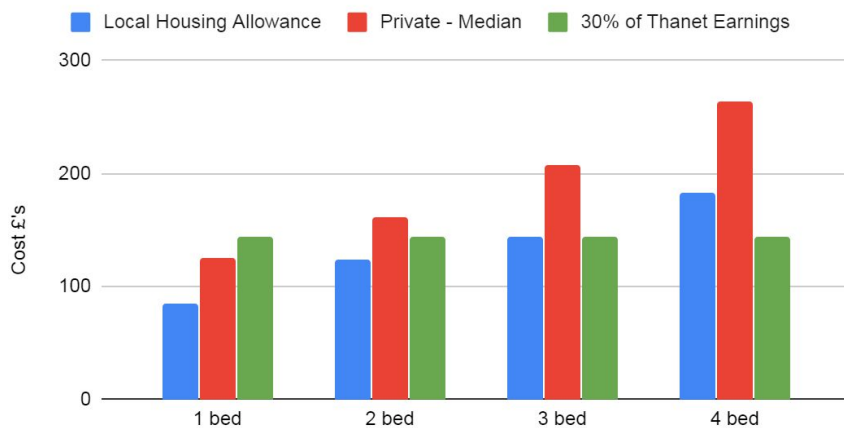
	Average price	Repayment mortgage	LCHO	Private rent	Intermediate rent
1 bed property	£120,000	£614	£480	£546	£437
2 bed property	£195,000	£998	£779	£702	£562
3 bed property	£255,000	£1,305	£1,019	£897	£718
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			<input type="text"/>	



This presents an opportunity for the Council and housing providers to develop a product which is affordable and accessible to more local residents in the district.

Additionally Landlords are able to select tenants that can afford higher rents and have access to rent-in-advance, deposits and guarantors. To be affordable, the National Housing Federation identifies that only 30% of income should be spent on housing costs.

### Cost of rent compared to 30% of Average Weekly Earnings



As shown in the table below, there is a significant weekly shortfall for households reliant on housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit. As a result of the growing difference between Local Housing Allowance rates and private rents and the need to top up from other resources:



<b>Property Size</b>	<b>Local Housing Allowance Source Gov.uk</b>	<b>Average Private Rent Sector source Hometrack Oct 2019</b>	<b>Weekly top up</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
1 bed	£85.64	£126.00	£40.36	47%
2 bed	£123.62	£162.00	£39.00	31%
3 bed	£144.36	£207.00	£62.64	43%
4 bed	£183.11	£264.00	£80.89	44%

The demand for housing for these groups far outstrips the current supply. The number of affordable homes delivered in the district in the last five financial years has been exceedingly low. The number of rented homes delivered has been as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of homes delivered</b>	<b>Location</b>
2014/2015	Social Rent - 33 Affordable Rent - 44 Shared Ownership - 9	Margate, Ramsgate Broadstairs
2015/2016	Affordable rent - 43 Shared Ownership - 9	Margate, Ramsgate Broadstairs
2016/2017	Affordable rent - 92 Shared Ownership - 15	Margate, Ramsgate Broadstairs, Westwood Cross
2017/2018	Affordable rent - 32	Birchington
2018/2019	Affordable rent - 20	Cliftonville, Margate, Broadstairs

The low delivery of affordable housing in recent years means it is crucial to maximise the number of affordable homes to be delivered over the duration of this strategy and beyond.

The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment has calculated that the district needs 857 homes per annum, of which 30% should be affordable homes. Given the low numbers of affordable housing delivered in recent years, it is essential that the council maximises the number of affordable homes that can be delivered through planning obligations.

In terms of the rental market, it is demonstrated that the private rented sector is currently the key option in terms of choice and availability.

The number of shared ownership homes is very low compared to other areas and according to the Office of National Statistics in 2018, the ratio of average house price to workplace based earnings in Kent was 9.7 compared to 5.39 in 2002. This means that owning a home locally is more difficult than ever.

In the last 5 years, 2 new independent living schemes have been delivered in the district in partnership with Kent County Council. As our population will live longer, the council will work in partnership with other bodies to determine what type of housing our older residents aspire to live in and deliver accommodation to meet the needs of our older population.

However, affordability is not just about tenure, but is also affected by living costs associated with the location and design of someone's home. For example, a highly energy efficient home can lead to it being more affordable in terms of utility costs

Taking a lead in developing new homes in Thanet, the Council intends to deliver newbuild council housing that is energy efficient for our tenants. The council will work in partnership with other registered providers, developers, land owners, community land, housing and charitable trusts, commissioners and specialist providers to deliver the homes the district requires. The council will encourage self build and custom-built housing and will decide and explore if it is feasible to set up its own housing company to deliver its own homes as an additional delivery option.

## Homelessness

A wide definition of homelessness is adopted in the Homelessness Monitor (Annual Independent Study Commissioned by Crisis) which helps to consider the preventative action needed for all of the following homeless groups:

- People sleeping rough.
- Single homeless people living in hostels, shelters and temporary supported accommodation.
- Statutorily homeless households – households who seek housing assistance from local authorities on grounds of being currently or imminently without accommodation.
- 'Hidden homeless' households – people who may be considered homeless but whose situation is not 'visible' either on the streets or in official statistics

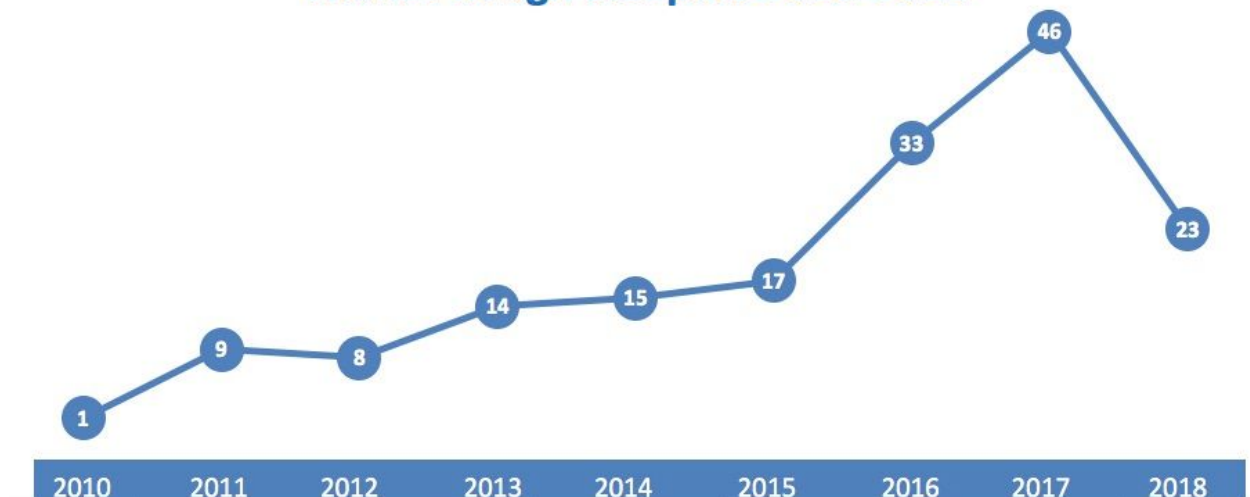
The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has placed additional duties on the council which include introducing a 56 day prevention duty and a 56 relief duty before the main housing duty, as set out in The Housing Act 1996 (amended 2002) is applied. The challenge for Thanet is the lack of affordable, suitable accommodation in the private sector that is primarily responsible for the increase in demand.

Homelessness has increased in recent years and the number of households accepted as homeless and the number placed in temporary accommodation has increased. Since the

introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council's focus has been around early intervention and prevention of homelessness.

Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness and whilst the numbers of rough sleeping in the district have steadily increased, over the past year direct intervention by multi-disciplinary professional services and government funding, have helped to support rough sleepers off the streets. In order to maintain this position, continuous funding is needed to enable out-reach activity and provision of much needed accommodation.

### Thanet Rough Sleepers 2010-2018



The council is keen to explore new methods of working with the most vulnerable homeless clients. The steady increase in homelessness in Thanet in recent years is a result of various welfare reforms and the opportunities to access the private rented market decreasing. Landlords are fearful of universal credit and the freezing of local housing allowance rates until 2020 has meant that the private rented sector has become increasingly unaffordable in recent years.

Under the terms of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the council is required to prevent or relieve homelessness for any household in its area. Only once these duties have been exhausted must the council consider if a full housing duty is owed. The council submits data quarterly to central government and this data gives an indication of homelessness trends in the district.

