



# **HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024 – 2029**





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## INTRODUCTION

### A message from Councillor Gary Luff



Good quality housing plays a vital role in ensuring our lives are lived well. The benefits to society repay the investment in housing many times over in quality of life, reductions in healthcare costs and improved educational and life outcomes as well as helping in the fight against climate change. We at Stroud District Council are determined that we will play a full role in ensuring that the quality and quantity of homes in our district is enhanced.

Building on our current record of being one of the most active District Council homebuilders in the country we will build even more high quality, energy efficient and safe homes for the residents of our District. We will also work with partners including developers, housing associations and community-led groups to ensure that the right homes are built in the right places and that many of them are affordable.

We not only need to build more homes we need to ensure that our existing housing stock is utilised as effectively as possible. We will achieve this by ensuring empty homes are returned to use and increase the efficiency of housing occupation. This will help in our fight against homelessness and rough sleeping.

We want Stroud District to be a place where people can remain in their homes and are supported in doing so, both by adapting their current homes and through good quality independent living accommodation.

Our District has always been welcoming to those who have had to flee violence and conflict, and we are keen to ensure that we support the generosity of spirit of our residents.

The country has for too long failed to build enough houses or ensure that they meet the needs of the people who live here. We at Stroud District Council, along with others, will work hard to resolve what can only be described as housing crisis.



**Councillor Gary Luff**  
Chair, Housing Committee

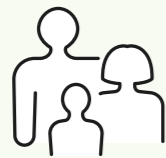


## KEY FACTS...

### ...about the Stroud district

#### Population

There are **121,104** people in Stroud District, an increase of **13,044** since 2001.



**17.26%** of the population are under 16

**23.31** of the population are over 65

There are **52,378 households** in the district

#### Heating

In Stroud District **1.11% of households lack central heating.**



#### Gas Network

In Stroud District **16.31% of households are not connected to the gas network.**



#### Ethnicity

Stroud District has **3.64% ethnically non-white population.**

This is lower than the proportion in South West with 6.87% and lower than the proportion in Gloucestershire with 6.94%.

In Stroud District, **93.44% of residents were born in the UK.**

#### Overcrowding

In Stroud District **1.55% of housing is defined as having too few bedrooms.** This is the proportion of houses where there is at least one bedroom fewer than needed.

#### Average Earnings

Mean gross annual pay = **£34,194**  
Take home pay after deductions = **£27,706**  
Mortgage lenders will typically lend **4.5 x salary**



#### House Condition

**7%** of dwellings in the district fail the Decent Homes Standard.

#### Average House price

The average house price is **£388,912**  
Flats: **£169,010**  
Terraced: **£281,229**  
Semi-detached: **£341,880**  
Detached: **£596,126**

#### Housing Stock

**87%** Private Sector  
**9%** Council  
**4%** Housing Association

#### DWP Benefits

DWP Benefits are payable to eligible people who need additional financial support due to low income, worklessness, poor health, caring responsibilities, bereavement or disability.

In Stroud District **15.51% of people aged 16-64 are claiming DWP benefits.** This is lower than the proportion in South West (20.00%) and lower than the proportion in Gloucestershire (17.96%).

## PRIORITY 1

### Enabling New Affordable Housing

#### Ambition

We want to maximise the number of new affordable homes completed in the district, ensuring that they are the best possible match with need in terms of type, size and tenure.

#### Key Facts

Affordable homes are defined in National Planning Policy as homes which are available for those whose needs are not met by the market. Types of affordable housing include affordable housing for rent, and affordable routes to home ownership, such as shared ownership housing.

There is a need for 365 new affordable units per annum in the district. That's on top of the existing Council and Housing Association homes that become available when their current tenants move on.

#### Achievements

- ✓ We've supported the delivery of over 1000 new affordable homes over the last 5 years.
- ✓ We were successful in attracting over £3m in additional Government grant to purchase 24 additional affordable homes for those fleeing conflict and develop 4 additional units of temporary accommodation.



#### Our Goals

Our planning policy is to deliver 30% of all qualifying housing sites as affordable housing. Our aim is to ensure that all these homes are of high quality and are the types and sizes needed by our communities.

Alongside this, we want to deliver affordable homes in other places such as rural parishes by working with Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Housing Associations and community groups.



#### Opportunities

We have the potential to access grant funding from Homes England, both directly for our own developments, and indirectly via our Housing Association partners.

#### Challenges

Rapid increases in build costs are affecting the viability of development. Changes to the property market can slow major development down, which impacts on the delivery of affordable housing.



#### Measures of success

Number of new homes completed; we aim to maximise delivery at every available opportunity. 156 new affordable homes were completed in 23/24.



**Ambition**

We aim to support the health, safety and wellbeing of residents in private sector housing, particularly the those disadvantaged through disability, age, or vulnerability.

**Key Facts**

- The Stroud district has 50,885 dwellings containing 48,765 households.
- As of September 2023, 48,765 dwellings were occupied, the remaining 4.2% were vacant.
- 1,721 dwellings (3.5%) exhibit Category 1 hazards, which are the most severe hazards within the Housing Health and Safety Rating System;
- A further 2,131 dwellings are in disrepair.

**Achievements**

During the last 5 years, the Housing Renewal Team has achieved the following:



- ✓ Carried out investigations into 295 complaints from private sector tenants and carried out actions to resolve those complaints and improve the standard of private rented property.
- ✓ Approved 5 Healthy Homes Loans totalling £42,000 to vulnerable owner occupiers on low incomes to carry out essential repairs to their properties.
- ✓ Approved 90 Disabled Facilities Grants totalling £1 million to enable adaptations to be carried out to allow occupiers to continue living in their homes.

- ✓ Identified all properties in the district which met the criteria for Mandatory HMO licensing and ensured that they were all licensed.
- ✓ We have started to issue civil penalties for a range of offences by private landlords.

By working in partnership with the Warm & Well Scheme we have also assisted in the installation of 548 energy efficiency measures to homes and brought in an additional £600,000 of external funding towards the cost of those measures.

