

Notes



Meeting 3: Housing Needs Task & Finish Group

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| Date: | 22 August 2022 |
| Time: | 19:30 hrs |
| Venue: | Room 1.26, Civic Offices, Milton Keynes |
| Present: | Councillor Hume (Chair) Councillors Ferrans, Fuller and Montague |
| Apologies: | Councillors Balazs and Verma |
| Officers: | E Richardson (Overview and Scrutiny Officer) |

NOTES

Disclosures of Interest

- Councillor Ferrans advised that she was a member of the Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP).
- Councillor Fuller advised that she was a tenant of Milton Keynes Council.

Notes of Previous Meetings

The notes of the meetings held on 15 March and 28 July 2022 were received and noted.

Discussion

1. What causes housing need?
 - The current level of housing benefit was lower than commercial/private sector rents and caps on other benefits;
 - Wages were too low, and this would worsen due to inflation;
 - Changes to people's financial situation, including changes to Universal Credit (eg a small wage rise could affect the level of in-work benefits, and the loss of the benefits was often greater than the wage rise);
 - Increase in poverty levels as a result of the above – likely to get worse in current economic situation;
 - Section 21 evictions;
 - Family breakdown;
 - Increase in family size / blended families;
 - Age range and gender of children which made room sharing inappropriate;
 - Grown-up children wanting to move out to their own place;

- Relationship breakdowns caused by Covid and lockdowns;
- Rise in the number of single person households;
- Aging population wanting to downsize but needing adapted properties – once adapted these properties can only be relet to those needing the adaptations;
- Older people being enabled to be independent in own homes with the assistance of care packages but who would rather be part of a retirement community to avoid loneliness and isolation;
- More and more single occupancy homes occupied by people with mental health needs or other vulnerabilities;
- Health changes, generally caused by aging, but not necessarily;
- Domestic Abuse;
- Harassment or anti-social behaviour;
- Possible pressure on private sector rentals by students once MK:U is fully operational;
- Migration from other more expensive locations, eg London, and increase in working from home;
- MK SEND offer very attractive to parents with special needs children;
- City status likely to attract more businesses to MK and create additional need for housing for their staff;
- Developers supplying more smaller houses rather than family homes;
- Current MKC housing policy;
- The government's definition of "affordable" isn't genuinely affordable for most people;
- Young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) but can no longer stay in family home;
- Not enough homes of the right size and affordability being built in MK, either council/housing association or private sector.

2. What frees up available housing?

- Marrying/moving in together;
- Dying;
- Evictions;
- Job mobility;
- Building enough homes of the right size and affordability.

3. Other questions to consider:

- Can the work of the Group influence / impact the current housing crisis and how can it influence the medium to long-term supply of affordable housing in MK?

- How many households are living in inappropriate housing – eg overcrowding?
 - On average, how many households are in temporary accommodation?
 - Who is analysing the latest census data and what can be learnt from it?
 - Is it being used to calculate the future growth of MK and the effects of a local, aging population?
 - Ratio between births and deaths in Milton Keynes?
 - Can the Council's databases be used to predict possible demographic changes?
 - How many young people brought up in MK have moved out of the area as they can't afford to stay?
 - Are they moving back later in life?
 - How do we provide essential services if key workers¹ can't afford to live in MK?
 - Are housing association tenants in shared ownership properties trapped in a system they can't get out of due to a lack of suitable "move-on" housing?
 - What is the impact of the lack of genuinely affordable housing on wider society, local creativity, cultural diversity and business entrepreneurship?
4. Who does the Group need to hear from to start to address these questions?
- Housing Allocations Team:
 - Average number of people in temporary accommodation?
 - Average length of time in temporary accommodation before they find somewhere permanent?
 - Are there any other factors affecting housing need which the group has missed at 1 above?
 - Housing Delivery Team:
 - Can the process of building new council houses be speeded up so that supply can closer match demand?
 - What will be the impact of inflation on the Council's house building programme – is 500 houses still viable or do increased costs mean that number will have to be revised down?
 - Does the 500 include replacements for Mellish Court and The Gables or will they be additional to the 500?
 - MKDP:
 - Are deals with the private sector, such as the Taylor Wimpy development at Daubeney Gate, Shenley Park delivering genuinely affordable housing?

¹ A key worker, critical worker or essential worker is a public-sector or private-sector employee who is considered to provide an essential service. The term has been used in the United Kingdom in the context of workers who may find it difficult to buy property in the area where they work

- Revs and Benefits Team:
 - Impact of the mismatch between housing benefit levels and the level of rents, particularly private sector, locally?
 - How many households in receipt of housing benefit/universal credit are in social housing and how many in private sector – does the Council have / need this level of detail?
- MK Futures Team re MK:U:
 - How are they planning to house an influx of students into MK once MK:U opens?
 - Will it impact the private sector locally?
 - Will it lead to an increase in HMOs?
- Preliminary Census Data:
 - Who is analysing this for the Council?
 - What information is available and what does it tell us about what we need to do in the future in respect of housing provision?
- MK ACT:
 - What is the need for move-on, safe housing for the victims of Domestic Abuse?
- YMCA:
 - What are the issues in providing suitable accommodation for young people?
- Age UK:
 - What are the housing needs of older people?
 - What are the best solutions?
- Community Foundation:
 - Is there any useful data in the 2022 *Vital Signs* report?

Dates of Future Meetings

Thursday 15 September @ 19:00

Thursday 29 September @ 19:00

Monday 3 October @ 19:00 (*reserve date TBC*)