Year	Approaches	Preventions	Statutory applications	Statutory acceptances	Number in Temporary Accommodation as at 31 March
2014	798	373	425	168	28
2015	975	371	604	150	44

2016	1155	275	800	184	78
2017	1077	189	888	195	147
2018	1742	461	584	146	178
2019 (1st 3Qs)	1561	630	247	122	119
2019 (projected)	1800	709	406	147	110

This illustrates that homelessness is increasing and the likelihood is that it will continue to increase in spite of the new legislation. In terms of the causes of homelessness, Thanet mirrors national figures whereby the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy is the main cause followed by friends and family not being able to accommodate. Below shows since the Homelessness Reduction Act commenced 3 April 2018 until the 30 September 2019, the reasons why an applicant approached as homeless.

<b>Reasons for homelessness</b>	<b>Households</b>
End of an Assured Shorthold tenancy	140
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	110
Relationship breakdown (non-violent)	67
Domestic abuse	49
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	47
Left institution	37
Non-racial violence	21
End of social tenancy	16
Supported accommodation	15
Homeless in an emergency e.g. Fire/Flood	11
Property disrepair	6
Mortgage	3
Other	183

Losing a private tenancy is an ongoing challenge for the Council to respond to and contributed by landlords' fears of welfare reform. It is becoming increasingly difficult for low-income or benefit dependent households to access alternative private rented accommodation due to high rents. Accommodation is becoming increasingly unaffordable as local housing allowance rates remain frozen until 2020.

It terms of households in the community who become homeless, this has broadly been an even split between families with Children and Single/couples over the last 5 years.

Homelessness has a particular detrimental effect on the lives of children and long-stays in temporary accommodation can severely impact a child's development, education and health and well-being.

## Cost of emergency accommodation

Temporary Accommodation (TA) was at an all time high in April 2018 with 188 households in temporary accommodation of which 51 were in hotel type accommodation. A key service priority has been to reduce numbers in temporary accommodation and to end the use of bed and breakfast type accommodation for families and singles. With a robust landlord liaison service working with the private sector their focus has been on preventing homelessness and the Council has invested in this by increasing capacity and introducing an incentive scheme as well as ring fencing discretionary housing payments to increase prevention activity.

In 2018, the Council introduced a charge for Temporary Accommodation through its Tenancy Strategy. This enables a proportion of the cost of TA to be offset by income from tenants, including housing benefits payments, although currently less than half of the Council's gross expenditure on TA is recoverable in this way. For 2019/20, under £500k was forecast to be received from TA charges, including housing benefit payments.

The table below illustrates the total gross cost to the authority of providing temporary accommodation to those who are homeless and are owed a duty by the council.

Date	Total Cost
2014/15	£267,035.09
2015/16	£390,259.05
2016/17	£1,103,649.25
2017/18	£1,903,413.71
2018/19	£2,134,912.80
2019/20 ( current projection)	£1.65m
2020/21 budget	Enter figure when known

The table below indicates those households that have left temporary accommodation in the last 18 months or since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Bedroom Need	Average number of nights in TA
1 Bed	107 Nights
2 Bed	124 Nights
3 Bed	208 Nights
4 Bed	152 nights
5 Bed	123 Nights

## Private Sector Housing

The owner-occupied stock remains the largest tenure in the district at 60% (source BRE). The private rented sector has increased in recent years and now accounts for 26% of the total housing stock. This is significantly higher than the national average of 19%. The cost of renting privately has also disproportionately increased compared to Local Authority rents and Housing Association rents. On a monthly equivalent, a social housing tenant will pay £345- £399 compared to a person renting in the private sector, who on average is paying almost double that at £622 per month. Gross weekly pay in Thanet District stands at £479 per week, according to the latest data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, which suggests more than 30% of income is spent on living costs. The loss of a private rented tenancy is the biggest reason for homelessness in Thanet. Over the period of the last strategy, the council has actively promoted landlord accreditation through the Kent Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Since the last strategy, the number of accredited landlords with property in Thanet has increased from 160 to 365.

Since 2011, the Council has been operating selective licence schemes in parts of Margate Central and Cliftonville West. A selective licensing designation requires landlords with property in the area to obtain a licence and comply with a wide range of licence conditions to ensure good property management. The latest designation was introduced by the Council to promote an improvement in general housing conditions, an improvement in the social and economic conditions in the area, and a reduction in anti-social behaviour, crime and deprivation. In October 2018, new rules for licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) were implemented. The changes extended the scope of the mandatory regime to include most HMOs with five or more people living in two or more separate households. The previous requirement for such HMOs to be three or more storeys high was removed, which means many single and two storey HMOs now require a licence. Licencing is necessary to regulate conditions, standards and safety in the properties considered to represent the highest risk to tenants as regards such matters as fire safety and overcrowding.

The BRE report (2017) estimated that there were 2,325 HMOs in Thanet. The council has investigated all alleged HMOs and has identified that of these around 75 fall under the current mandatory HMO licensing regime. The private sector in Thanet suffers from condition and repair issues. According to the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 10.6% of households in the district live in fuel poverty which impacts on their health and well-being. Fuel Poverty is defined by a low income household with high costs. If fuel costs are above average, by paying for that amount, the remaining household income falls below the official poverty line. The highest concentrations of fuel poverty are in the private sector and are found in wards of Cliftonville West, Margate Central and Eastcliff with excess cold concentrated in the Thanet Villages, Dane Valley and Central Harbour.

There have been affordable warmth strategies in place since 2003 to improve properties to ensure a decent, warm home is provided to live in. It is estimated that 11% of the private sector homes in Thanet contain a Category 1 Hazard as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and that the cost of dealing with these hazards would be approximately £18.8m. The situation is more acute in the wards of Thanet Villages, Eastcliff and Central Harbour, where 15% of private rented sector homes contain a Category 1 Hazard. Furthermore, remedying these hazards would save the NHS approximately £2.3m per year. The council believes that good health starts at home regardless of tenure and will continue to address standards in the private and social housing sectors.

The Council is also working with Kent Fire and Rescue Service as well as with private owners and other housing providers to ensure the safety of all residents living in high rise and converted flats across the district.

The Energy Performance of properties in the district is estimated to be below a Band D across all tenures, with 5.7% of private rented dwellings falling below a band E rating. Government's ambition, through its Clean Growth Strategy, set a target to upgrade as many houses to EPC Band E by 2020, Band C by 2035 "where practical, cost-effective and affordable". Additionally, all fuel poor households, and as many rented homes as possible, to reach the same standard by 2030. The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is the only public scheme currently delivering insulation measures into homes in England. EPCs have been around for a decade now and many people have simply ignored them citing them as an unnecessary cost associated with dealing in property. This position will doubtless change with the introduction of the 2015 Energy Efficiency Regulations. Most landlords are aware of the new Minimum Energy Standards which come into effect in 2018. The regulations will make it unlawful for landlords to grant a new lease or tenancy of a commercial or residential property that has an EPC rating of below band E from 1 April 2018.

The target for all homes to reach EPC Band C requires over 1 million insulation installations per year in England, but in 2018 only around 110,000 insulation measures were installed with ECO support, translating into an average of 2,100 insulation measures per week. Although it is difficult to track, there is little evidence to suggest that there is a considerable amount of insulation deployment taking place outside of ECO in England, except for double glazing installations. There is an estimated cumulative funding gap of £15.1 billion to meet the Fuel Poverty Strategy's 2030 target, and 2020 and 2025 interim milestones. The Committee for Fuel Poverty calculated that if

implemented, the Clean Growth Strategy proposals could realistically reduce the shortfall to £8.9 billion. Even after including this assumption, a gap of over £0.7 billion per year to 2030 remains.

There is a clear and considerable investment shortfall to meeting the Government's energy efficiency targets. This will impact on Thanet with the risk of landlords choosing to let homes on short-term licensing or leave homes empty, rather than invest to bring up to lettable energy performance standards. Potentially Housing Associations will also seek to exit from older stock in Thanet ahead of 2020, rather than invest in renovation, of any properties performing below the required energy efficiency standard.

As at 31st March 2018, there were 5,558 affordable rented homes in the district 3,016 are owned by the council and 2,424 are owned by other registered providers (housing associations). Of the 2,424 properties are owned by other registered providers, 146 are let through the Seaside and Country Homes Scheme and are homes built by the former Greater London Council for retired people living in the London Boroughs. They are therefore not available to households living locally reducing the potential pool of properties available and ability to require improved maintenance.

The energy regulations will have a significant impact on both affordable and private sector stock and the wider sustainability of communities, over the next 5 years which will need to be closely monitored and intervention or enforcement applied as necessary.

## Empty Properties

Since March 2016 the overall number of empty properties (excluding 2nd homes) in the district has increased by 45%, from 1,118 to 1,620. Of these, 725 homes have been empty for more than 2 years. The sharpest increase relates to long term empty homes that require major works, which have doubled to 206 homes since March 2016. Empty homes equate to 2.4% of the overall housing stock. There are a further 1,622 known second homes in the district. This is despite the continued good work completed by the council to bring empty homes back into use. The most significant increase has been for those properties that require or are undergoing major repairs or alterations.

