



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



A place to call home

Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan 2024-2027

www.npt.gov.uk

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1. Foreword

We are pleased to introduce the new three year Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan for Neath Port Talbot.

The importance of having a home can never be underestimated, and was highlighted all the more during the response to the pandemic.

We have faced significant challenges over recent years, but we have also continued to deliver homelessness services throughout lockdown, forged new partnerships and community support groups, and strengthened existing working partnerships. We remain committed to working alongside our partners to improve the lives of our residents.

The aims and objectives that shape this strategy reflect the need to proactively address the housing challenges impacting our communities, and highlight how we intend to work together to improve the lives and homes of the residents of Neath Port Talbot.

Demand for housing across all tenures is outstripping supply and housing costs are increasing. However, we are always looking for innovative solutions to meet needs and increase available options.

We want to tackle homelessness in all its forms, from rough sleeping, to those experiencing abuse and harm and home, or those living in unaffordable or unsatisfactory housing.

Anyone can be affected by homelessness and the effects for families and individuals, as well as society as a whole, can be devastating, impacting on health and wellbeing, employment and education, and more.

We want to support people to be able to access good quality accommodation and lead dignified, fulfilling and rewarding lives that have purpose.

This is also an opportunity to thank all the organisations and individuals who worked with us during the pandemic to help others.

The strategy will govern our approach for the next three years, but it will be kept under review to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of our communities.

Although we face challenges, this is our opportunity to help reduce and prevent homelessness and improve the quality and availability of housing across the county, so that we can help people find a place to call home.

2. Introduction

We want all citizens of Neath Port Talbot to have access to safe and appropriate housing, this Plan sets out Neath Port Talbot County Borough Councils (the Council) strategic approach to managing the challenges of homelessness and affordable housing across the borough.

This document supports other strategic plans that are already being progressed, such as the [Social Housing Grant Strategy](#) (SHG) and the [Rapid Rehousing Plan](#). The Plan will also complement other Council strategic documents and objectives such as the upcoming replacement [Local Development Plan](#) (LDP) and the updated [Local Housing Market Assessment](#) (LHMA).

Over the last few years, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of people presenting as homeless and a sharp decrease in access to affordable housing. The links between access to sustainable affordable housing and homelessness mean that both issues need to be tackled together if we are to successfully prevent homelessness and create cohesive communities.

Our Plan sets out a clear statement of intent to take actions that ensure all people of Neath Port Talbot are able to quickly access quality housing that is affordable and that there are sufficient interventions to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

3. Current Situation

Post COVID-19 there has been a significant increase in demand for homelessness services resulting in an unprecedented use of temporary accommodation such as B&Bs. The overuse of temporary accommodation and an overreliance on B&Bs to support our homelessness population is not in line with the Council's expectations and values for supporting its most vulnerable citizens and is in direct opposition to our approved Rapid Rehousing Plan.

The causation of homelessness leading to people requiring temporary accommodation as at 14/03/23 was as follows:

Table One: Reason for Temporary Accommodation

Reason for homelessness	Total of all TA residents	%
Prison release	16	8
Relationship breakdown – violent	16	8
Relationship breakdown – non violent	13	6.5
Current property unsuitable	11	5.5
Loss of rented accommodation	49	24.5
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	26	13
Other relatives no longer willing to accommodate	43	21.5
Other (inc emergency)	12	6
Property unaffordable	2	1
Other violence	4	2
Rent arrears private sector	5	2.5
Leaving institution or care	3	1.5
Total	200	

Pressures on homelessness services is due to multiple national and system wide factors affecting people’s ability to access and retain affordable housing, alongside new legislative and strategic requirements from Welsh Government. This level of demand is projected to grow without the Housing and Communities Department implementing a programme of significant transformation.

The last few years has seen the introduction of legislative changes such as the Renting Homes Act and the Housing Wales Act. The purpose of the Renting Homes Act is to drive up standards and offer more security to those in rented accommodation, however some landlords have decided to exit the rental market rather than comply with the relevant measures. It is reported that over 50 landlords have left the market in Neath Port Talbot since the introduction of the Act, which has resulted in renters being served notice and becoming homeless. As can be seen in the above table, 24.5% of people in temporary accommodation became homeless due to loss of their rented accommodation, which is the highest proportion of people in temporary accommodation.

Temporary changes to the Housing Wales Act to provide a legal homelessness duty to a wider number of people as part of the COVID-19 response was made permanent in October 2022. These changes have inevitably resulted in more presentations to Housing Options, who are now working with a much higher number of people that are owed a homelessness duty. Although additional Housing Options staff have been employed, Housing Options Officers are still

working with caseloads of up to 65 households, which prevents them from offering more targeted and intensive support.

Alongside these legislative changes, the cost of living situation is pricing more people out of the private sector and resulting in more people struggling to maintain their tenancies. Financial pressures can also negatively impact on a person's wellbeing and mental health, which can then lead to relationship and family breakdowns. Although only 1% of people in temporary accommodation state they were made homeless due to their property becoming unaffordable and 2.5% due to rent arrears, there is a need to look behind other figures such as the reason why 21.5 % of people were staying with relatives and the reasons why the 24.5% of people that lost their rented accommodation could not find an alternative home. There has also been a change in the demographics of people presenting to Housing Options, with a marked increase in families with children becoming homeless and requiring temporary accommodation, something that was rare only a few years ago.

Housing Options are also working with higher numbers of people experiencing multiple and complex issues, such as mental health, substance use and criminal backgrounds. Currently 20% of people that are being supported by Housing Options have a high need and 6% have intensive needs. The [2022-23 HSG Annual Update Report](#) shows that of the 486 individuals who accessed HSG funded supported or temporary accommodation over the year, 33% had a secondary need of mental ill health and 13% had a criminal offending background.