**Our Goals**

To help achieve our aims a number of key objectives have been identified:

1. Improve housing conditions in the private rented sector particularly with regard to damp and mould.
2. Prepare for the new renters rights reforms and where necessary implement new legal obligations.
3. Respond to tenants concerns about the condition of their homes or incidents of harassment by landlords.
4. Remove the most serious home hazards (category 1 and high category 2).
5. Promote and improve energy efficiency in the home via Warm and Well projects.
6. Continue to issue Mandatory Licensing for Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMO).

7. Continue to License mobile homes and caravan sites.
8. Adapt accommodation to meet the needs of those with disabilities using mandatory grant and new discretionary grants where funds allow.
9. Review the empty homes strategy and ensure that action is focused on long term or nuisance empty homes, to help return them to use.

**Opportunities**

**Disabled Facilities Grants:**

Stroud like other areas is seeing an increased demand for disabled facilities adaptations in the home, driven in part by an aging population. We work in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council to deliver disabled facilities grants to residents, including developing and implementing discretionary assistances where it can assist disabled residents with energy efficiency, hoarding, associated repair works, or moving to a more suitable home. Funding is subject to available budgets.



**Empty Homes**

Our Empty Property Strategy is due to be reviewed to fully reflect the Council's premiums on council tax and second homes, which discourages property from being left empty. The housing renewal teams focus will be on long term empty homes or empty property causing substantial issues within the local community.





## PRIORITY 2

# Improving Private Sector Housing



### Challenges

- 3,421 dwellings (7.0%) fail the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and are non-Decent.
- Costs to achieve Decent Homes within the private-housing sector are estimated at £16.102M; £4706 per non-decent home.
- 17% of housing stock in the district was built before 1919.
- 167 vacant dwellings have been vacant for over 2 years.
- New legislation for the private rented sector is anticipated in the next few years, which will introduce new legal obligations for the council.
- A new private sector enforcement and financial penalties policy will be adopted.

### Measures of success

- Respond to 100% of complaints made to the council about private rented properties. Taking appropriate enforcement action when necessary.
- Approve within 6 months, any disabled facilities grant application made to the Council, subject to available funds.
- Produce a revised empty property strategy which reflects current resources available to the team and council tax initiatives.
- Undertake inspection regime for HMOs (i.e one inspection per HMO during a five year licence).



## PRIORITY 3

# Maintaining & Improving our Council homes



### Ambition

Our priority is to ensure our tenants' homes are safe, of good quality, and that they are energy efficient.

### Key Facts

We have roughly 5000 homes in management.

We have a clear 30-year investment plan in place which ensures regulatory standards are met along with delivering energy efficiency improvements to help us meet the Carbon Neutral 2030 Strategy targets.

The average annual cost for the work which delivers improvements to our homes. is around £6-8m.

The team completes 18,000 repair and maintenance jobs a year.



### Achievements

Top achievements in the last 5 years;



- ✓ Brought the majority of our repairs service in-house rather than contracting it out. All maintenance services are now delivered direct by the Council with only larger planned works being delivered through contractors.
- ✓ Delivered retrofit works to some of the least energy-efficient properties in our stock, including whole house retrofit to 28 properties and fabric first improvements to 187 properties.
- ✓ Successfully bid for £3.9m funding towards the Council's social housing retrofit programme through the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).
- ✓ Completed a large refurbishment project at Park Parade and Park Road in Stonehouse.
- ✓ Delivered improvement works at Paganhill Estate in consultation with residents.

### Our Goals

**Damp and Mould** is recognised as a significant risk to health and wellbeing and our approach is very much around prevention and early identification. Our Damp and Mould Policy 2023 aims to ensure that we meet our obligations as a landlord and that we have adequate management and monitoring in place to ensure the safety of our tenants and leaseholders.





## PRIORITY 3

# Maintaining & Improving our Council homes



### Opportunities

**Property Care** is our repairs service which was launched in April 2020. Our team of in-house operatives deliver around 18,000 repairs and maintenance jobs each year, as well as carrying out gas servicing and electrical checks. This has brought greater flexibility, an enhanced and more efficient service, increased value for money and improvements to customer satisfaction.



### Challenges

**Compliance and building safety** has increased in profile across the social housing sector, following a number of avoidable tragedies in the UK. At Stroud we have increased our monitoring of our legal compliance obligations at all levels of the Council, with a renewed understanding of the importance of getting it right. We have recently consulted with tenants and reviewed our Compliance policies, ensuring that current legislation is highlighted through responsibilities, guidelines and control measures. These can be found on our website.

### Measures of success

Through our retrofit programme we aim to improve the energy efficiency of our properties, reduce our carbon footprint, and make our homes warmer for tenants. Additionally, works undertaken through our retrofit programme result in properties requiring less energy to heat, leading to lower energy bills for tenants. So far, we have successfully obtained £3.9 million of grant funding towards our retrofit programme through three waves of funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. We have also won 'Best Social Housing retrofit programme' in 2024.



## PRIORITY 4

# Supporting our Tenants



### Ambition

We aspire to provide excellent customer focused housing services, that comply with regulations and support our tenants, enabling them to thrive in their homes.

### Key Facts

- In the past two years we created 650 new tenancies. The overall number of empty properties continues to fall following a high during the pandemic.
- In the same period we have lost 41 properties through tenants exercising their Right To Buy their home.
- In the past year 92 of our tenants moved home either via the housing register or, increasingly, by swapping homes through a mutual exchange.

- In the past year we managed 282 new anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases. On average we deal with 49 cases per 1,000 properties, which is higher than the average across the sector. Overall satisfaction is improving with 65% of tenants happy with our approach to handling ASB.
- We have set aside £150k per annum through the Tenant Support Fund to help our most vulnerable tenants and those facing financial hardship through the ongoing cost of living crisis.