The financial viability of these projects is often a barrier to owners completing the work required to bring the properties back into use; however, the Council targets the most problematic empty properties, such as these, for proactive intervention. The underlying causes of the increase are complex, but background economic issues, linked to the local housing market play a significant role. On-going pressure on the housing market means that it is important that the number of properties remaining empty in Thanet is kept to a minimum. This is also to the benefit of the property owners as their property would provide a rental income if it were made available for letting.

## The council as a landlord

As at 31 March 2019, the council owns 3,016 homes, mostly houses (51%), medium to high-rise flats (42%) and low-rise flats (7%) across the area, with around 2,997 tenants and 304



leaseholders. Around 29% of tenants are aged 60 or over, and it is estimated that around 47% may have a disability or a vulnerability of some kind.

The council is committed to continue as a landlord, providing quality services and safe and well maintained homes to its tenants and leaseholders. The council will maintain a 30 year business plan, setting out the financial provisions for these services and for the investment needs of the existing housing stock over the long term.

The council is also committed to using the resources available within its Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to build and acquire new affordable homes, where this is affordable and sustainable.

Tenant Health and Safety and reducing fuel poverty are key focuses for the Council. On energy improvement, a package of investment with low cost measures such as heating improvement, double glazing, solid wall insulation and solar hot water will enable over 36% reduction in energy demand. A reduction of 20% in energy demands would be achievable by implementing low cost measure of heating improvements within tower blocks across the district which have EPC ratings below E.

Following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in 2017, the Council worked promptly to review fire safety in its own tower blocks and agreed additional funding to refresh fire risk assessments and complete works. Longer term proposals have now been developed for the long term investment in the council's 6 tower blocks. The focus over the next five years will be on improving conditions of lifts, passive fire safety works and external cladding.

## Our finances

The council has a robust 30 year business plan in place for its Housing Revenue Account. Significantly, a requirement to reduce rents by 1% per annum for 4 years from 2016/17, introduced by the Welfare Reform & Work Act 2016, has negatively affected the council's housing finances and had an impact on the council's capacity to support new development and acquisitions initiatives. However, the last year of the rent reduction requirement will be 2019/20 and thereafter, the council is likely to be able to increase rents by the CPI +1%. This will therefore increase the council's rent roll, albeit the council is conscious that the roll out of universal credit could lead to an increase in arrears and has accounted for bad debt to increase. It is predicted that at the end of 2019/20, there will be reserves of £21.2m in the housing revenue account and this will leave the council in a positive financial position and able to fund any new or unexpected investment needed in its own housing stock. The debt cap on the council's ability to borrow for new build was removed in the Summer of 2018 giving the council greater flexibility to prudentially borrow. As rents increase from 2020/21, the council anticipates that it can commit more funds for development and acquisitions in future years. As a landlord, the council will maintain and improve its stock through its capital programme (Housing Investment Programme). The Housing Investment Programme is approximately £3m and includes not only works on individual properties but also estate and environmental improvements and disabled adaptations.

The annual rent roll for the council is approximately £12.5m per annum. At the end of 2017/18, rent arrears stood at 1.8% of the total rent roll for that year but it is anticipated that the percentage of

rent arrears will continue to increase as universal credit full service rolled out across the district in the Summer 2018. The council re-let 132 homes between 1 Jan 2018 and 31 Dec 2018.

The council received an allocation of just over £3 million in 2019-20 to provide disabled facilities grants in the private sector. This was the highest allocation in Kent and is reflective of our ageing population and number of disabled residents in the district. The council also makes available discretionary loans for home owners to improve their homes that are in poor condition. The council will encourage households who are eligible to apply for grants and loans where necessary to improve the health and well-being of our communities and to support residents to remain in their homes.

The council receives government funding for its homelessness service and following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the amount of funding given to the council significantly increased. Between 2017/18 and 2019/20, the council will have received £917,685 in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant as well as £328,387 new burdens funding specifically related to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and its implementation.

The council has increased the staff resources in the Housing Options team with 4 new posts created. However, an increase in emergency temporary accommodation placements has put finances under pressure. Whilst the outlook is financially positive in terms of the Housing Revenue Account and the funds the council has received from central government to deliver homelessness and adaptations services, the council is still awaiting the results of the Government’s consultation on its Housing Green Paper “A New Deal for Social Housing” and a separate consultation, “Use of Right to Buy Sales”. Both consultation findings could impact on the delivery of new affordable homes in the district as risks could be posed to the council’s ability to borrow to fund new homes. Funding for Controlled Migration and some homelessness services is not guaranteed beyond March 2020 and the council still faces financial constraints now and in the future. The council will, where appropriate, lobby Government and other agencies to remove barriers or support enabling actions to assist in the delivery of this strategy.

## Capital Funding streams

In order to increase the number of homes each year, the Council will be looking to capitalise on opportunities to acquire more properties, develop new homes on council owned land and intervene in the local market to buy sites which may otherwise not come forward. This will be funded from a mixture of Right to Buy receipts, borrowing and external funding as illustrated below:

Funding	Funding Type	Permissible Uses	Restrictions	Timescale for spend
Revenue contributions (inc New Properties Reserve)	Revenue contribution	New Build/ refurbishment purchasing/	None, but there is unlikely to be sufficient revenue to fund capital expenditure going forward. Income received from affordable rent properties is allocated to the New Properties Reserve, which must be re-invested into increasing the number of affordable rent properties.	None
Right To Buy 141 Receipts	Capital Receipt	New Build/purchasing properties	30% not to be combined with any grant/S106/affordable housing receipts. Currently restricted to social	Within 3 years of receipt

			and affordable rent properties.	
Other capital receipts	Capital Receipt	New Build/purchasing properties	All capital receipts from asset disposals are GF, unless allocated to a HRA scheme with cabinet approval.	None
Section 106	Developer Contributions	Dependant upon agreement	As per agreement	Typically 5 years from receipt, but agreement dependant
PFI Capital Receipt	Capital Receipt	To be used for affordable housing	To be used for affordable housing	None
External Funding	Grant	Dependant upon funder and conditions	Dependant upon funder and conditions	Dependant upon funder and conditions
PWLB	Borrowing	Capital Expenditure	PWLB restrictions on the nature of capital spend. Government announced in 2019 that the interest rates would increase which will have an impact on funding of development.	None

## Our Priorities:

This next section sets out our approach to meeting the housing challenges facing the district with a focus on improving supply that local people can afford, improving standards in the private rented sector, ensuring that homes are secure and promoting independence and sustainable accommodation for those vulnerable or at risk of homelessness.

## Improving access to and supply of housing

Housing is at the core of our ambitions for growth, for jobs and prosperity, for the health and wellbeing of our residents and to ensure that Thanet is a place where people can thrive.

There is a recognised mismatch between growth in second homes and the corresponding slower growth in house-building and infrastructure, and the adverse impacts this can have on both people and businesses. It is therefore essential for local economic success that the pace of delivery of new homes overall is increased and that we can stimulate the housing market in the case of any market failure. But we also need to make sure that we are providing the right types of homes in the right locations, ensuring these are affordable for those that need to live and work in the area, whilst minimising adverse impacts of growth.

### Priority 1 - Improving and responding to our understanding of Housing Need

Through our Local Plan we know that we need to deliver an additional 17,140 homes up to 2031; with the key challenge that sufficient housing is available which is affordable to everyone in the district. Building on the Local Plan, a review of housing needs will be undertaken in 2020 aligning to the new national standard method for calculating local housing need. A further assessment will determine the appropriate size, type and tenure of housing needed for different sections of the community.

**Priority 2 - Increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to those on low to median incomes**

The majority of new affordable homes will come from private developments and we will continue to work proactively with developers to secure the provision of affordable housing through our Local Plans. In summary, the aim is for 30% of all sites with 10+ units to be provided as affordable housing.

*Flexible Approach to tenure mix*

We are committed to working proactively with developers to help them find ways of making it viable to deliver our affordable housing requirements. Where a policy compliant scheme is offered subject to viability, the Council will consider a different tenure split on a site by site basis.

As housing delivery remains a priority, 100% affordable housing schemes will only be considered where there is a commitment to deliver the homes early and the scale of provision of different tenures is suitable within the location. All tenures will be considered on a site by site, spatial basis, to ensure we are supporting mixed and sustainable communities.

Where developers choose not to work with us in this way we will take a robust approach based on the National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance as to how we scrutinise any viability challenges, to ensure we maximise the affordable housing contribution.

We will continue to prioritise affordable housing for rent to meet the needs of those on low incomes who are unable to afford alternative accommodation.

For those aspiring to own their own home we want to offer choice, and will explore intermediate products for low cost home ownership such as shared ownership, rent to buy and rent to save. We also want to explore the role that new Private Rented Sector housing can have in broadening housing options.