For a number of people, homelessness is one of many co-occurring complex issues that a person may be facing and this can result in a person finding it harder to access long-term housing and to retain their home. People can become trapped in cycles of homelessness as their complex needs mean that they are unable to sustain their tenancies and then their history of 'failed' tenancies becomes a barrier to accessing another home. For a number of people, provision of accommodation alone does not mean that they will experience long term secure housing as their wider and multiple vulnerabilities have not been addressed.

To better prevent homelessness from occurring, Welsh Government require all Councils to implement a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and develop a Housing First model within the next five years. The Council's Rapid Rehousing Plan was agreed in October 2022 and necessitates a whole scale change in

relation to how we respond to homelessness, including the services we commission and deliver.

Local Authorities are also required to develop and take forward a HSG Strategy in order to ensure a strategic approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services. This approach incorporates both statutory homelessness functions funded through the revenue settlement and non-statutory preventative services funded through the HSG.

Housing is a key element in supporting people with an assessed social care need to achieve the outcomes that matter to them and to remain or retain their independence. Neath Port Talbots [Market Stability Report](#) illustrates the requirement to create a range of new accommodation models in order to meet anticipated demand and to better meet peoples personal outcomes.

For adults with complex care needs, such as a learning disability or mental ill health, there is a drive to reduce reliance on more institutionalised care models, such as care home placements and to support people to obtain their own tenancy. This ambition will be achieved through the development of accommodation models such as supported living, Extracare, Core and Cluster and independent living schemes, alongside the commissioning of appropriate support.

Pressures within social care and the NHS in relation to our aging population is well documented and the development of appropriate accommodation options is a key element of ensuring that peoples social care needs can be appropriately met. For many years, enabling older people to remain at home has been a key priority for Social Services, however there is now a challenge with obtaining sufficient levels of domiciliary care to meet demand and there is a lack of suitable alternatives to care home placements. As a result, alternative community models need to be implemented.

Housing Options also works closely with Children and Young People Services with regards to youth homelessness and care leavers. In 2022/23 Housing Options supported six young care leavers aged 16, 22 young care leavers aged 22 and 12 young care leavers aged 18-21. There is a need to develop more accommodation based services and provide a more specialised response to young people facing homelessness and young care leavers so that they can thrive and achieve their potential into adulthood.

A Housing Strategy is in the process of development and the progression of the strategic housing work plan is fundamental to preventing homelessness. Without improving access to affordable housing, the Council will be unable to prevent homelessness and ensure that those who experience homelessness are quickly and appropriately rehoused. This strategy will be informed by the LDP and the LHMA.

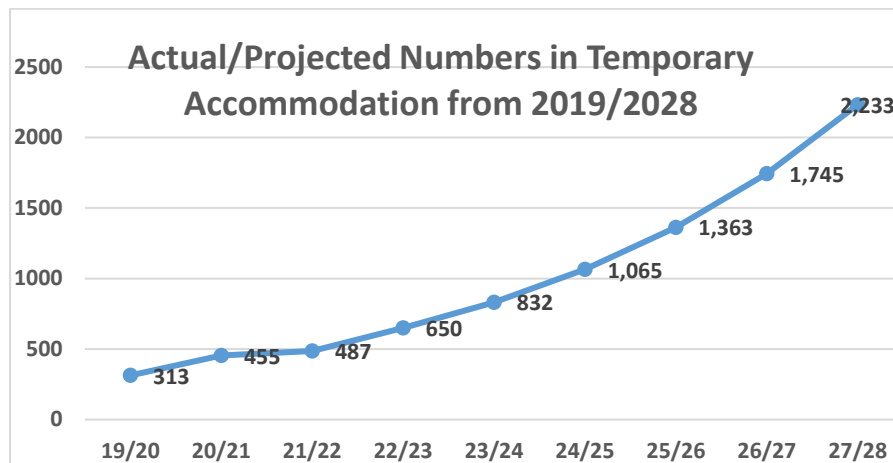
One of the ways we are able to help stimulate development of affordable housing is through the Social Housing Grant (SHG) which we manage in behalf of Welsh Government. There has been a significant increase to the SHG over the last few years with a 158% increase to our budgeted grant in 2022/23, compared with 2019/20 (£4,966,372). The total allocated grant over a three year period of 2022/23- 2024/25 is over £40 million, this £40 million is split into the three financial years. In 2022/23 we were provided with £12,819,862, this money cannot be rolled over into other financial years so if a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) is unable to draw down the money allocated to it for a development then it is lost to the NPT area.

The utilisation of SHG will not in itself fill the gaps in affordable housing and there is a parallel need to look at other ways to stimulate the affordable housing market and create more available housing. Projects like Leasing Scheme Wales, which allows property owners to lease their accommodation to the Local Authority and the Empty Homes Scheme, which provides grants to property owners to bring their empty properties back into use, are also valuable tools.