## PRIORITY 4

# Supporting our Tenants

### Achievements

- ✓ The proportion of our tenants who feel we make a positive contribution to their neighbourhood and are satisfied with our approach to handling ASB has increased significantly since 2022 and we are now well above our equivalent peer group benchmarks.
- ✓ In 2024 we successfully implemented a redesign of our housing management services, focusing resources on resettlement of new tenants giving them the skills and support to thrive in their home. We created a team of housing officers, each with a dedicated patch, improving their visibility on estates, enabling them to connect with tenants where and when they are most needed.
- ✓ We understand the importance of making a house a home. We continually review our policies and practices to keep our tenants' best interests at the heart of our approach. Our updated Pet Policy 2023 celebrates integrating animal welfare considerations into housing, promoting an environment where people and pets can thrive together. We are delighted our Policy has been recognised by achieving a golden RSPCA Paw Prints award.
- ✓ Stroud has an aging population and we have worked hard with tenants and other stakeholders to implement our Independent Living Strategy, ensuring we invest in high quality



homes that meet tenants' needs, enabling them to live independent lives but connected to their community. In recognition of our approach, we have been shortlisted for best Older Peoples Housing at the UK Housing Awards 2024.

- ✓ In recognition of increasing rents and the continuing impact of the cost of living crisis, we introduced a Tenant Support Fund in 2023. The discretionary fund, available initially over 4 years, is allocated to tenants in greatest need and facing financial hardship, to enable them to maintain their tenancy and live healthy lives.
- ✓ Continuing work with the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has seen an increase in excellent partnership working regarding ASB case reviews; reflecting good practice of agencies working together to make communities safer.

### Our Goals

- We want to deliver high quality services and an excellent customer experience to all our tenants. We aim to evidence this through compliance with Housing Regulator and Ombudsman requirements, as measured through a new framework of consumer, tenancy and complaints standards. We will embed new structures to provide assurance and accountability to tenants.



- We want to ensure tenants and residents are at the heart of everything that we do and are actively involved in shaping the services we deliver now and in the future. To achieve this we will implement new approaches to tenant engagement, scrutiny, collaboration and communications, ensuring inclusion of all those with diverse needs. We will undertake a census to understand how we can meet the different needs of tenants and ensure fair access for all to our services.

### Opportunities

- A quarter of our tenants are dissatisfied with our approach to dealing with ASB and this remains a key area of focus.

- We will work with tenants to ensure there is transparency in what and how services are delivered through the de-pooling of rents and service charges.
- We will work with our partners and stakeholders to enable tenants to access the widest range of community services, such as Community Hubs and leisure facilities, to ensure their wellbeing and support to thrive in their homes and neighbourhoods.
- We will continue to apply for suitable grant funding as available, and seek further external recognition of our successful services.
- We will continue our collaboration with veterans and provide training for staff to embed the principles and greater understanding of the Veteran Covenant.





## PRIORITY 4

# Supporting our Tenants

- We will ensure the best use of our housing stock and sustainable finances by continuing to focus on tackling fraud and provide fair access to housing.

### Challenges

The UK is facing a shortage of affordable housing with demand far outstripping supply. This pressure is felt across Stroud district and results in lengthy waiting times on the housing register for many families.

The cost of living crisis and high utility costs in particular continue to pose challenges for many households across the district.

Increasing costs and caps on social and affordable rents continue to place extreme pressure on the housing revenue account. Difficult decisions will have to be made to ensure we continue to provide critical services and evidence good value for tenants.

Fly tipping and poor waste management continues to be a problem affecting many tenants. In 2024 16% of respondents to the tenant satisfaction measures survey were dissatisfied that the district council, as their landlord, make a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.

### Measures of success

- Increased tenant satisfaction measures.
- Compliance with Housing Regulator requirements and Ombudsman code.



## PRIORITY 5

# Tackling Homelessness & the Causes

### Background and ambition

Homelessness is a social issue with far-reaching impacts on individuals and communities. The Stroud District is not sheltered from these national issues, and both homelessness and demand on our social housing stock continues to rise every year. This is in line with much of the country and is a result of national issues such as the cost-of-living crisis and rising housing costs as well as local factors such as limited access to private rental properties due to an ever-increasing gap between the Local Housing Allowance and rent levels.

Prevention initiatives are essential. We aim to identify individuals and families at risk of homelessness and intervene wherever we can to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity.

We also focus on understanding the challenges faced as a result of being threatened with homelessness and will develop additional targeted support to address those challenges. We can only achieve this with partners throughout the housing and support sector.

### Key Facts

#### In 2023:

- Approximately 3300 households on the social housing waiting list at any given time, of which around 1200 households in silver banding or higher (i.e. have an identified housing need).
- 912 households approached the council for homelessness assistance in the calendar year 2023, of these:

- 12% were made by households aged 21 or younger;
- 24% were made by households with at least one dependent child.

- Main reasons for loss of last settled accommodation:

1. Loss of private rented accommodation.
2. Asked to leave by family.
3. Relationship breakdown.
4. Victim of Domestic Abuse.
5. Eviction from Supported Accommodation.

- 1% of homelessness applications were from care leavers aged 18-20.

- 149 applications were referred to us by another service through the Duty to Refer.

- 111 Veterans on the Housing List for Stroud as at end of December 2023, of which 38% were banded silver or higher (i.e. have an identified housing need).

- 40 households accommodated in temporary accommodation, nine of which were families.

### Achievements

#### In 2023:

- ✓ 379 social housing lets made through Homeseekerplus.
- ✓ 57 households prevented from becoming homeless through council assistance and intervention.
- ✓ 55 Ukraine guests re-matched to another sponsor.







## PRIORITY 5

# Tackling Homelessness & the Causes

- ✓ 2613 drop-in appointments supported by P3, the support service we commission.
- ✓ 17 household assisted through use of our Homelessness Prevention Fund to prevent or relieve their homeless situation.
- ✓ 40 households at risk of domestic abuse assisted through sanctuary and target hardening initiatives to help them remain safely in their current home.
- ✓ 45 households prevented from becoming homeless or relieved from homelessness following a successful offer of supported accommodation.
- ✓ Increased provision of temporary accommodation in the district, including women-only accommodation and units that will accommodate pets.