The following approach will be applied:

<b>Tenure cascade</b>	<b>Evidence required for change</b>	<b>Nominations</b>	<b>Consultee</b>
30% Affordable Housing	Policy scheme compliant	100% rights to the Council	Housing Team
30% Affordable Housing At 100% Affordable in favour of rent (up to 50 units)	Viability Accelerated programme build	100% rights to the Council and 75% on re-let	Housing Team
30% Affordable Housing 100% Affordable in favour of shared	Accelerated programme build Viability evidence Sales research	100% rights to the Council Exclusive sales to local residents for 6	Housing Team

ownership		weeks	
-----------	--	-------	--

*Acquisitions programme*

Since 2016 the council has operated a programme of acquiring homes on the open market for use as an affordable form of temporary accommodation and some homes for affordable rent in the district. This approach has provided a way of making properties available more quickly, complementing our development programme, and has also provided a more cost-effective way of providing temporary accommodation. The council has funding plans in place to acquire additional properties using affordable housing contributions and unspent right to buy receipts. The council will continue to acquire properties as part of its strategy for providing homes that people can afford, as well as providing a cheaper alternative to paying private owners to provide temporary housing.

Where sites are stalled due to a lack of affordable housing providers, this is a potential area for the Council to intervene to accelerate the pace and delivery of these sites. By acquiring S106 units for rent and shared ownership, on sites with thresholds below which housing associations are less likely to purchase, the Council will consider purchasing as the units to enable the build out of much needed affordable homes.

*Council-led development pipeline*

Tackling poverty is a priority for the council, and we are committed to building new council homes which are accessible and affordable to those on low incomes. Over the years we have seen a historic decline in stock numbers - particularly through Right to Buy sales, but we are aiming for this trend to be reversed through our council new-build programmes. By building mixed tenure housing on smaller council owned sites, this increases housing choices that meet the needs and aspirations of local residents.

**Priority 3 - Using Local Lettings Plans to build sustainable and cohesive communities**

To support well balanced and sustainable communities, Local Letting Plans will be used for larger developments aligned to the Council's nomination rights. We will continue to enable delivery of significant development of schemes of over 100 units to help meet the housing needs of the district, including the need for affordable housing tenures. We are committed to learning lessons from past experience to help the development of new communities going forward, to establish community cohesion and long term sustainability. 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 know that on large sites where the infrastructure and facilities are less established this can lead to residents feeling isolated. We 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.

**Priority 4 - Promoting housing for Essential Local Workers**

The council is keen to work with local employers and other partners to get a better understanding of the housing needs of the local workforce, to support local services, the local economy and further economic growth. A number of high skilled residents and those in the construction sector travel to London for employment. The Council is keen to reduce commuting travel and ensure business growth is sustainable into the future through the provision of homes specifically targeted to essential local workers beyond the 'Essential Local Workers' definition in the NPPF.

Shared ownership homes and alternative intermediate models, such as rent to buy and Private Rented Sector models (PRS), can help support the needs of those on middle incomes who come to work in the area but cannot afford to buy locally.

The Allocation Policy (2019) amended the council's choice based letting scheme to include low income workers to register and apply for social housing for rent which will help to support the number of working households approaching the Council as being at risk of homelessness.

### **Priority 5 - Building for an ageing population**

With a rapidly ageing population, The Council are keen to promote a range of housing options to accommodate people and families throughout their lifetime across all tenures, to enable them to live safely and independently for as long as possible. This could be through the provision of 'downsizer' accommodation to provide more choice to older people who want to move to smaller and more suitable accommodation, and to enable them to remain in their local community if they wish to do so. This can also help to free up family homes. In relation to affordable housing, local lettings plans may also be used to give priority to older people wanting to move to smaller homes in particular new housing developments.

We know that loneliness and isolation is one of the biggest issues that may affect older people, and we will promote homes that are well located to services and facilities and well integrated into the community, where people of all ages can help support each other.

There are a number of sheltered housing and extra care schemes, which enable older people to remain in the community, whilst at the same time having the opportunity to mix more with people of their own age where they choose to do so. Both KCC and the council are interested in exploring options for more housing specifically for older people, including new models of housing. Any new provision has to take into account any impacts on social care and we will continue to work with the County Council to make best use of the financial resources available.

In terms of general housing, both affordable and private, we need to be future-proofing new homes through design so that they can be easily adaptable to enable people to live independently. In accordance with our current Local Plan, all homes be built to level M4(2) of the adaptable and accessible building standard with 10% of the housing to be built to wheelchair accessibility standards.

The provision of care beds that can be funded through social care is a particular issue facing the County Council and we will continue to work with them to identify how we can support the provision of care homes, including places available for spot purchasing beds for those funded through social care. With the increase of older people suffering from dementia, providers of any new specialist

accommodation should consider how it can help meet this need, as well as the potential to help hospital discharge through the provision of intermediate care.

### **Priority 6 - Promoting specialist and other types of housing**

We will continue to develop 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. Where purpose built accommodation is required, we will work with both commissioners and developers to secure appropriate accommodation on new developments.

### **Priority 7 - Homes for Gypsies and Travellers**

Everyone should have the right to a decent home, be that in traditional housing or through other cultural or lifestyle choices. Under the Housing & Planning Act 2016, local authorities have a duty to assess the housing needs of those residing in caravans. Across the district, there has also been a noticeable increase over the last year or so in the number of temporary unauthorised encampments, particularly involving gypsies and travellers. As part of the council's action to identify new sites, we will look to see how we can best accommodate those stopping temporarily in the District. A key priority is to identify transit sites to accommodate those that wish to live in a caravan. Under the planning definition, a recent assessment identified the need for Gypsy & Traveller sites for those residing in caravans who no longer travel (7 permanent pitches) and 5 transit pitches.

### **Priority 8 Diversifying the Housing market**

Everyone has different needs when it comes to the homes people live in. We want to create a place where people have a choice, through ensuring that a wide range of different types of housing are available, which at the same time can help accelerate rates of delivery. We also want to provide diversity in how homes are delivered so we are not solely reliant on a handful of developers to build the homes, including the affordable housing that we need.

We are also keen to explore new ways of delivering different types of housing - such as community-led development, including cooperative-housing & Community Land Trusts, and self-build homes. The Council will continue to support community groups active in the area with the joint enabling role across Dover, Canterbury and Thanet.

#### *Private Rented Sector or Build to Rent*

Based on the local need and demand on privately rented units, the Council will explore purpose-built private rented sector (PRS) accommodation; and of the relationship between large PRS schemes and the ability to create settled and cohesive communities.

We recognise that PRS can meet the needs of households on a range of incomes, from those who are unlikely to be considered for social housing for rent to those who can afford but do not want to own their own home. We also recognise PRS can help accelerate overall housing build-out rates on large strategic sites. Subject to clear evidence of need, we may consider proposals for new

PRS as part of a wider housing mix. Any such homes provided should remain available as PRS for an agreed period.

They need to be of high quality, well managed and offer longer term tenancies, as well as options for tenants to end tenancies sooner where it meets their needs.

Where the need for PRS has been identified we will seek a range of unit sizes and household types and income levels, including appropriate provision of Affordable Private Rent.

### *Houses of Multiple Occupation*

Well managed HMOs have an important part to play in meeting housing needs, offering a more affordable housing solution for single low income households. The Local Plan supports the provision of good quality, larger HMOs, in appropriate locations. At the same time the council will seek to avoid over concentration of provision in any one area, and to minimise any potential adverse impact on neighbouring occupiers through mandatory HMO licensing. Currently Margate Central and Cliftonville have restrictions in place for any additional HMOs and single bed units.

As part of the development of the larger strategic sites we will explore what role new-build HMOs can also play within these areas.

### **Priority 9 Accessing funding for Infrastructure and Offsite construction**

Innovative and new ways of developing high quality housing more quickly and cheaply than through more traditional construction methods are emerging. Although this is unlikely to completely replace existing house building methods, at least for now, it does offer opportunities for the councils to consider more innovative ways of promoting delivery through their own development programmes, and for supporting carbon reduction and other sustainability objectives.

Any such consideration would need to take into account implications for future repair and maintenance. We will continue to work with developers on the larger strategic sites where the scale of build is appropriate to modern methods of construction.

### **Priority 10 - Increasing the role of SMEs**

The Council want to promote diversity in the market, to help speed up delivery and provide a wider range of housing options. We are keen to work with SME builders to bring forward smaller sites that provide variety in the market to meet local needs.

The councils will seek to identify land to accommodate at least 10% of our housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare, in accordance with the National Planning Policy. This will help to ensure that land is available for small to medium sized house builders to develop.

### **Priority 11 - Increasing build out rates of stalled sites or sites with planning**

Measures above aimed at diversifying the housing market can also help to accelerate the delivery of housing, which in turn can help us to address affordable housing more effectively.



The Council will promote housing delivery as a corporate priority and explore all options of whether there is more we can do to speed up delivery.

