

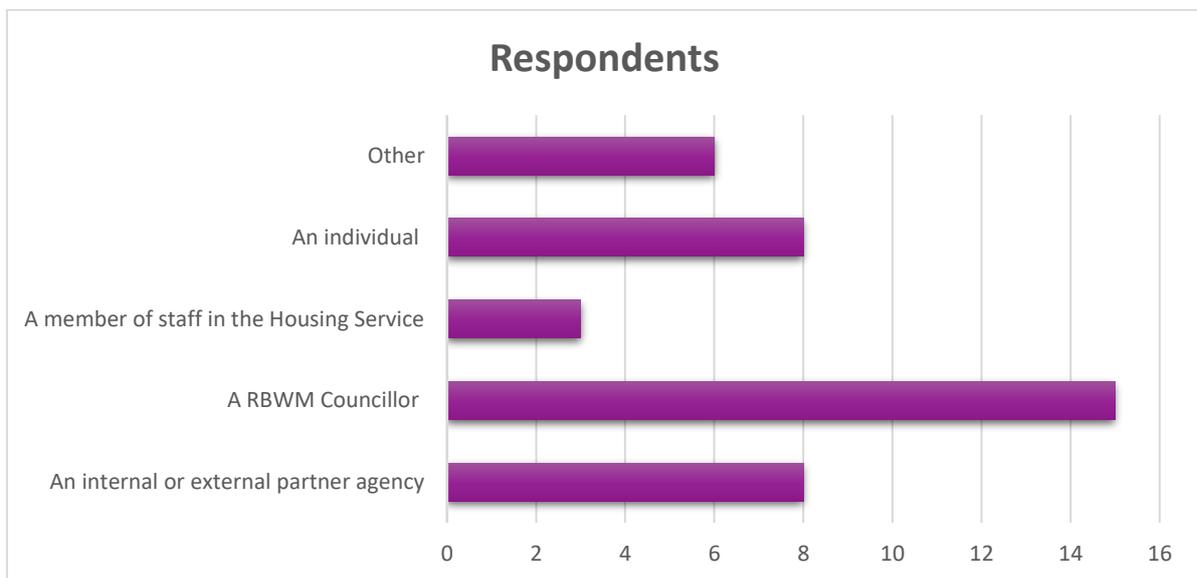
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Housing Strategy Consultation responses

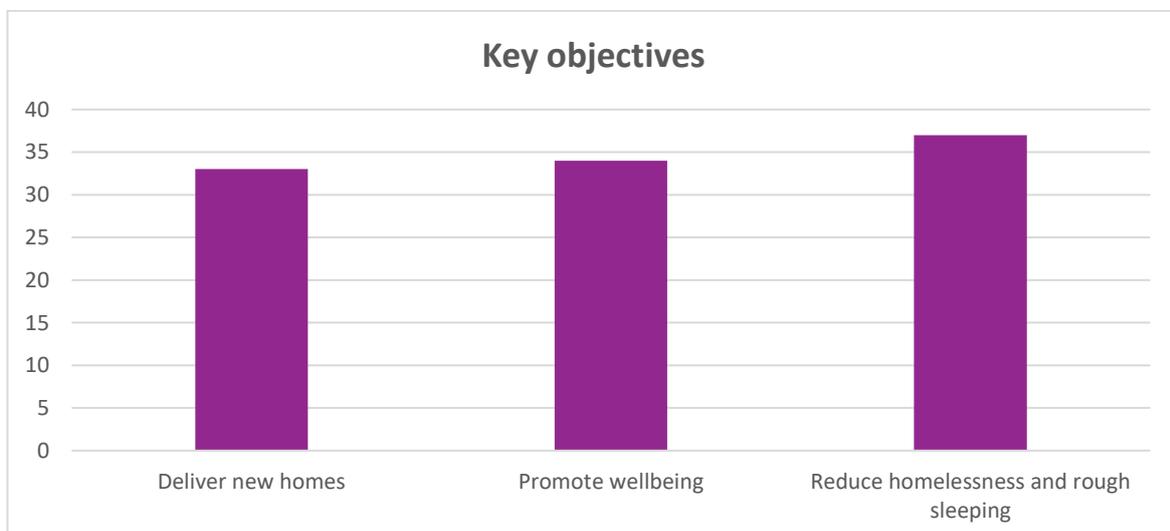
Background:

On 6th November Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead launched a four week consultation of its draft Housing Strategy 2021 – 2025. Feedback was sought from a wide range of respondents including but not limited to Members, partner organisations, stakeholders, members of the Housing Service, wider council departments and members of the public. Feedback was gathered through a series of focus groups and via an online survey. Feedback received during the consultation is presented below:

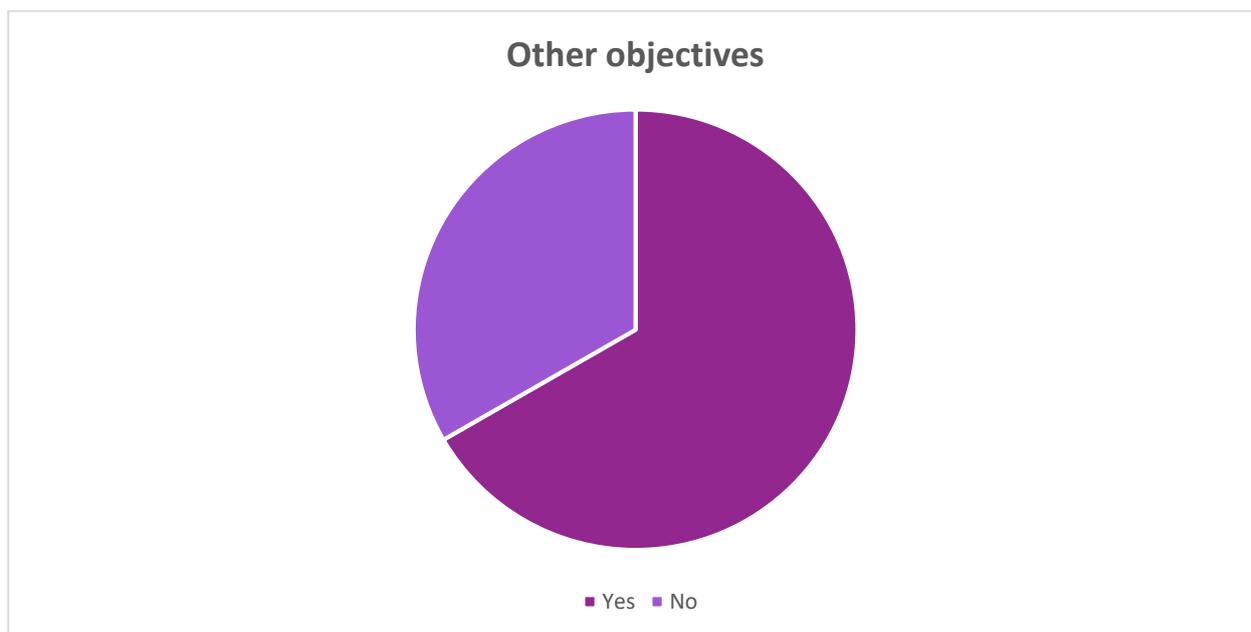
1. I am providing my view as:



2. The draft of the Council's Housing Strategy has 3 key objectives, please tick all those which you think are appropriate:



3. Are there other objectives the council should consider including in the Housing Strategy?



Comments:

More affordable housing, also more housing that can easily be adapted for disabled people or the elderly, providing homes for a lifetime
Climate change, although mentioned in the strategy, deserves a category of its own as it is so important
Fair access and support to make housing options a successful choice
New homes need to have greater space to allow for home working
Mental health and links to supported living accommodation
under occupation of current homes within the borough to release more family housing
Sustainability
Work with all landlords to ensure that rental properties meet appropriate standards. The Objective could be to promote the highest standards for rental properties.
Delivery new homes must be of the right type in the right place
Housing numbers alone is not the answer. We need sensible numbers
Increase social housing stock
Regular landlord and accommodation checking & supervision
Reduce the carbon footprint of new homes and improve affordability
Additional social housing for Over 50's in areas with accessible facilities. Therefore, freeing up larger units for families currently in smaller units.
Sustainability and a route to Zero Carbon / carbon neutral housing. This approach can link to reducing fuel poverty. Lack of provisions for Vulnerable groups i.e., Supported housing for mental health, Autism groups etc
Protect the green belt
Preservation of open spaces, green belt and recreational space to promote wellbeing.
Real affordable housing in line with average wage index or current model of living wage
More social housing
Environment and wildlife preservation, maintenance of the green belt and creating human environments that are sustainable
More, well realistically some, affordable and accessible housing

Suggest adding to second objective something about building communities, which would align with the recovery strategy which talks about empowering communities and would acknowledge the role of housing in the wider placemaking agenda.