### Our Goals

- In partnership with other agencies, we will work to ensure that there is a coordinated approach in assisting households with complex needs, such as physical and mental ill-health and drug & alcohol misuse;
- We will ensure that appropriate accommodation and support services remain available for survivors of domestic abuse;
- We will identify the housing needs of young people, including care leavers, with the principle aim of reducing barriers to housing access;

- We will continue to expand upon our homelessness prevention initiatives in assisting homeless households into the private rental sector through the continual success of the Homelessness Prevention Fund scheme;
- We will seek to minimise placements into, and reduce the time spent in, Bed and Breakfast accommodation, and aim to reduce use of temporary accommodation outside of the district;
- We will continue to ensure that our practices encompass the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant;
- We will continue to monitor for emerging challenges and adjust our approach accordingly.

### Goal Objectives

- **In partnership with other agencies, we will work to ensure that there is a coordinated approach in assisting households with complex needs, such as physical and mental ill-health and drug & alcohol misuse:**
  - Promote access into services provided by our partners, such as alcohol and drug support services, to help households retain their home.
  - Review the effectiveness of the statutory and non-statutory 'duty to refer' pathways, to determine whether there are additional early homelessness assessments that we should be aware of;



- Support our partner agencies and councils in the commissioning of current and future support services;
- Maintain a focus on early intervention through our Homelessness Prevention Officers and our intervention-focused Advice Officer posts, to provide pre-emptive support and guidance to households with more complex needs and with a greater risk of homelessness.
- **We will ensure that appropriate accommodation and support services are available for survivors of domestic abuse:**
  - Increase overall awareness of domestic abuse and the support available across relevant sectors, so individuals know where they can find help;
  - Work alongside our communications team to increase awareness and improve access to specialist national and local domestic abuse support services;
- Continue to work with our county partners in the development and provision of additional 'places of safety' accommodation units;
- Review the target hardening and sanctuary services, ensuring that the reach is sufficient in supporting survivors of domestic abuse to feel safer in their homes;
- Work alongside the Domestic Abuse Intervention Officers, and other resources developed to provide specialist support to survivors;
- Ensure that our service remains committed to the aims and objectives of the Domestic Abuse Policy which supports SDC tenants experiencing domestic abuse;
- Review our jointly commissioned countywide arrangements, to ensure they remain agile and effective in supporting victims of domestic abuse;
- Assist countywide partners in the review and future development of the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy;





## PRIORITY 5

# Tackling Homelessness & the Causes



- Work in close partnership with our local domestic abuse refuge, the Stroud Beresford Group, to support victims of domestic abuse to be guided through appropriate housing pathways.
- Undertake Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) Accreditation.

■ **We will identify and respond to the housing requirements of young people, including care leavers, with the principle aim to reduce barriers:**

- Review our practices around contact with young people, with the aim of determining whether we are correctly providing support to help them to remain with their family where it is safe and reasonable to do so;
- Work alongside voluntary sector agencies with an acute focus on young people, such as Gloucestershire Nightstop and The Door, so young people can access specialist tailored support;
- Ensure that pathways into and out of supported youth housing remains agile and efficient in a challenging climate;
- Adhere to the countywide housing protocol and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for 16-17 year olds; understanding the unique challenges faced by this particularly vulnerable client group; and enable effective collaboration with Children's Services should anyone under 18 face homelessness;



- Adhere to the countywide housing protocol and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for care leavers, ensuring that staff are skilled to provide a trauma-informed approach to supporting individuals.

■ **We will continue to expand upon our homelessness prevention initiatives in assisting homeless households into the private rental sector through the continual success of the Homelessness Prevention Fund scheme:**

- Review our current Homelessness Prevention Fund scheme to ensure we continue to financially support households to access private rental accommodation, and determine if there are any ways to further improve the opportunities available to households;

- Support households to explore a range of grants and opportunities such as discretionary housing payments, to provide short-term relief whilst exploring all housing options;
- Ensure that access to the county-wide community-based support service remains.

■ **We will seek to minimise placements into, and reduce the time spent in, Bed and Breakfast accommodation, and decrease use of temporary accommodation out of district:**

- Explore additional provision of new emergency and temporary accommodation within the district for a range of households, in line with the aims of the Temporary Accommodation Strategy;
- Complete annual checks of temporary accommodation to check that it reflects our standards and requirements;
- Review our prevention offer to minimise the need for emergency accommodation through proactive intervention.

■ **We will continue to ensure that our practices encompass the Gloucestershire Armed Forces Covenant:**

- Continue to ensure that our local approach remains in accordance with national good practice guidelines.

- Commit to ensuring that our allocations policy continues to remain relevant, and proactively adjust it to adhere to any future change to national regulations.

■ **We will proactively monitor for emerging challenges and adjust our approach accordingly by:**

- Commit to the 'One Council' approach by working closely with all internal departments to ensure that Housing Advice continues to support the overall priorities and objectives of our vision;
- Further develop our relationship with external and internal stakeholders by delivering an effective homelessness prevention forum, with the aim of sharing effective approaches;
- Review our countywide support services to ensure they remain effective in serving a rural community, and develop them to better serve our district if required.