### **Priority 12 - Raising the standards of design for new homes and communities**

It's not just the cost of rents and mortgages which determines whether a home is affordable but also service charges and running costs, including costs associated with heating a home. We want to see homes built that are environmentally sustainable, and to encourage well-designed developments, especially in terms of on-site renewable energy and low carbon technologies, and in promoting biodiversity.

We need to ensure that homes are of good quality, and that communities are well designed with access to sufficient facilities and open spaces. New communities need to be effectively integrated with existing more established communities so that everyone can benefit from new developments.

The Council has introduced a Design Guide which sets out standards expected in its own council new build programme. The Council's approach to Climate Change aims to achieve zero carbon status by 2030 and stresses the importance of new developments being designed to both respond to and mitigate against climate change.

New homes need to be flexible to meet the needs of a range of household types and sizes, and to meet individual households' changing needs over time. All new homes have to meet the nationally described space standards.

Ensuring that villages keep their distinctive character, the Council has undertaken Rural Needs Survey to establish the emerging housing need in the parishes and ensure the results inform tenure mix for planning. The Council will continue to work with Parish Councils to raise the quality of new development and support inclusive, sustainable growth through the use of Village Design Statements, which are produced by local parishes. These Statements will set out guidelines, worked up in partnership with parishes, that will help shape the character of new development in villages. The council also works with communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans as a way for communities to take a proactive approach to deciding the future of the places where they live and work.

Having easily adaptable homes as a household's circumstances change also helps support people to live independent lives. An ageing population means we must future-proof the design of our homes now, so that as we age homes can be easily adapted to avoid the need for expensive specialist housing. Whilst the Lifetime Homes Standard has been superseded, we will, wherever possible, build to M4(2) adaptable and accessible standards ourselves and encourage other house builders to do so.

We also need to be delivering homes and wider infrastructure that are designed with a view to new technologies, including the move towards a digital connected future. Being digitally connected will support a range of groups, including those seeking employment, those that want to work from home, and those for whom assistive technology can reduce the need for care.

## Improving standards and safety across all tenures

Everyone has the right to live in a safe home, whichever sector they live in. Whilst we have an ambitious programme for building new homes in future years that are well designed and energy and water efficient, we must not forget that the majority of residents live in existing homes, and as many of the homes are older, they are more likely to be in poorer condition, less well insulated, and more expensive to heat.

The Council supports this right for all tenants and works hard to ensure that landlords in all sectors provide good quality well-managed accommodation across the district. In respect of the private rented sector, local authorities have been given greater regulatory powers in recent years to improve housing conditions. The Council has embraced these new enforcement tools and uses them robustly whenever appropriate to help safeguard tenants. For example, the Council has started imposing civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution when a private landlord commits a housing offence. Selective licensing, which requires private landlords to obtain a licence and comply with a range of licence conditions, has proved to be an effective area-based intervention that has improved the quality of housing and management standards in parts of Margate. The Council will remain proactive in tackling poor housing.

### **Priority 1 - Ensuring our council homes and environments are of high standard and are well managed and maintained**

Having high quality responsive services for managing and maintaining council properties is something that tenants and leaseholders have identified as particularly important. We know also that the physical appearance of the outside of homes is important to tenants and needs to feature in our investment plans.

Significant investment has been made in maintaining our homes to a good standard and making them more energy efficient. This will continue to be a priority for us in terms of improving our homes and we will work towards any additional requirements following the government's proposed review of building standard. The Council has also committed to investing in a five year programme of environmental improvements on its council housing estates.

The Council has an ongoing programme of improving the energy efficiency of council homes. This includes the installation of new windows and thermally efficient doors, improving thermal insulation and replacing heating with new and more efficient systems.

The roll-out of Universal Credit could have a significant impact on our tenants' welfare, including the ability to pay their rent. This in turn could have a knock-on effect in terms of the councils' rental income, reducing the funding available to invest in homes and services. We will prioritise the support we can give to tenants to ensure they are able to claim and pay their rent on time.

### **Priority 2 - Improving standards in the private sector**

The private rented sector in Thanet has increased significantly in recent years, from an estimated 9,874 dwellings in 2002 to 17,271 dwellings in 2017. Housing conditions tend to be worse in this sector, with around 12% of private rented homes in the district having one or more Category 1 hazards. The council has an important role to play in improving housing conditions and

management standards in the private rented sector. We will actively support landlords in meeting their responsibilities, but will take robust enforcement action against the minority of landlords who provide poorly managed and unsafe housing.

The Council is under a statutory duty to deliver the mandatory HMO licensing regime and will continue to ensure that relevant landlords obtain a licence and comply with licensing conditions. The existing selective licensing scheme, which affects parts of Margate and Cliftonville, will be proactively enforced until all licences have expired.

### **Priority 3 - Bringing more empty homes back into use**

Having homes sitting empty when we have such a high demand for housing is a wasted resource. Furthermore, long term empty homes can have a detrimental impact on the wider community, making streets and neighbourhoods appear neglected and uncared for. They can attract crime and anti-social behaviour such as squatting, arson, graffiti and fly-tipping, and also affect the value of neighbouring properties. Tackling empty homes is a priority for the Council. It is therefore important that we work with owners to try and bring empty properties back into use. We will provide informal advice and assistance to the owners of long term empty homes and, while funding remains available, work in partnership with Kent County Council to offer interest free loans to assist owners in bringing long term empty homes back into use.

When informal action is unsuccessful, the Council will consider taking enforcement action if it has the potential to bring empty homes back into use. This can include serving statutory enforcement notices requiring works to be completed, the undertaking of works-in-default, and taking some of the more significant interventions, such as enforcing the sale of a property, applying for an Empty Dwelling Management Order or making a Compulsory Purchase Order.

The Council will also seek to disincentivise the ownership of long term empty homes through the use of Council Tax premiums, which are applicable to unoccupied and unfurnished homes that have been empty for two or more years.

The council will publish an Empty Homes Plan and keep progress under regular review.

### **Priority 4 - Promoting energy and water efficiency**

It is estimated that around 40% of UK emissions come from households, with up to 50% coming from heating and electricity. As well as the effects on our environment, it can also be damaging to the health and wellbeing of residents where homes cannot be heated properly, with an estimated 11.5% of households in fuel poverty in the district.

We therefore have a responsibility to ensure that housing across all tenures meets a high standard for residents and supports our goals to reduce the overall carbon footprint. Wider housing developments are required through the draft Local Plan to apply the National Technical Standards (relating to water efficiency; internal space standards and accessibility), and Code Level 4 to new housing development.

We will continue to promote greener and energy & water efficient solutions for council tenants and home-owners. The Council will explore greater scope and flexibility to fund energy efficiency measures for those on low incomes, to promote warm homes. We will look to provide greater support to improve housing conditions through this policy. We will also provide advice and support to private landlords, but where necessary take enforcement action if they fail to meet the expected standards.

Working with KCC we will continue to explore the potential to work together to deliver energy efficiency projects that address issues of fuel poverty and climate change through the KM Strategy Energy Partnership.

### **Priority 5 - Exploring discretionary licensing schemes across the district**

In addition to the mandatory HMO licensing regime, the Council is empowered to consider implementing further discretionary licensing schemes in the district. These are “additional HMO licensing” and “selective licensing” schemes. Additional HMO licensing schemes can be introduced to capture HMOs that do not fall under the mandatory scheme; for example, HMOs containing only three or four people. Selective licensing schemes require most types of privately rented property to be licensed. Before either type of scheme can be introduced, the evidence supporting the case for a designation must be subject to a 10-week public consultation. Larger schemes also require Government approval.

The Council will continue to explore opportunities for using these discretionary licensing schemes in Thanet. Such schemes can help improve housing conditions and management standards in the private rented sector, promote regeneration and have beneficial social-economic impacts.

### **Priority 6 - Tackling Rogue Landlords**

While there are many good private landlords with property in Thanet, there are some who routinely ignore their responsibilities and some who are simply criminal. They are known as rogue landlords. Rogue landlords give good landlords a bad name and put their tenants’ health, safety and welfare at unnecessary risk. Such behaviour is unacceptable.

The council will use every regulatory powers at its disposal to tackle rogue landlords and help drive up standards in the private rented sector. The council will serve a wide range of enforcement notices, issue financial penalties, pursue criminal prosecutions, and apply for rent repayment and banning orders, when appropriate and in the public interest to do so. The council will endeavour to make operating a rogue landlord business model in Thanet too difficult. This should support good landlords by ensuring that others do not find it easier and cheaper to neglect their responsibilities.

When appropriate, the council will seek to add rogue landlords and property agents to the national rogue landlord database if they have been convicted of a relevant offence, or have been subject to two relevant financial penalties within a one year period.