4. Demand

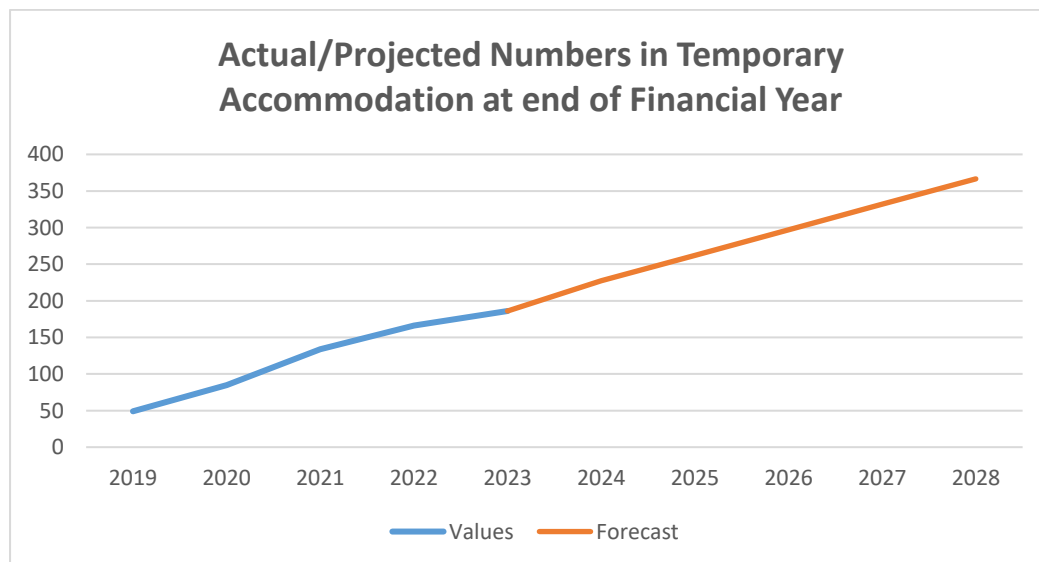
Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, there has been a 108% increase in households accessing temporary accommodation over the year. If we continue with this trajectory, there will be a 244% increase in the next five years, resulting in 2,233 households requiring temporary accommodation per year at a cost of £4,444,000 a year by 2027/28.

Graph One: Actual and Projected Demand for Temporary Accommodation over the Year



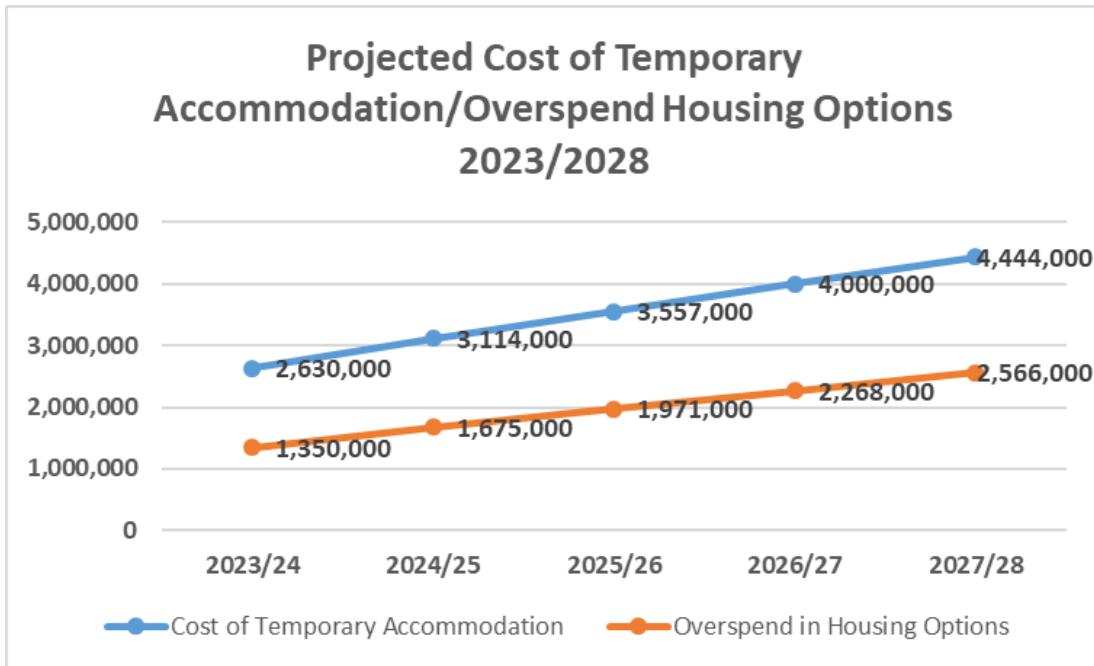
The second graph shows that in the same period, there has been a 280% increase in households accessing temporary accommodation at any one point in time. Forecasting shows that there will be an 87% increase in the next five years, resulting in 349 households requiring temporary accommodation at any one point in time by 2027/28 (i.e. 349 households will need to access temporary housing at the same time).

Graph Two: Actual and Projected Demand for Temporary Accommodation at the End of The Financial Year



The third graph shows the financial impact of this rising demand on the Councils finances over the next five years.

Graph Three: Projected Cost of Temporary Accommodation and Projected Budgetary Overspend

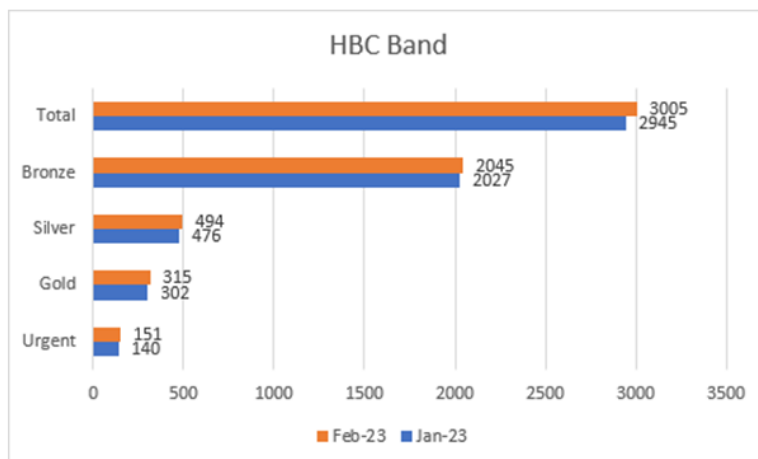


Increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness and requiring temporary accommodation creates a snowball effect in terms of preventing at risk households becoming homeless through prompt access to affordable housing. People in temporary accommodation are allocated an urgent banding, giving them the highest priority when bidding for social housing. With an average of 180 people at any one time in temporary accommodation, and therefore given priority for available social housing, those in the gold, silver and bronze bands have reduced opportunities to access the housing they need.