### Opportunities

- We received £223k Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding for the financial year 2024, with an additional £171k in top-up funding.
- A tailored, countywide response to domestic abuse in partnership with statutory and charitable sectors that understand the needs of victims



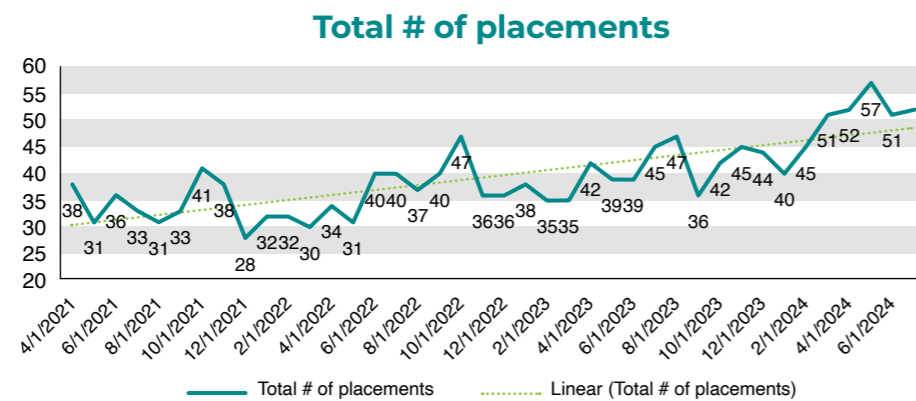


## PRIORITY 5

# Tackling Homelessness & the Causes

### Challenges

■ In line with this, the number of homelessness placements into temporary accommodation continues to rise from an average of around 15 at any one time in 2019 to an average of around 50 in 2023.



- The number of homelessness approaches has substantially increased over the past two years; we had 912 approaches in the calendar year 2023 compared to 466 in the year 2021.
- Alongside the increase in number of households requiring assistance, we are seeing an increase in the complexity of households presenting as homeless with multiple support requirements, including an increase in cases where housing is not the sole or main solution to their needs.

■ We are seeing continual increases in the typical cost of private rental properties and a decrease in available properties, which is making it substantially more difficult to help secure affordable, private rental properties for households facing homelessness.

### Measures of success

- Increase the number of households we assist to secure existing or new private rental opportunities.
- Increase the number of households we are able to temporarily accommodate in the Stroud District.



## PRIORITY 6

# Prevention & Reduction of Rough Sleeping



### Background & ambition

Despite a substantial increase in the number of homeless applications being made in the district, Stroud District continues to experience relatively low numbers of rough sleepers.

Despite this, we recognise the devastating impact that homelessness and rough sleeping has on individuals, and accordingly we will continue to prioritise the overall reduction of rough sleeping in the district, something which can only be met through bespoke, varied approaches tailored to each individual. Rough sleepers generally have complex needs over and above simply being 'roofless'.

We work with partners across the public and voluntary sectors to provide services which provide housing and support to break the cycle of rough sleeping.

### Key Facts

- Nationally, the number of rough sleepers was 3,898 in Autumn 2023; an increase for two years in a row, although down from the peak of 4,751 in 2017.
- **1 rough sleeper** was reported in the district at the latest rough sleeper count – no significant change during the previous three years.
- At any one time during the calendar year 2023, Stroud District had between 0 and 4 rough sleepers each week.

### Achievements

- ✓ £3 million secured across the county in government funding, over 3 years to end March 2025.
- ✓ 123 Streetlink referrals from members of the public reporting rough sleeping across Gloucestershire over 12 months to December 2023.
- ✓ Temporary Accommodation Strategy adopted in 2024, which aims to reduce our reliance on hotel-style temporary accommodation.
- ✓ 12 rough sleepers supported into SDC owned accommodation with relevant, tailored wrap-around support via our Housing-First initiative.
- ✓ 16 individuals accommodated as part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in the 2022/23 winter period.



### Our Goals

- In partnership with other agencies, ensure the effective commissioning of services to support rough sleepers.
- Help individuals with complex and multiple needs through bespoke pathways into off-the-streets accommodation.
- Improve our operational partnerships with the aim to better coordinate our interventions and practices.





## PRIORITY 6

# Prevention & reduction of rough sleeping



### Goal objectives

#### ■ In partnership with other agencies, ensure the effective commissioning of services to support rough sleepers:

- Identify new funding opportunities for additional and ongoing services aimed at supporting individuals with complex and multiple needs.
- Support the development and delivery of wrap-around intensive housing support to rough sleepers in SDC Housing First accommodation;
- Support the commissioners of countywide accommodation-based support and community-based support; allowing us to identify gaps in service provision for future development;
- Continue to participate in the countywide partnership, that responds jointly to new challenges and opportunities.

#### ■ Help individuals with complex and multiple needs through bespoke pathways into off-the-streets accommodation:

- Continue to build our relationship with hospital support services to help prevent individuals being discharged to the streets;
- Build on our work with probation services to support any individual leaving prison at risk of either homelessness or rough sleeping;
- Work in partnership with the countywide Complex Homelessness Partnership Support Service (CHPSS), a multi-disciplinary team commissioned to provide support to individuals with complex needs, to support individuals to access to mental health and adult social care support;

- Improve engagement with commissioned accommodation-based support providers with the aim of reducing the number of evictions from supported accommodation.

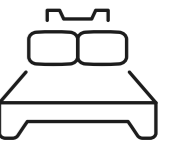
#### ■ Develop our emergency accommodation provision to reduce use of hotel style accommodation and aim for more suitable options, working toward the council's temporary accommodation strategy goals and rough sleeping targets:

- Evaluate our operational position around offers of emergency accommodation to individuals verified as rough sleeping, where no statutory housing duty is owed;
- Continue to develop our severe weather protocol with our countywide partners to ensure that it continues to ensure safe accommodation to rough sleepers, including a review of the trigger factors, and look to identify further placement opportunities in the district;
- Explore opportunities to develop access new emergency accommodation provision to help manage an increase in demand and complexity of cases;
- Review operational and strategy outcomes from our commissioned services, with the aim to enhance upcoming commissioning opportunities.



#### ■ Improve our operational partnerships with the aim to better coordinate our interventions and practices:

- Work in partnership across the districts to support effective monitoring through our annual rough sleeper count;
- Alongside our partner agencies, develop bespoke plan to support entrenched rough sleepers;
- Continue to promote the use of Streetlink to ensure that any new rough sleepers in the district are identified as quickly as possible to allow for speedy intervention and safeguarding;
- Improve our practices with the goal of earlier identification of individuals who are more likely to be at risk of rough sleeping following the loss of settled accommodation;
- Support internal and external stakeholders, such as the neighbourhood wardens and PCSOs, in tackling parallel issues such as anti-social behaviour, aggressive begging, and abandoned belongings on the streets.