As well as tackling poor housing conditions and management standards, the council will robustly investigate any allegations of tenant harassment and unlawful eviction. When sufficient evidence of an offence can be collected and it is in the public interest, the council will pursue prosecutions to punish offenders and deter others from engaging in such criminal behaviour.

## Enhancing the health and wellbeing of our residents and communities

Poor and/or unsuitable housing, and lack of appropriate transport and community infrastructure, can have a significant effect on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. In addition, a cold home can lead to respiratory and other diseases, and unsuitable homes can increase trips and falls. It is estimated that poor housing costs health and social care around £2.5bn per year.

Ill health prevention is crucial to improving the population's health. On average, approximately 68.7% of time is spent at home. Therefore housing availability, affordability and quality is essential to staying well, both physically and mentally, and having the ability to live independently for as long as possible. Access to green space and quality of environment are also important.

Our aim is to help people live safely and independently at home, and encourage residents to be active participants in community life to combat loneliness and isolation. The **Better Care Fund** (BCF) is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government which seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. The Government awards allocations for Disability Facilities Grant based on need and Thanet has year on year had the highest allocation at around £3m. This enables the Council to enhance the ways residents live in their homes, maintain their homes and have access to wellbeing services.

In collaboration with key stakeholders like the Department for Work and Pensions and Your Leisure we are delivering schemes that focus on our general resident population as well as specific community groups. This includes projects for people on benefits who have anxiety and depression, dementia swimming opportunities, upskilling voluntary organisations through our stakeholder networks to improve the availability of sports like tennis and bowls and supporting existing external partners with their delivery plans.

There are also numerous community projects that are not based in traditional sports and leisure activities that can foster positive community relationships which we are working with local and national stakeholders to develop and deliver. The link between physical and mental wellbeing is well established and we are keen to enhance all of the artistically creative and physically engaging opportunities that our residents have so they are accessible and welcoming whilst we ensure that sustainability of all of the services is a priority.

Thanet District Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and we work closely with veteran-specific charities to meet the needs of our residents who have served as well as their families, working with the Armed Forces Network across Kent to ensure that our veterans are treated with parity and respect at every interaction.

We will continue to work with partners to improve the integration of housing, health and social care services, including the planning and delivery of new developments, reviewing how we deliver Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and home adaptations, and supporting the county-wide 'Housing

Options for Older People' project to help families make informed housing choices as they grow older

### **Priority 1 - Improving support to people in their home**

Over the years we have seen a changing tenant profile within our own council homes with an increase in the number of tenants experiencing mental health issues. This has resulted in us moving towards a much more intensive housing management service to help support the needs of our tenants. This is a growing problem generally across all tenures, with people with complex needs ending up as homeless because there is no where else to turn for support. Often homelessness is a symptom, rather than the cause of mental ill health. We will continue to engage with the Community Safety Partnership in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour with partners to ensure that there is appropriate support and provision available to meet increasing demand.

With continuing reductions in health and social care budgets, it is essential that we work together to ensure that our support services are sustainable for the future. In particular, forging closer links with GPs and other allied health professionals to resolve health issues as a result of poor housing is a priority. Early intervention and prevention is crucial in helping to reduce costs and provide a better quality of life for residents.

Welfare reforms are impacting on residents across all tenures. For example, low Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates compared with local private rents make it increasingly difficult for benefit claimants to rent privately and the overall benefit cap is already affecting a number of local families. The full local roll out of Universal Credit will also have an impact. The Council provides a joined up advice and employability service, Step up training. Support includes actions around, for example: supporting residents to access benefits and respond to the impacts of welfare reform; provision of debt and other financial advice; supporting people to reduce their fuel and water bills; and supporting people into work and training.

Fuel and water poverty are particular issues for local residents who struggle to pay their utility bills. By improving the energy efficiency of new and existing homes, this will reduce the carbon footprint and improve the quality of life for residents. It is therefore a key priority for both KCC and Thanet council to continue to ensure through partnership and publicity activities, that owner occupiers and private rented tenants secure their full share of any funding available to help address fuel poverty.

### **Priority 2 - Tackling poverty and inequality**

Supporting people to develop digital skills and get online is important for a number of reasons. It can help to reduce poverty - e.g. enabling people to make use of benefits and financial and other services which are increasingly only readily available online, access employment, and make savings on utility bills.

It can also help to tackle social isolation. The council will work with Active Thanet are on projects to promote digital inclusion, including actively working to train up 'champions' who can then help others to get online.

### **Priority 3 - Combating Loneliness and Isolation**

The issue of loneliness is rising up the national agenda, particularly in relation to older people, with an estimated 1.2 million chronically lonely older people in the UK. The Council is working with partners on community development and other initiatives to tackle loneliness, including work on improving digital access as well as improving planning on new developments. As part of this we want to explore opportunities for joint inter-generational work, particularly across the councils' sheltered housing schemes.

#### **Priority 4 - Supporting people with Physical disabilities to remain in their own home**

Maintaining people in their own homes, especially the most vulnerable is a key priority. The Council works with Kent County Council to develop community-based wellbeing services for older people, adults living with dementia, physical disabilities or sensory impairments. The Housing Assistance Policy, sets out a new model of delivering from hospital discharge to supporting people to live independently in their home through adaptations and handyman services, funded through the Disabilities Facility Grant or the Council's maintenance provider. This will ensure that wellbeing services are easier to access, better connected and focused on the things people have told the council are important to them.

#### **Priority 5 - Support for young people to access the housing they need**

Thanet has consistently had the highest number of Looked After Children in Kent. As at 28 February 2018 there was a total of 522 Looked After Children in Thanet; of these 288 were local (to Kent) and 234 were Other Local Authority Looked After Children.

The Housing department to continue working alongside Kent County Council to conduct joint housing assessments to ensure that young people have full knowledge and understanding of their housing options so an informed choice can be made about their future housing pathways.

## **Preventing Homelessness and tackling rough sleeping**

The 2014 Housing Strategy identified a number of priorities which shaped how the Housing Options services developed over the last 5 years. We have reviewed our services for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to ensure that we provide timely realistic and practical advice on their housing options to prevent homelessness and, where this is not possible, mitigate the impacts of homelessness.

Homelessness has continued to increase with households approaching the council for assistance up from 798 in 2014 to a projected 1,800 in 2019, an increase of 125% in 5 years. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, in April 2018, provided an opportunity to refocus activity on homelessness prevention. Over the same period the number of households where the council's support has helped to prevent homelessness has increased from 373 in 2014 to a projected 709 in 2019, nearly doubling the effectiveness of homelessness prevention, despite increasingly challenging conditions in the private rented sector.

A focus on reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation has also been successful, with numbers falling from a high of 188 households in April 2018. The council set a target to half this number within a year and continues to work to reduce the number further over the coming period.

## **What progress has been made?**

The Council has made real progress in improving these priority areas:

- Establishing a Multi Agency Rough Sleeper Team (RISE)
- Increased Housing Options & prevention
- New landlord incentive scheme
- Provision of a Winter Shelter and extended time period over the last year
- Reducing use of Temporary Accommodation
- Ended the use of bed and breakfast to families
- Effective engagement with private and voluntary sectors
- Introduction of Homelessness Reduction Act and offering face to face personal housing plans
- Review of Housing Allocations Policy following introduction of the HRA?

## **Trends in homelessness approaches**

Although the number of households seeking assistance continues to increase, the growing success of new preventative services has meant that the number of statutory homeless applications has fallen since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The casework has, however, become more complex and the needs greater, including psychological and financial issues as a result of broken relationships, exclusion by family and friends, the trauma of eviction and the burgeoning costs of private sector accommodation. It is notable that over the period of the previous strategy, rents have increased significantly which has resulted in a growing gap between housing benefit and actual rents and the lucrative private sector market which allows for landlords to evict tenants to re-let at a much higher rent. Additionally, the roll out of Universal Credit, direct payment of housing costs to tenants, will be the greatest potential risk for the Council and its registered provider partners by 2023.

We know that rough sleeping is harmful and dangerous for the individual. Recent studies indicate that the average life expectancy for a rough sleeper is 47 years. We also know that rough sleeping negatively impacts on the local community in various ways. Thanet is fully committed to ending rough sleeping by preventing people sleeping rough for the first time and reducing the number of individuals currently sleeping on the streets.

The council will work in line with the MHCLG's aim to halve rough sleeping over the course of the Parliament (by 2022) and eliminate it altogether by 2027. The ambition is to ensure there is a route off the streets for every single rough sleeper in Thanet so that they are supported through to safe and secure accommodation as quickly and sustainably as possible.

Our overall approach to deliver this priority will be guided by the work to date which has been progressed to ensure effective implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This work has been ongoing since 2016 and has involved a significant restructure of the Housing Options



Service. The service and interventions will be delivered in partnership with a range of council departments, other statutory services, third sector organisations and the wider community.