The below table shows the current waiting lists for our largest RSL Tai Tarian

Table Two: Tai Tarian Waiting List by Banding

HBC Band	Jan-23	Feb-23
Urgent	140	151
Gold	302	315
Silver	476	494
Bronze	2027	2045
Total	2945	3005



In some cases, the inability for people in non-urgent bandings to access social housing contributes to a breakdown in their current housing arrangement, such as staying for a short period in overcrowded housing or 'sofa surfing', which may have been preventable with more timely access to affordable housing. The figures in table one show that 21.5% of people in temporary accommodation were made homeless due to relatives no longer being able to accommodate them and 13% because parents were no longer able to accommodate them. This type of situation creates even more demand on temporary accommodation, resulting in a situation where some people have to experience homelessness and go into temporary accommodation before they can access affordable housing, which may have been avoidable if they had more prompt access to social housing.

In 2022/23 the Council spent £2.24 million on B&Bs, this figure does not include the cost of the Council operating temporary accommodation and the total amount spent on the Housing Options service in 2022/23 was £4.95 million. At present, grants provided by Welsh Government to support the Council in discharging its homelessness duty is not aligned with the actual costs incurred. There was a projected overspend of £1.45 million in 2022/23 as a result of the increased demand for temporary accommodation, however Welsh Government provided a one off grant of £842k towards the end of the financial year which reduced the overspend.

Based on anticipated demand for temporary accommodation, if we take no action to change the way we respond to homelessness then the Council will see an annual overspend of £2,566,000 by 2027/28. This projected overspend does not take into account the need to increase Housing Options staff to meet the rising numbers of people presenting as homeless, nor does it account for the unit cost of B&Bs to rise each year in line with inflation.

Our projections show that by the end of the 2023/24 financial year there will be 227 households in temporary accommodation, however we are already progressing more quickly towards this figure than anticipated, meaning that we may exceed this projected figure. As at 04.04.23 (i.e. the first week of the 2023/24 financial year), the Council was required to accommodate 200 households in temporary accommodation, which is the highest ever number experienced and represents an increase of 14 households in less than a week.

Of particular concern are the number of families with young children in temporary accommodation. Between 19/20 and 22/23 there was a 620%

increase in families residing in temporary accommodation. This type of arrangement has implications for the children's education, which can be significantly disrupted. In addition, the lasting impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as the trauma of experiencing homelessness in childhood, is well understood and we need to take action now to prevent further cycles of poverty and homelessness. By focusing our attention on minimising the harmful impacts of child homelessness we can better ensure that all our young people can thrive and prevent intergenerational deprivation.

As previously noted, sufficient specialist accommodation is also crucial in supporting Social Services to achieve the best possible outcomes for those they support. An accommodation pathway group has been established in order to plan the necessary developments with RSLs and has resulted in the creation of a number of new care models such as specialist Extracare and Core & Cluster.

Despite current work programmes, demand for specialist supported accommodation for adults with an assessed social care need is high and demand is outstripping supply. This has resulted in a need to purchase care home placements, between 2018/19 and 2021/22 there was a 16% rise in learning disability care home placements and a 23% increase in mental health care home placements. Whilst there is a need for some care home placements, this is a more institutionalised model of care and is not always the most optimal care model for the person in regards to achieving their independence outcomes. In addition, there are ongoing pressures with sourcing sufficient levels of care in line with demand for older people, with 136 people waiting for a package of domiciliary care and care home occupancy running at 98% of available dual registered beds and 90% of available residential beds.

Over the next two years 66 young people known to Children Social Services will turn 18, there are a number of services to support young people transitioning into adulthood such as 'When I'm Ready' and 'Supported Lodgings' but a number of these young people will also require accommodation or support from Housing Options as part of their transition plan. In addition, a number of these young people will require ongoing support from Adult Services, which will place further demands on the already limited supply of adult social care services.

Ultimately in order to end homelessness, unsecure accommodation and insterutionised care, we need to ensure that we make best use of our available housing stock and develop more affordable an accessible housing.

The current stock of social housing in 2022 was as follows:

Table Three: Housing Stock in 2022 by LDP Area and Bed Type

RSL Housing Stock by LDP Area 2022	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
	Afan Valley	52	308	428	6
Amman Valley	58	151	122	6	337
Dulais Valley	89	157	187	7	440
Neath	1,327	1,722	1,720	59	4,828
Neath Valley	144	104	279	13	540
Pontardawe	308	305	257	42	912
Port Talbot	850	1,314	2,025	59	4,248
Swansea Valley	126	376	232	3	737
Totals excluding Linc because properties not disaggregated by LDP area	2,954	4,437	5,250	195	12,836
Totals including Linc properties not disaggregated by LDP area	3,190	4,531	5,340	198	13,259

In 2022/23, 195 homeless households were housed with an RSL, of which 63% were single people and 27% were families. It is difficult to obtain accurate figures, but Council data indicates that only 35.5% of RSL lettings in 2022/23 went to people that were homeless. There will be many reasons for this including available properties not being suitable (e.g. demand for one bedroom properties outstripping availability) and there are also cases where available properties receive no bids from homeless households. In addition, people with a history of failed tenancies due to things such as rent areas, anti-social behaviour and criminal backgrounds may find it harder to secure future tenancies.