### Opportunities

- We have a good foundation network of charitable organisations in the district, committed to supporting residents.





## PRIORITY 6

# Prevention & Reduction of Rough Sleeping

- Strong strategic and operational partnerships at a district and county level, with good access to jointly commissioned services.
- Council-support for trauma-informed services, such as housing-led accommodation for rough sleepers with complex requirements.

### Challenges

- Short-term Government funding opportunities can mean limited scope for long-term projects.
- Although there is a growing understanding of the impact of rough sleeping, there is still limited investment in trigger factors, such as mental health and trauma support services, and services for care leavers, which is leading to rough sleepers numbers increasing nationwide.
- As the reasons people face rough-sleepers are complex, a wide-range of responses and interventions are required.

- As rough sleeping levels remain low in the district, this can restrict the availability of services to support homeless individuals with complex needs.

### Measures of success



- Continue to meet targets around minimising the number of rough sleepers in the district.
- Continue to meet targets around placements into Housing First homes for rough sleepers.
- Continue to be able to make offers of accommodation to anyone at risk of rough sleeping during severe weather.



## PRIORITY 7

# Older Person's Housing

### Ambition

Our Vision is to provide good quality housing for older people which meets a variety of current and future needs – where people want to live.

### Key Facts

- We manage 720 individual homes over 28 independent living schemes for people aged over 55.
- 23 of the schemes have communal spaces such as lounges and laundries.
- We have 7 Independent Living Hubs which serve the local community. 16 Independent Living + schemes, all of which have social spaces for residents to socialise, reducing social isolation. We also have 5 Independent Living schemes which have no shared spaces. All schemes have the services of Site Officer and Enabling Officer.

### Achievements

- ✓ The Independent Living Modernisation Project has been running successfully for six years and is anticipated to complete by 2026. We've delivered a number of improvements and updates to our existing housing schemes including the creation of 'Hubs' in communal spaces.
- ✓ We have moved away from a 'one size fits all' approach, allowing tenants to enjoy as little or as much support as they need. Seven of our schemes are now designated as 'Hubs', providing vibrant lounges where tenants can come together in a safe



welcoming space. As well as the popular bingo, yoga, craft, and seated exercise classes, we have listened to residents needs and supported the development of unique activities to match the different communities that are evolving within each Hub. We are passionate about finding new ways to make the lives of our residents better, whether this is supporting fun activities, or providing opportunities to tackle social isolation. These services are also available to the local communities within the area.

- ✓ We have a dedicated Independent Living Hub Facilitator who works closely with tenants, residents, internal and external partners providing social inclusion via a huge range of activities and events. Our Hubs have become lively, vibrant environments, in turn supporting better health and wellbeing for all.
- ✓ Shortlisted for 'Best Older People's Landlord' at the UK Housing Awards 2024.



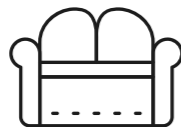


## PRIORITY 7

# Older Person's Housing

### Our Goals

We will continue to work towards the complete development of all 23 schemes by modernising and improving communal areas and accessibility to shared spaces.



The Independent living Strategy 2023 - 2027 focusses on our accommodation for older people, ensuring that it is suitable for current and future tenants. The strategy's intention is to maximise the independence, choice and control for older people by providing affordable, accessible, comfortable homes and value for money.

To initiate and deliver a comprehensive housing information network paper which will also feed into the wider communities and support people to make choices for their situation.

Concentrate on individual site results from tenant consultation to offer confidential support with an approachable can-do attitude to tenants that need more help with well-being or financial issues.

We are committed to delivering adapted housing and services which are good quality, providing value for money. SDC would like the homes it owns to enable tenants to live as independently as possible with the resources available.

### Opportunities

The Independent Living Hubs are open to visitors from other schemes as well as the wider community. By working in

partnership with scheme residents and various organisations is fundamental in evolving the Hubs and achieving some great outcomes. Listening and encouraging tenants is how we start to build relationships to find out what part people would like to play whilst involving the whole community in, to share their space. An example of a range of activities and events include health clinics, adult education, digital inclusion classes, better balance classes, external agencies offering soup and roll lunches. 100% provision of mobility scooter storage and charging points are available along with level access throughout the building.

The visiting Site Officer looks after the Health & Safety, ground maintenance and cleanliness. Tenants can self-refer to the Independent Living team for housing related advice.



### Challenges

The number of people living in the Stroud district over the age of 60 is set to dramatically increase over the next 20 years. We recognise that the needs of older people vary, and that their needs continue to change through later life.

We need to future proof our older people's accommodation to meet the needs and aspirations of its current and future tenants as well as assisting with the crisis in personal care by enabling tenants to live as independently as possible in their homes for as long as possible.



### Measures of success

- Seven of the schemes will become Independent Living Hubs – which have been located around the district by looking at demographics in the local communities within easy reach of the Hubs. These Hubs will be lively and inclusive spaces for the local community.
- Deliver the Independent Living Strategy Action Plan by 2027.
- Increase Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- Compliance with Housing Regulator requirements and Ombudsman code.





## PRIORITY 8

# Health & Wellbeing

### Ambition

We want to help support communities through the Cost of Living Crisis and tackle long term poverty and health inequality.

We aim to achieve this by working with colleagues across the statutory and voluntary sectors.

### Key Facts

Only 16% of the factors affecting our health sit within clinical health care.

- 84% comes from other parts of our lives:
  - 47% isolation and poverty.
  - 34% healthy behaviours.
  - 3% physical environment.

### Achievements

Stroud district has a number of community hubs supporting local neighbourhoods or special populations such a young people with additional needs. A number of leading statutory and community organisations support these, sharing resources and fundraising.



SDC has worked closely with the Citizens Advice throughout the Cost of Living Crisis. The CA have used Household Support Funding to provide emergency support to clients, provided extra money advice at outreach Foodbank sessions and helped clients to appeal benefit cuts and reduce debt.