There have been a number of successful bids through the Ministry of Housing which have enabled a number of positive interventions to combat rough sleeping in Thanet including:

<b>Funding</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) Funding 2018-2020	Dedicated Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator
	3 Additional Rough Sleeper Outreach Workers
	1 Specialist Mental Health Nurse
	1 Specialist Drug and Alcohol worker
	Personalised Budgets
	Additional Emergency Accommodation provision
	Thanet Winter Shelter Extension
Winter Fund 2018-2019	Housing Led, 7 Unit, Supported Accommodation Scheme
	Additional Winter Emergency Accommodation provision
RRP 1 : Supported Lettings & Navigators 2019-2020	Additional Winter Evening and Weekend Outreach support
	2 Specialist Money Advisor Navigators
	Out of Hours Provision
RRP 2: Somewhere Safe To Stay Hub	2 Landlord Liaison and Tenancy Sustainment Officers
	24/7 Staffed Supported Accommodation Hub for Rough Sleepers with 4 Emergency Bed Spaces and 7 self contained flats
RRP 3: Prison Navigator	Joint bid with Canterbury, Medway and Maidstone councils for 4 prison navigators to work with clients prior to release to source accommodation pathways.
Winter Fund 2019-2020	Additional Winter Emergency Accommodation Provision
	Additional Winter Evening and Weekend Outreach support
	Additional personalised budgets to support Winter essential items and move on fund

## **What are the main challenges we need to overcome?**

**Increasing cost and inaccessibility of the private rented sector** - Thanet has become an increasingly attractive place to live, particularly for retirees leaving London, young professionals purchasing second homes in Thanet and the rise of accommodation being used for AirBnB and short term lets. However, this has had a corresponding impact on the local market, where rents have increased significantly at a time of major welfare reform, resulting in more and more accommodation becoming inaccessible and unaffordable to those on low incomes or at risk of homelessness.

**Increasing need for services** - This is true across the spectrum of homelessness, but is particularly true in relation to households losing their accommodation in the private rented sector. The use of section 21 notices to bring private sector tenancies to an end is a particular challenge.

**Increasing numbers of rough sleepers** - The number of people found rough sleeping has risen year on year across the whole Thanet. Our population of rough sleepers is made up of individuals who have a local connection to the Thanet and also those from wider Kent, UK and the European Union. Each of these individuals are unique with their own history of how they came to sleep rough and what resources and housing options are open to them in Thanet. Although the RISE team has made significant progress in supporting people into accommodation, new people moving onto the streets for the first time continues to rise.

**Complex needs** - Rough sleepers with a local connection often have very complex needs (e.g. people with a triple diagnosis and/or a serious forensic history, couples and people with pets) and therefore need very sophisticated and personalised accommodation and support options. A major concern for our rough sleeping population is the level of substance misuse resulting in and being a response to both their physical and mental health needs.

**Entrenched rough sleepers** - Those who are very entrenched in a street lifestyle can often be resistant to taking up offers of support (including health and substance abuse support) and accommodation options. These individuals can also contribute to notable levels of anti-social behaviour that negatively impacts on the community.

**Limited accommodation options** - Some clients with a local connection to Thanet are unwilling to access accommodation in other areas while others face the reality of the lack of specialist provision for people with dogs.

**Returning to rough sleeping** - There are a number of people who return to rough sleeping after a period of time in either temporary or long-term accommodation.

**The Homelessness Strategy is focussed on the following objectives:**

- **Preventing homelessness.** Prevention remains the most effective way to manage homelessness. We will support people to stay in their own homes or help to find new homes by developing personal housing plans to better meet their housing needs
- **Reducing the use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) and securing suitable accommodation.** We aim to reduce the number of households living in TA significantly over the next five years by developing accommodation strategy Council owned properties, Housing association stock and securing more affordable properties in the private rented sector at LHA rates.
- **Establishing effective partnerships, working collaboratively and increasing support (in-reach and outreach)** We will improve the strategic focus of tackling homelessness through the multi-agency led Homelessness Forum, which enables a multi-disciplinary partnership is in place and building resilience across the agencies to prevent homelessness.
- **Supporting Rough Sleepers to address their housing and other needs.** Building on the Government's Rough Sleeper's Intervention grant programme, we will provide specialist outreach workers to support rough sleepers with a focus on health and wellbeing to move people from the streets and into accommodation that better meets their needs.

### **Priority 1 : Service re –design to meet the challenges of the Homelessness Reduction Act**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed significant new duties on local housing authorities to prevent homelessness. The act introduced new 56 day prevention duties for households threatened with homelessness and new 56 day relief duties for those that had already lost their accommodation. During each of these 56 day periods councils are required to agree personal housing plans with each and every household owed a prevention or relief duty.

In order to meet these new duties, the council has invested in additional landlord liaison officers, homelessness officers and housing advisors. It has also completed a review of application processes and of its allocations policy to ensure that customers receive the person centred services envisaged by the new legislation.

These changes have contributed to reductions in the number of households in temporary accommodation and the number of statutory homelessness applications, which are now only made after the expiry of the new 56 day relief duty.

The council will continue to invest in this approach to further reduce the use of and cost of temporary accommodation and build on the successes achieved in preventing homelessness.

### **Priority 2 : Reducing the reliance on temporary accommodation**

A range of options are currently being developed and implemented to increase the supply of temporary accommodation to address homelessness and include. These range from procurement of private sector accommodation, purchasing properties for conversion or newbuild, Right to Buy buy-backs, and provision of modular housing. The service has had a focus on reducing the use of temporary accommodation and formatted an ambitious trajectory to halve temporary

accommodation throughout 2018/19. Whilst there has been significant progress in this area there is still a commitment to achieve this ongoing.

### **Priority 3 : People-centred reviews**

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has increased the number of reviews and challenges related to the complex needs of the applicants. Officers will ensure decisions are thorough and compliant with the law and Homelessness Code of Guidance to minimise further challenges. It is also anticipated that the work undertaken by front line staff in developing Personal Housing Plans with clients will reduce the number of challenges.

### **Priority 4 : Exploring and enhancing a range of preventative measures**

In addition to existing provisions in place to prevent homelessness, the Council is exploring and doing more work to increase the prevention for those facing homelessness. Greater reliance is on the private rented sector for housing solutions and working effectively in partnership with mediation services and developing and adopting a range of incentives and measures to prevent homelessness to enable, where possible, applicants to remain in their existing homes.

Where appropriate we will enhance existing initiatives; the Council's Housing Options service has been transformed to offer more help to those threatened with homelessness or needing housing advice. Instead of being able to simply offer advice on housing options, staff are working closely with other agencies so as to be able to offer information on a comprehensive range of services that help with problems that often cause homelessness or housing difficulties. This includes money advice, debt counselling, landlord and tenant mediation, specialist legal advice, help in accessing education and training, help in seeking work, access to child care and our Children's Centres. Staff can make referrals to other agencies to ensure clients get the help they need. The Housing Options Service attend quarterly landlord forums and will be leading on the annual landlord event from 2020.

### **Priority 5 - Access to Affordable Housing Options**

The Council believes that the provision of suitable housing for people that is decent, warm and weathertight is a fundamental right. Increasing the supply of housing will fundamentally assist in our desire to tackle homelessness.

A new facet to the challenge is sustaining delivery in what is a difficult environment with limited public funding available for new affordable rented housing. The prospects for the residential housing market currently look uncertain and we need to be flexible about how we approach housing delivery to meet needs. This includes:

*Identifying potential funding opportunities to develop new council homes, through a housing company*

Plans for new homes on existing Council land are already in place and a list of other potential sites will be identified and assessed for their suitability for the additional homes necessary.

### *Establishing a Council's Housing Company to secure further housing, both through purchase of existing market properties and developing new homes*

The Council is committed to the establishment of a housing delivery vehicle which will enable it to increase housing supply through alternative housing financial models and intervene in the market for sites, mainly those with 20 affordable housing units and below, which cannot identify a Housing Association. The company can make use of other financial power in order to procure permanent and temporary accommodation and provide an additional supply of housing, much of which will be used to enable the Council to meet its homelessness duties.

### *Bringing empty properties back into use*

The council has a proactive approach to working with the owners of empty properties to bring them back into use. This includes advice and assistance, access to grants in return for council placements of homeless families and use of enforcement and planning powers where necessary.

### *Making better use of Housing Association stock*

Develop a letting agreement with Housing Associations to ensure voids are re-let and newbuild social housing is nominated to the Council. This will enable new homes to be targeted to Council tenants and free up Council owned stock for new lets.

## **Priority 6 Develop innovative and sustainable housing options by:**

- Considering options to lease property in the private rented sector as a continued opportunity to prevent homelessness, recognising that caps on Housing Benefit allowances influence affordability considerations.
- Promoting tenants' rights and supporting responsible landlords through the ongoing promotion of the Council's Landlord Accreditation scheme.
- Maximise the use of the existing social housing stock
- Ensuring homeless households have equal access to the council's housing register.
- Using general needs social housing as temporary accommodation, where this is suitable.
- Encouraging tenants under-occupying larger affordable rented homes to downsize and release family housing for reletting.
- Seeking to procure alternative options for the provision of temporary accommodation.