The Local Housing Market Assessment for the 2021-2036 period is currently being reviewed however initial indications show the following housing needs:

Table Four: Local Housing Need Assessment Figures

Period	Affordable	Of Which Social Rent	Of Which Intermediate	Market	Total for Period	Total PA
1st 5 years	2060	1885	175	1010	3070	614
Remaining 10 years	1180	830	350	2020	3200	320
Plan period 2021-2036	3240	2715	525	3030	6270	418
%	52	43	8	48		

Of the 3,070 homes that need to be developed in the first five years of the LHMA period, 67% would need to be affordable housing and 32% market housing. Draft projections indicate that for the period 2021-2026, there is a net need for 412 affordable homes per annum, of which 92% would be social housing and the remaining 8% intermediate housing. The tool also highlights that in the first five years of the plan, 68% of the affordable housing need for that period should be one bedroom properties.

The balance between affordable housing and market housing evens out for the entire LHMA period 2021-36 to 52% affordable and 48% market rate. The reason for the higher % of affordable housing in the first five years is predominantly driven by the existing unmet need and if we continue to under develop affordable housing then this will have a knock on effect for the 2027-36 period.

The LDP is was adopted in 2016 and the Council is in the process of preparing its Replacement LDP for the period 2021-2036. The existing LDP made provision for 7,800 new residential properties over the period 2011-2026. This figure was based on the creation of new employment within Neath Port Talbot and going forward it will be important that the Council plans for new jobs that will arise from projects such as the Freeport and the Global Centre of Railway Excellence.

Within the LDP was a target of 1,200 affordable homes to be built in Neath Port Talbot over the plan period of 2011-2026. Unfortunately due to low levels of market housing being built, mainly as a result of viability relating to low land values, delivery has been below target for a number of years.

Currently there 23 schemes in our SHG programme, which is anticipated to deliver 629 units over the grant period of 2022/23-2024/25. Of which 93% will be social housing, with the remaining 7% being shared ownership. This falls significantly short of the total number of affordable housing required in the area and as such there is a need to take steps to stimulate investment into the area and to identify opportunities for affordable housing delivery, including bringing empty properties back into use.

5. Challenges

The main challenges for the Council in terms of homelessness and affordable housing noted within this report can be summarised as follows:

- **Demand Outstepping Available Grant Funding** – The amount of funding made available to the Council to support those facing or experiencing homelessness is not sufficient to meet current and projected demand. In addition, no new funding was allocated to provide the measures contained within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and the 2023/24 Housing Support Grant allocation has remained static, despite rising inflation and increased demand. It is not possible to meet our statutory duties within the available grant funding and this is causing budgetary pressures within the Council.
- **Reduction in Private Rental Sector Housing** – There has been a notable loss of private rental properties within the area as landlords look to leave the sector, which is resulting in more homeless presentations including families.
- **Affordability of Private Rental Sector Housing** – Alongside a reduction in private rental accommodation, rent levels are often unaffordable for those on low incomes or relying on housing benefits, which places more demand on social housing.
- **Availability of One Bedded Properties** – Households are getting smaller and housing benefit levels mean that it is not affordable for many people to rent a home with a spare bedroom. There is a disconnect between demand for one bedroom affordable housing and the available social housing stock, as the majority of RSL properties are family size. This is making it more difficult for homeless people to move out of temporary accommodation and into a sustainable tenancy.
- **Insufficient Volume of Social Housing** – The numbers of people waiting for social housing is far in excess of available properties, in addition the rising number of people in the ‘urgent’ banding as a result of their homelessness status, means that those in other categories are unable to promptly secure social housing.
- **Young Care Leavers & Youth Homelessness** – We will see a number of young people transition from Children and Young People Services over the next few years. In addition, we are seeing increasing numbers of family breakdowns leading to youth homelessness. There is a need to

ensure that there is sufficient specialist services to meet the needs of these young people.

- **People with Complex and/or Multiple Needs** – There are increasing numbers of people presenting to Housing Options with multiple and complex co-occurring needs, which makes it more difficult for them to secure and sustain a long term tenancy and often puts them at risk of repeat episodes of homelessness.
- **Cost of Living** – Rising costs and inflation is likely to have a significant impact on our most economically deprived populations, resulting in more households struggling to maintain their tenancies and becoming homeless.
- **Lack of Strategic Planning** – There has been a historic lack of strategic housing resource, which has resulted in reduced strategic planning and joined up partnership approaches, as well as an inability to maximise the impact of funding and investment opportunities.
- **Land Values** – Low land values have a negative impact on the viability of new developments in the area, which makes it more challenging to achieve our LDP targets and results in a lack of additional housing in line with our projected demands.
- **Sufficiency of Suitable Land** – There are a number of challenges with identifying suitable development land within the area, which can cause barriers in producing sufficient new developments and potentially result in over development in more suitable areas.
- **Community Cohesion and Place Making Concerns** – Overdevelopment in certain areas and a lack of balanced and holistically planned developments can place pressure on existing communities and infrastructure.
- **Increased Development Costs** – Current inflation levels and the cost of living impact is resulting in higher development costs, which presents viability risks and may lead to a slowdown or abandonment of planned new developments. Increasing costs also means that the available Disabled Facilities Grant is insufficient to meet anticipated demand and will result in much longer waiting times for adaptations, which may mean that some people are unable to remain living in their homes.
- **Social Care Needs** – Rising numbers of people with complex disabilities requiring social care services, alongside an aging population and a lack of

available workforce will result in an absence of suitable provision unless there is a programme to implement new care models.