### Our Goals

Our aim is to have a well-connected, sustainably funded network of hubs throughout the district which help each other and their communities.

We will support the network of Community Hubs to increase fund raising, good practice and access to helpful services like housing support, money advice and affordable food.



### Opportunities

We have used GP data to target outreach Strength and Balance classes in areas where high numbers of residents are at risk of becoming frail.

### Challenges

Funding is always limited, so using data and insight from our health and community partners, we will prioritise where the efforts of the Council will have the most impact, using this data to produce our first Health Inequalities Strategy.

### Measures of success

In 2025 SDC will produce our first Health Inequalities Strategy. Using data and insight from our health and community partners, we will prioritise where the efforts of the Council will have the most impact.



## PRIORITY 9

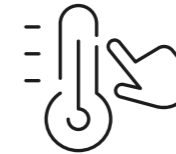
# Tackling Fuel Poverty

### Ambition

To raise the energy performance of existing homes and ensure homes are warm, dry and healthy.

### Key Facts

Fuel poverty occurs when a household is unable to keep their home adequately heated and there were an estimated 3.1 million households in fuel poverty in the UK as of February 2024. There are three main factors that contribute to fuel poverty: the energy efficiency of the property, the cost of the energy, and household income.



Locally, 3,673 households in the District of Stroud are in fuel poverty representing 7.5% of all households in the District.

Demographically, households with children are adversely affected by fuel poverty; 1,397 households with children are in fuel poverty. Elderly households are also impacted by fuel poverty; 7.8% of all elderly households are fuel poor. Economically, fuel poverty, as might be expected, impacts more strongly on households on low incomes and those on benefits. 41.3% of households on low incomes are in fuel poverty.

### Achievements

#### Green Homes Grants

In conjunction with Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire authorities, we successfully led several bids to the Government Green Homes Grants



Fund to access funding to pay for the installation of Energy Efficiency measures and affordable central heating systems for any household in fuel poverty. In the last 5 years in the Stroud district £1.5million of funding has been accessed enabling 310 measures to be installed. The partnership is currently delivering the latest round of funding accessed of £6.2 million under the HUG2 programme.

### Our Goals

#### Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

Living in private rented accommodation significantly increases the likelihood of a household being fuel poor. Since April 1, 2020, The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 have made it unlawful for landlords to





## PRIORITY 9

# Tackling Fuel Poverty

rent out domestic property where the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is less than E rating except where a valid exemption has been appropriately registered on the PRS (Private Rented Sector) Exemptions Register portal.

Where funding is available and a landlord fails to carry out the necessary works we can serve a Financial Penalty Notice of up to a Maximum of £5,000 on the landlord.

### Warm and Well Partnership

We aim to renew the partnership for the next five years and to retender for a delivery partner. This includes submitting a bid to the Warm Homes Fund Local Grant Scheme for measures to support residents in Stroud district.

### Opportunities

We are part of the Warm & Well Partnership. The 'Warm and Well' advice line provides free and impartial energy efficiency advice to residents in Gloucestershire on a range of areas from basic 'top tips' for saving energy to more complex renewable energy systems. Warm and Well also has officers who carry out home visits to offer guidance.

In Gloucestershire we have secured £200,000 funding a year from the Gloucestershire NHS Foundation Trust which homeowners, private sector tenants and landlords can access as well as the Green Homes Grant Schemes.



We will enforce the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards Regulations 2015 which were introduced to improve the energy efficiency of privately rented property. The regulations set out a minimum level of energy efficiency for any privately rented property which is required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

### Challenges

44.8% of households in the district live in a home defined as being of low energy efficiency.

3,232 households reported being in difficulty with heating their home.

Fuel poverty can lead to homes experiencing damp, condensation and mould, which have considerable negative impacts on health.

### Measures of success

- Number of private rented sector properties with improved EPC ratings.
- Number of owner occupied properties improved.
- Number of properties with energy efficiency improvements through the Warm & Well partnership.



## PRIORITY 10

# Gypsies & Travellers



### Ambition

We want to ensure that Gypsies, Travellers and Showpeople living in the district have access to the stopping places, plots and pitches that they need.

### Key Facts

The **Housing and Planning Act 2016** (as amended) requires local authorities to take account of the needs of travelling people and to create strategies to meet those needs. National policy requires local authorities to identify and if necessary allocate sufficient sites to meet the needs of these groups within their local plans.

### Achievements

The Gloucestershire local authorities worked together to commission a new Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling



Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) for the period 2021-2041. It aims to identify the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers, Showpeople, and boat dwellers. The results are used as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning.

The Gypsy and Traveller County Officers Group is made up of planning policy/housing and environmental health officers from the 6 districts and County Council in Gloucestershire and meets quarterly. The group make recommendations on policy matters. The group is working to increase accommodation provision for Travelling Communities by encouraging the release of publicly owned land for the use of Travelling communities in Gloucestershire; and the identification of other land for site provision.







## PRIORITY 10

# Gypsies & Travellers

### Our Goals

At times of high housing pressure, some households will look at alternative accommodation to the traditional 'bricks and mortar' routes to finding a home and one of these options is dwelling on a houseboat. Some communities have a heritage of living, working and travelling on the waterways (known as Bargee travellers) but, more recently, additional households are choosing to live on boats because of the relative affordability of this type of accommodation. These are boat dwellers. The Council are currently working neighbouring Authorities within the County to provide a total of 53 permanent moorings in the period 2020-40. Within this District the Council is working with the Canals & Rivers Trust (CRT), Cotswold Canals Trust (CCT) and marina owners to contribute to meeting the new identified boat dweller needs.



### Opportunities

The Council will examine a number of recommendations through the ongoing Local Plan review process that could for example include short-term stopping areas situated on specific pieces of ground, which are made available where needed for an agreed and limited period of time.

### Challenges

The cultural and housing needs of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople community can be very different to the district's general population.