## **Priority 7 : Managing the use of Emergency Accommodation**

The Council has a dedicated officer that manages households in temporary accommodation and ensures relevant support is being provided. . Emergency bed and breakfast is only used when there are no other alternative options available. The Code of Guidance states that where families are placed in bed and breakfast, this should be for longer than 6 weeks. The Council ended the regular use of this type of accommodation for families in October 2018 and is determined to avoid its use in the future. In addition the Council is always looking to work with a range of private sector landlords who could provide good quality temporary accommodation in district.

The Council has committed capital funding to develop new temporary accommodation owned by the council.

## **Priority 8 Provision of Services - Supporting Rough Sleepers**

Prevent people from having to rough sleep for the first time in Thanet by:

- Providing services and interventions in partnership to reduce rough sleeping
  - Producing and updating a Rough Sleeping Action Plan with service user involvement
  - Prevent people at risk of losing their accommodation from rough sleeping, joining up services to intervene quicker and develop partnership plans to support tenancy sustainment.
  - Ensure early intervention with people at risk of rough sleeping, prioritising hospital discharges and prison navigation.
  - Resource street engagement activity to support new rough sleepers and increase access to services and reduce time spent rough sleeping
  - Proactively seek and source additional funding to extend services for non priority clients and specialist supported accommodation provision for people previously rough sleeping
  - Continue to support the valuable relief contribution delivered locally by the charity sector and volunteer provision such as Homeless Drop ins, Food Kitchens and Thanet Winter Shelter.
- 
- Participating in forums and implementing models to support rough sleepers and reduce the anti-social behaviour associated with some rough sleepers and sleeping sites
  - Formally seek a local commitment to collectively approach and differentiate rough sleeping from street activity with partner agencies.
  - Help former rough sleepers maintain their independence and accommodation.
  - Homelessness Partnership Board, drawing on the expertise of Housing Association, voluntary sector and other statutory partners such as the health services to oversee the production, delivery and monitoring of the action plan.

## Monitoring the Housing Strategy

Some of the actions in this strategy are short-term and can be realised quickly. Others will take a number of years to bear fruition. There can be legislative or policy change at a national or local level that could render some of the actions in the strategy redundant or unachievable. It is therefore important that the strategy responds to changing needs and new actions are agreed as necessary.

The strategy will be accompanied by an action plan which will set out when the actions will be completed and achieved, The strategy and action plan will be reviewed and monitored regularly and a report will be produced and published annually to update the community and other interested parties on how the strategy is progressing.

### Appendices:

**Equalities Impact Assessment (to be completed)**

**Housing Strategy 2020-25 Action Plan**

## Action Plan

Theme	Actions	Comments/Progress	Completion by	Lead
1.1	Assess the housing requirements to inform the tenure, design, planning and development of and support to new communities, including groups with specific housing needs in relation to disability.	Agree process of modelling work to feed into the assessment of overall need by Local Plan team	Autumn 2020	Strategic Planning Housing Strategy
1.2	Action and use the results of Rural Needs survey and activity with community groups	Results of survey and focus group meetings. Lessons learnt to be shared through various forums, eg. Housing Board, Planning Policy & s106 negotiations	Analysis completed Feb 2019  Use ongoing.	Housing Strategy
1.3	Work in partnership with hospitals to undertake an assessment of housing need for their workforce	Kent County Council Sub group		Housing Strategy KCC & PHE )
1.4	To deliver at least 40 council homes over the next 5 years	Additional sites to be identified	April 2023	Housing Strategy
1.5	Local Lettings Plans to be developed to promote mixed and sustainable communities on larger sites.	Local Lettings Plans already included for exception site schemes and on larger strategic sites  Further consideration to be given as part of the development of the relating to local needs.	Ongoing	
1.6	Explore options for alternative affordable models, such as a Living Rent.		March 2021	Housing Strategy
1.7	To explore opportunities for a council owned Housing Company to build or acquire homes for rent.  To explore how a housing company could be used to develop flagship examples of environmentally sustainable homes.	Investment partnerships through Housing Company to deliver new homes included in Medium Term Financial Strategy.	April 2020	Housing Strategy
1.8	Review the SHMA to identify need and demand for purpose-built private rented sector housing (PRS)	Develop a set of local requirements to inform development of PRS schemes that are appropriate to the area.	April 2021	Housing Strategy & Planning Policy

1.9	To develop better intelligence concerning housing delivery and how it could be improved.	Review outstanding planning permissions and work with developers to ensure that schemes are built out in a timely manner	Autumn 2020	Housing Strategy
1.10	Explore the role that new purpose built HMOs could have to provide an affordable housing option through a feasibility study, potentially through a housing company.	Updated BRE survey and analysis of need for HMO type accommodation	March 2022	Housing & Planning Policy

Theme	Actions	Comments/Progress	Completion by	Lead
2.1	To implement the housing-related actions agreed through a new Climate Change Strategy.	Progress updates published annually on website	2021	Climate Change
2.2	Recruit a Home Energy Officer and promote opportunities to improve energy efficiency or to purchase cheaper and more sustainable energy.	Working together to deliver energy efficiency projects that address issues of fuel poverty and climate change through the KCC Energy Group	Summer 2020	TDC and KEEP
2.3	Complete an annual review of the Empty Homes Plan.	Review to be carried out and action plan to be developed.	tbc	Housing Strategy & Private Sector Housing
2.4	Explore provision of further selective licensing schemes needed to address standards in the private sector	Consider designation of a larger area including key areas of higher deprivation.		Private Sector Housing
2.5	Complete a review of the council's published HMO standards.	The council publishes HMO standards to assist with mandatory licensing.		Private Sector Housing

3.1	Deliver the council's housing assistance policy and explore how a more regional approach to housing assistance can be developed.	To be monitored quarterly and using data from HIA and KCC	April 2019	Housing Strategy & KCC
3.2	To pilot project working with Care Navigators, HIA and Active Thanet to help tackle loneliness and isolation.	Jointly funded with - County Council for the recruitment of a Care Navigator (Social Prescriber). This gives GPs a non medical referral option to ensure the right support can be given to help people who feel isolated access other services and local groups.  Project started April 2019 and is funded for 2 years.  Outcomes to be evaluated.	April 2020	
3.3	To develop an accommodation strategy for Older Persons and supported needs, in partnership with Kent County Council, with potential for an additional scheme.	Work underway through Issues and Options for developing the Local Plan	April 2021	Planning Policy Housing Strategy
3.4	To work to identify a site or sites for Gypsy and Travellers	Through Issues and Options for developing the Local Plan.	April 2020	Planning Policy Housing Strategy Environmental Health



Theme	Actions	Comments/Progress	Completion by	Lead
4.1	Review case work and data to develop robust preventive action for homelessness and rough sleeping. Increased casework with all homeless applicants (including non priority homeless applicants), identifying key actions through housing plans	Key actions included in Housing Strategy	April 2020	Housing Options
4.2	Work with estates agents and private sector to increase the number of homes by ten per year through the Council's Landlord Liaison scheme	Target of 10 homes to be achieved annually	Ongoing to January 2025	Housing Options
4.3	Delivery of Council newbuild programme to let to people on the housing register and Foy House to support temporary accommodation.	Acquisition of building completed. Temporary Accommodation be delivered through conversion of a former office building in Margate.	March 2025	Housing Strategy
4.4	Agree Charter for all agencies to help prevent homelessness, including homeless prevention awareness, referral systems, housing pathways and protocols.			
4.5	Help staff within partner agencies to identify early warning signs of homelessness and find new ways to prevent it including staff training, evaluation of RISE project and identifying ways of continuing joint working. Work with public bodies under their duties to refer clients at risk of homelessness.			
4.6	Update and review written and website information covering advice on rights and responsibilities to help residents prevent homelessness from their current accommodation. Targeting advice for specific groups, such as single people or those renting privately.			
4.7	Review levels of temporary accommodation and the need for additional units,	By monitoring Housing Association voids, hostel vacancies and the use of B&B, and exploring opportunities for new Council owned temporary accommodation provision.		
4.8	Work with Citizens Advice Thanet (CAT) money advice to promote service and discretionary housing payments to people on the housing register.			
4.9	Develop Domestic Violence Charter with key stakeholders to tackle risk of homelessness, using data and working with housing repairs and maintenance team to assess safeguarding issues.			
4.10	Develop accommodation plans with KCC commissioning to support vulnerable households, prioritising provision for Victims of Domestic Violence.			
5.1	Review this action plan annually to assess what further actions are required to achieve the Strategy's objectives and priorities.			