- **Empty Properties** – Unused properties can become a local nuisance and have negative community and environmental impacts, they are also a missed opportunity when considering the pressures on current available housing.
- **Regeneration & Growing Populations** – A lack of sufficient housing to accommodate and complement our regeneration ambitions will reduce the ability to create local jobs for local people and strengthen our local economy.
- **Supporting Asylum** – Multiple global issues means that we need to ensure that we work with Welsh Government, the Home Office and our statutory and third sector partners to ensure that our strategic plans adequately take into account the need to provide suitable and appropriate accommodation for those seeking refuge.

6. Strategic Principles

Our current position is not sustainable and without drastically changing what we do now, we will be unable to manage the human and financial impact of homelessness and unaffordable housing. In order to reverse demand, there is a need to undertake wholesale change to make sure the Council and its strategic partners are equipped to respond to the housing and homelessness situation facing our communities. This change will be underpinned by the following nine guiding principles:

- **Plan** by working more strategically with the wider Council, RSLs, developers, private landlords and service providers in the way we utilise our available resources to implement sustainable housing and homelessness interventions in line with population needs.
- **Prepare** for Neath Port Talbot's future by making best use of our available resources to create sufficiency of housing to ensure thriving and prosperous communities in line with our anticipated needs.
- **Placemaking** principles to underpin our development plans so that we promote sustainable communities.
- **Preservation** of our future through minimising our environmental impact and maximising opportunities for decarbonisation and energy efficiency.

- **Partnership** working by building on our relationships with stakeholders to take forward a collaborative approach to addressing NPTs housing needs and ending homelessness.
- **Prevent** homelessness wherever possible and if it does happen, prevent recurrence through the development of targeted support services and suitable accommodation.
- **Personalised** responses to supporting those with housing needs by putting the person at the centre of our approach, thereby enabling people with complex and/or multiple needs to live in stable accommodation.
- **Positive** outcomes for people with social care needs, including young care leavers, through the development of specialist accommodation models that promote independence and reduce the need for more institutionalised care.
- **Provide** our workforce with the skills and resources to implement a new preventative way of working and providing people with the right interventions and accommodation so that they are able to fulfil their potential.

7. Priority Areas for Action

We know that there is a lot to do in order to achieve our ambition of ensuring all citizens of Neath Port Talbot have access to safe and appropriate housing. The following section outlines the areas of priority that we are planning to take forward over the next three years and beyond.

Priority Area One - Implement a More Strategic Approach

- ✓ **Strategic Approach to Development** - We will provide a more joined up strategic approach to working with our partners to facilitate the development of the right interventions, whether that be more specialised accommodation or the commissioning of targeted homeless prevention services. This will include the development and strategic implementation of specific strategies and plans, such as young care leavers, older people and homeless families. It will also include better strategic planning of our available resources such as the establishment

of a SHG panel to assess applications for grant funding to ensure that the proposals are viable and in line with Neath Port Talbot's requirements.

- ✓ **Enhanced Partnership Working and Multi-Agency Approaches** – We will strengthen our partnership working with key stakeholders including RSLs, private developers and private landlords, as well as ensuring more joined up working with other Council departments such as the Environment and Regeneration department and Social Services, so that there is a shared approach to meeting our housing needs. This will include operating the Strategic Housing Partnership Forum, market management events, RSL engagement and regular partnership meetings with the Council's Planning, Environmental Health and Regeneration Teams. It will also involve working more closely with service providers and other partnership groups such as the Area Planning Board, VAWDASV Leadership Group and the Community Safety Partnership, to ensure the establishment of holistic interventions for those we support.
- ✓ **Improved Third Sector Involvement** – We will build upon our current Third Sector partnerships in order to harness the Sector's wide range of expertise and knowledge when looking at how to best support our communities. This will include working with Neath Port Talbot CVS to involve the Third Sector, including volunteers in the development and delivery of interventions that can prevent or quickly elevate homelessness. It will also include ensuring their expertise informs our strategic plans and that our strategic delivery takes into account the Sector's sustainability.
- ✓ **Internal Opportunities for Development** – We will work more closely as a Council to identify opportunities to overcome some of our barriers for progress such as the lack of available land that is suitable and viable for development. This will include option appraisals and business cases for utilising Council owned land and repurposing Council buildings in line with our identified housing needs. Areas for consideration will include the development of older people accommodation and triage centres, as well as the provision of temporary accommodation for people experiencing homelessness and supported accommodation models for people with health and social care needs.
- ✓ **Maximising Investment Opportunities** – We will look at how we can bring in more development and investment into Neath Port Talbot through the use of grants and other funding sources. As well as

implementing a more strategic approach to the allocation of SHG, this will also include maximising available Welsh Government grants such as the Housing with Care fund to develop a range of social care accommodation models, the Empty Homes Scheme to bring out of use properties back into circulation and the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme to enable those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to move into more permanent accommodation. It will also include working with the wider Council as part of our partnership approach to maximise the benefits of other investment opportunities. In addition, we will focus on facilitating private sector and RSL market management to build more affordable housing, including increasing the number of units allocated to Housing Options in new builds.