### Measures of success

- Maintain a supply of deliverable Gypsy, Traveller and boat dweller sites throughout the lifetime of the Local Plan.
- Maintain joint working within the County on Gypsy, Traveller and boat dweller matters.
- Ensuring that Members and Officers are fully briefed on Gypsy, Traveller and boat dweller matters.



## PRIORITY 11

# New Homes & Regeneration

### Ambition

To build affordable high quality, EPC A rated homes to meet the needs of current and future residents. We will deliver these new homes in line with our **'Strategy for New Council Homes'** through creative use of our land holdings, regeneration of poor performing or non-traditional stock and new land opportunities. We'll stay up to date with new innovation and standards in construction. More than just bricks and mortar, we care about the impact our developments have on the natural environment. As a council we are committed to achieving our Carbon 2030 goals, and we focus on mitigating the impact on species and habitats through landscaping, the use of bird and bat boxes, hedgehog holes in fencing and insect hotels.

### Key Facts

There are currently over 4,000 people registered on Homeseecker Plus for an affordable rent or social rent property.

### Achievements

We have delivered 276 new affordable homes since our new homes programme began in 2014. The last three projects delivered 36 EPC-A rated homes and in 2023 one of these projects, Summersfield Road in Minchinhampton was as a finalist at the 'Unlock Net Zero Awards' in the category of 'Development of the Year – Local Authority'.



### Our Goals

- Deliver the remaining 96 homes in our new homes programme by 2029.



- To extend the new homes programme and deliver a further 50+ homes over the next 7 years.
- To secure external subsidy to support delivery of our new homes programme.

### Opportunities

- Innovation in construction.
- Partnership working with other stakeholders.

### Challenges

- Statutory approval processes and associated timescales such as securing planning permission and procuring development partners can delay development.
- Construction costs may increase even further.
- Uncertainty about future external grant subsidy availability to fund projects.

### Measures of success

Number of new homes completed – 96 additional by 2029.





## Ambition

We want to support those who have moved to the district having fled war and conflict.



## Key Facts

The Council doesn't house asylum seekers; that responsibility rests with the Home Office. The Home Office has the power to commission asylum seeker accommodation anywhere in England and Wales.

Once an asylum-seeking household receives a decision which allows them to remain, they gain the legal right to apply for housing locally and, in some circumstances, to be housed as homeless.

More than two years after it started, the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Stroud continues to support refugees from the war in the Ukraine to access housing opportunities with hosts, or in more permanent tenancies of their own.

## Achievements

Working with the County Council's Homes for Ukraine team, we've helped more than 370 people fleeing the war in the Ukraine to access safe accommodation in the district.

Through three bids to the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund, we've been awarded more than £3.5m in total to purchase or develop 32 properties to help house those fleeing conflict in Afghanistan and the Ukraine.

## Our Goals

We recognise that, while not all will be in the district by choice, we need to support asylum seekers and refugees to access health, education and wellbeing activities.

## Opportunities

We'll continue to look for further opportunities to bid for funds to buy properties for those fleeing conflict, as these become permanent additions to our Council stock.

## Challenges

We aren't able to predict where or when asylum seekers will be placed into the district, which makes planning for services particularly difficult.

Once an asylum-seeking household obtains settled refugee status, they can approach us for housing assistance. This puts additional pressures on affordable housing stock which is already in high demand.



## Measures of success

New residents who have fled conflict are able to access the services they need, including education, health and wellbeing support, so that they are able to live healthy, settled and successful lives.

# Glossary

<b>ASB</b>	Anti-social behaviour, which is conduct that causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person.
<b>Asylum seekers</b>	An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right.
<b>Category 1 Hazard</b>	A hazard in the home which is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety.
<b>Clinical Health Care</b>	An activity concerned with the prevention, investigation and treatment of illness.
<b>Compliance</b>	An ongoing process of following rules and regulation to comply with health and safety standards.
<b>Carbon 2030</b>	Scientific consensus that, in order to prevent the worst climate damages, global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2) need to fall by 2030. The Council has an ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
<b>Decent Homes Standard</b>	Sets minimum standards for the condition of social homes in England and Northern Ireland.
<b>Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance Accreditation (DAHA)</b>	Is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse. By becoming DAHA accredited, housing providers and services are taking a stand to ensure they deliver safe and effective responses to domestic abuse.
<b>Duty to Refer</b>	A duty on specified public authorities to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to local authority homelessness/housing options teams
<b>Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)</b>	Sets out how energy-efficient a property is. Properties being built, sold or rented must have an EPC.
<b>Homeseekerplus</b>	Gloucestershire's Choice Based Lettings system. This is how affordable housing is allocated to tenants.
<b>Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)</b>	A property shared by at least three tenants, forming more than 1 household. Bathroom and kitchen facilities are shared.
<b>Housing Regulator</b>	Ensures that social housing providers operate ethically and efficiently, directly benefiting vulnerable and low-income individuals and families in need of affordable housing options.
<b>Independent Living</b>	Housing for older people which promotes independence and freedom of choice.
<b>National Planning Policy</b>	The national planning framework which sets out Government's planning policy, and how it is expected to be applied by local authorities.
<b>Planned works</b>	The maintenance programme for council-owned properties.
<b>Pitch (traveller)</b>	A space suitable for the placement of a residential caravan or caravans, usually with a utility building.
<b>Retrofit</b>	the process of making improvements to a home so it becomes more energy efficient with lower emissions. It often involves improving insulation of walls, floors and lofts and, the upgrading of windows and doors. It may include renewing services such as heating, hot water and lighting.
<b>Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund</b>	A government-funded programme to improve the energy performance of social rented homes.
<b>Streetlink</b>	A platform that connects people rough sleeping in England and Wales to support provided by local authorities and charities. This includes anyone who is sleeping outside, preparing to bed down, or sleeping somewhere not designed for habitation, such as a car.
<b>SWEP Gloucestershire</b>	Local Authorities have developed a humanitarian response to help prevent deaths on the County's streets due to extreme weather by offering accommodation to anyone rough sleeping. This is known as the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP).
<b>Veterans</b>	Anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.



# **HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024 – 2029**