- ✓ **Promoting the Local Economy** – We will ensure that our work will support the wider local economy through our commitment to place based working and by ensuring our strategic development plans take into account the need to meet the housing demands for a growing workforce. Our intention will be to support those working in Neath Port Talbot to live more locally to their workplace and reduce economic migration through the provision of suitable housing. This will be achieved through working in partnership with other departments within the Council, RSLs and private developers to ensure we have the right type of housing in the right locations.
- ✓ **Community Cohesion** – We will work to involve local communities and Elected Members in the delivery of our plans and to ensure that we carefully consider and balance local needs when taking forward our priorities. This will include appropriate and timely communication, so that local intelligence informs our strategic planning and that there is a unified NPT approach to housing and homelessness. It will also include improved consideration of how new proposals interact with existing communities and the promotion of community led development.
- ✓ **Supporting the Environment** – We will ensure that the Councils wider environmental objectives are supported through our work plan, both in terms of ensuring environmental considerations are embedded within our planning and by putting in place measures to encourage more energy efficient and environmentally friendly housing. These measures will include requesting evidence of how developments support the lowering of carbon emissions and reduction of energy consumption as

part of the SHG application process and promoting specific decarbonisation programmes, such as the ECO4 Flex Scheme.

Priority Area Two – Prevent Homelessness

- ✓ **Rapid Rehousing** – We will continue to take forward our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in order to achieve a position where homelessness in Neath Port Talbot is rare, and when it does occur, be brief and unrepeated. Our Rapid Rehousing Coordinator will lead on the implementation of our plan objectives of providing housing that is safe and affordable. This work includes an ambitious programme of activity to completely transform the way we support households facing or experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ **Temporary Accommodation** – We will put in place short-term alternatives to reduce the use of B&Bs whilst we implement and imbed our homelessness prevention plans. Although our ambition is to prevent homelessness and reduce the need for temporary accommodation, there is an urgent need to move away from our current overreliance on B&Bs, as this type of intervention is not sustainable for the Council and creates more transiency and less stability for those experiencing homelessness. This will be achieved by the Council leasing suitable properties and the repurposing of unused Council buildings to increase the number of Council operated temporary accommodation units, including more specialist units for groups such as families.
- ✓ **Triage Centres** – We will establish a new model of short term accommodation for homeless people with more complex or multiple needs, in which their longer term holistic accommodation and support needs are assessed. Through this accommodation and assessment process, we will be able to identify the most appropriate type of long term accommodation and support service in line with the persons individualised needs. Appropriate accommodation for these models will be sourced by the Council from RSLs and also by redeveloping existing Council owned properties, with the support and assessment service undertaken by specialist Officers within the Housing Options Team.
- ✓ **Housing First Service** - We will develop and implement a Housing First model for homeless people who have multiple and complex needs. Those that are referred into the service will be provided with intensive person-centred support to ensure that they are able to maintain a long

term tenancy and prevent them from being caught up in cycles of homelessness. The move towards Housing First can only be achieved through strong partnership working between the Housing Options, RSLs, specialist providers of housing support services and other statutory organisations such as the NHS and Social Services. By building on our strong partnerships and commissioning the right models of support, we will establish a number of Housing First units and reduce episodes of repeat homelessness for our most vulnerable and complex residents.

- ✓ **Review RSL Housing Allocations** – We need to work with RSLs to increase the number of available social housing units that are allocated to homeless households. Stronger collaboration with RSLs will allow us to identify barriers they face in allocating more social housing to those that are homeless. This will include ensuring that there are appropriate housing support services in place for those that require ongoing help in maintaining their tenancies, gaining a better understanding of why some properties receive no bids and why some households do not bid for available properties. This work has strong links to our wider strategic development work, as often the available property is not in line with the needs of those applying for a home, for example a higher number of bedrooms than required by the household.
- ✓ **Strengthening the Housing Options Team** - The Housing Options team are highly dedicated but significantly overstretched and their roles, as well as the level of demand placed upon them, has markedly changed post COVID-19. This necessitates a need for the Council to strengthen the resources and support provided to the Team so that they are best placed to appropriately respond to the prevention and elevation of homelessness.
- ✓ **Transformation of Housing Support Services** – We will undertake a programme of service reviews for all HSG funded services and benchmark current performance outcomes against their contribution to achieving our strategic housing and homelessness objectives. From this review we will begin a process of transformation for those services that do not sufficiently meet our new strategic priorities by remodelling and recommissioning existing services models. This will include realigning funding to provide Housing First and redeveloping existing services to better support the progression of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and better meet the changing needs of our local population.

- ✓ **Specialist Complex Needs Services** – We will implement a more person centred approach to ensure that those with complex and multiple needs are given the right types of interventions to enable them to break cycles of homelessness and achieve secure long term housing. This will be achieved through measures such as the strengthening of the Housing Options Team and the establishment of triage centres. People with more complex needs will also be supported through the establishment of more targeted housing support services that are person-centred and focused on helping them to maintain their tenancies.
- ✓ **Tenancy Sustainment** – We will establish a tenancy sustainment panel with RSLs in order to ensure that residents who might be struggling with their tenancy receive early interventions. By working in partnership across organisations to identify at risk households, this multi-agency approach will ensure that focused work takes place with a household before issues escalate and their tenancy is placed at risk, thereby reducing the number of households that become homeless due to tenancy failure.

Priority Area Three - Increase Access to Appropriate Affordable Housing

- ✓ **Nominations for New Builds** – We will work with RSLs to increase the number of accommodation units to be allocated to support those that are homeless into permanent housing, whilst ensuring that we achieve balanced communities. Through the development of local letting agreements for new developments and ensuring that new housing is aligned to demand in terms of type, location and bedroom size, we will work collaboratively with RSLs to ensure that available housing is prioritised to those that are most in need of affordable housing. This will be done whilst maintaining community cohesion through a more person centred approach to the allocation of housing and offering more tailored services for those with ongoing housing support needs. Community cohesion will also be strengthened through closer partnership working with RSLs through the design and development process.
- ✓ **Bring Empty Homes Back into Use** – We will work with other departments across the Council to develop and implement a strategy for reducing the number of empty homes in the borough. This will include progressing the Welsh Government Empty Homes Scheme as well as looking at how we can support property owners to bring their empty properties back into use and working in partnership with RSLs to support

the refurbishment or redevelopment of empty properties. Our work will also include consideration of buy back schemes for former social housing and how the purchase of empty homes could be used to increase Council owned stock. In this way, the Council will be able to maximise the use of an unused stock of ready-made houses and prevent the community and environmental detriments that come with disused properties.

- ✓ **Private Sector Engagement** - We will aim to increase affordable private sector housing in Neath Port Talbot, in order to enable more people to access suitable housing and reduce reliance on the boroughs social housing stock. This will be achieved by establishing private sector forums and taking forward specific projects to increase the availability of good quality affordable private rentals, including growing the number of properties operated by the Council through the Leasing Scheme Wales programme. It will also involve working with the Council's Environment and Regeneration Directorate to influence the private market in terms of the type and range of housing stock they develop.
- ✓ **Increase Council Owned Stock** – We will build on our previous work to further increase the number of properties owned and managed by the Council in order to offer more affordable housing to homeless households, in particular those households that experience specific barriers to accessing long term accommodation. This work is closely connected to other objectives such as bringing empty properties back into use and developing Rapid Rehousing.
- ✓ **Streamlined Application Process** – We will work with our RSL partners to explore the development of a more streamlined process for people applying for social housing. Neath Port Talbot does not have a common allocation policy or register, as such Officers will explore with RSLs opportunities to implement a Neath Port Talbot wide approach and process to the prioritisation of social lettings.
- ✓ **Housing Strategy Implementation** – We will develop and oversee the implementation of new Housing Strategies for Neath Port Talbot, which will take into account the specific requirements of the borough. This strategy will set out the actions Officers need to undertake in order to respond to the areas identified within the plan, so that the Council is best placed to meet the current and future housing needs of its local population.

Priority Area Four - Support Those with Social Care Needs to Live Well in Their Communities

- ✓ **New Models of Care for Older People** – We will work with Adult Services, support providers and RSLs to implement a range of accommodation models for our aging population, so that people can remain active members of their local area. These models will include Extracare and assisted living, which will result in the development of inclusive communities that enable our older population to retain their independence and reduce social isolation and exclusion. This work will involve supporting the establishment of new developments as well as working with RSLs and support providers to remodel existing services so that they are better positioned to meet the changing needs of our older population, including the provision of more dementia friendly environments.
- ✓ **Independent Living for Adults with Complex Needs** – We will continue to progress our development programme to provide suitable housing that allows people with complex social care needs to live as independently as possible and supports them to achieve the personal outcomes that matter to them. These models will include specialist Extracare, Core and Cluster, Supported Living and independent living flats that incorporate assistive technology and smart solutions. To achieve our aims, we will work with the West Glamorgan Partnership to maximise our allocation of the Housing with Care Fund.
- ✓ **Home Adaptions for People with Disabilities** – We will support people with disabilities to remain living independently in their own homes though the provision of adaptations. By utilising the Disabled Facilities Grant, maximising access to available grants such as the Housing with Care Capital Fund and working with Third Sector Organisations, such as Care and Repair, we will strive to provide timely adaptations for people whose current environment creates a risk to their independence.
- ✓ **Enabling Hospital Avoidance and Discharge** – We will explore how we can support our NHS and Social Care partners to prevent avoidable admissions to hospital and ensure that those who are medically fit can be discharged in a timely way. Some of this work will link to the progression of other objectives such as the provision of adaptations and the development of new models of care for our older population. In addition, we will work with RSLs and support providers to create

alternatives to interim care home placements, which will better support an enabling approach, including increasing the number of Step Down Extracare Units.

- ✓ **Supporting Transition** - We will work with Social Services to ensure that young people with social care needs transitioning into adulthood are able to access an appropriate range of supported accommodation in line with their individual needs, so that they are able to reach their full potential and live fulfilling lives. This will include the development of additional supported accommodation properties and increasing the range of care models to reduce reliance on specialist care home placements. It will also involve working with the West Glamorgan Partnership to implement regional accommodation projects in line with identified need.
- ✓ **Working with Care Leavers and Young People** – We will support the Children and Young Peoples Service to achieve their ambition for care leavers by feeding into their Pathway Plans and through our membership at the Youth Homelessness Group, as well as offering support with delivery of their strategy for care leavers. Our review of HSG funded services will allow us to maximise opportunities for commissioned youth homelessness services and our strengthening of the Housing Options Team will enable us to offer more targeted and specialised support to young people facing homelessness based on trauma informed principles and psychologically informed environments.
- ✓ **Closing the Gaps** – We recognise the link between unstable housing, including cycles of homelessness, and a person’s wider vulnerabilities, such as mental health, neurodiversity and learning difficulties. There are a number of people that would not fit the usual eligibility criteria for statutory social care services but still require additional support in order to enable them to gain and maintain the skills required to live safely and prevent an escalation of their vulnerabilities. By working in partnership with Social Services, we will develop a range of supported specialist accommodation for people that need additional support to live independently. This will include Move On accommodation, in which people will be supported to develop their daily living skills in order for them to progress into general needs housing and Step Up/Step Down accommodation where people will receive targeted levels of support in line with their fluctuating needs.