Not build on green belt flood plain

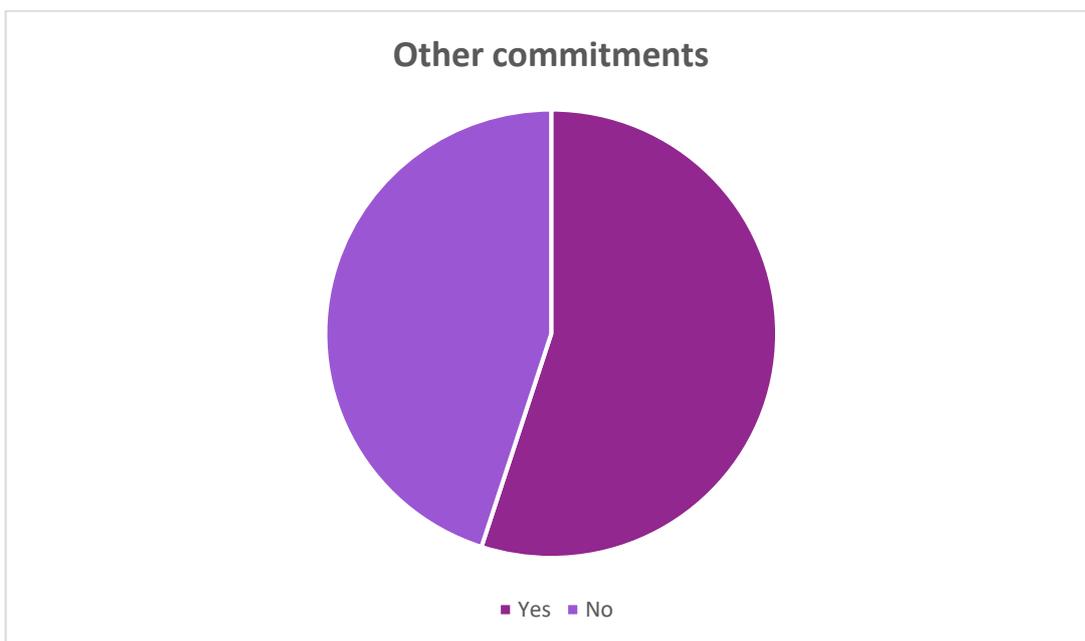
Provision of increased housing stock

Environmental Impact

4. Please tick which of the following commitments you think will ensure we meet our objective to deliver new homes:



5. Are there other commitments which would ensure we meet our objective to deliver new homes?

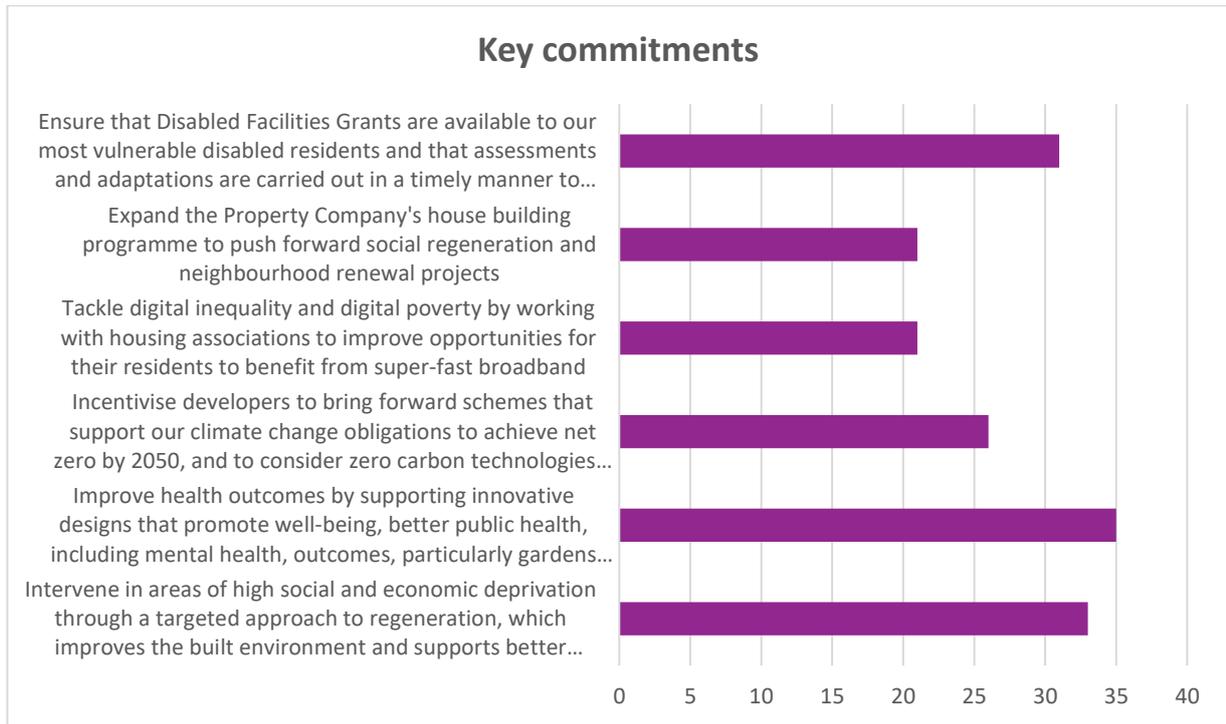


Comments:

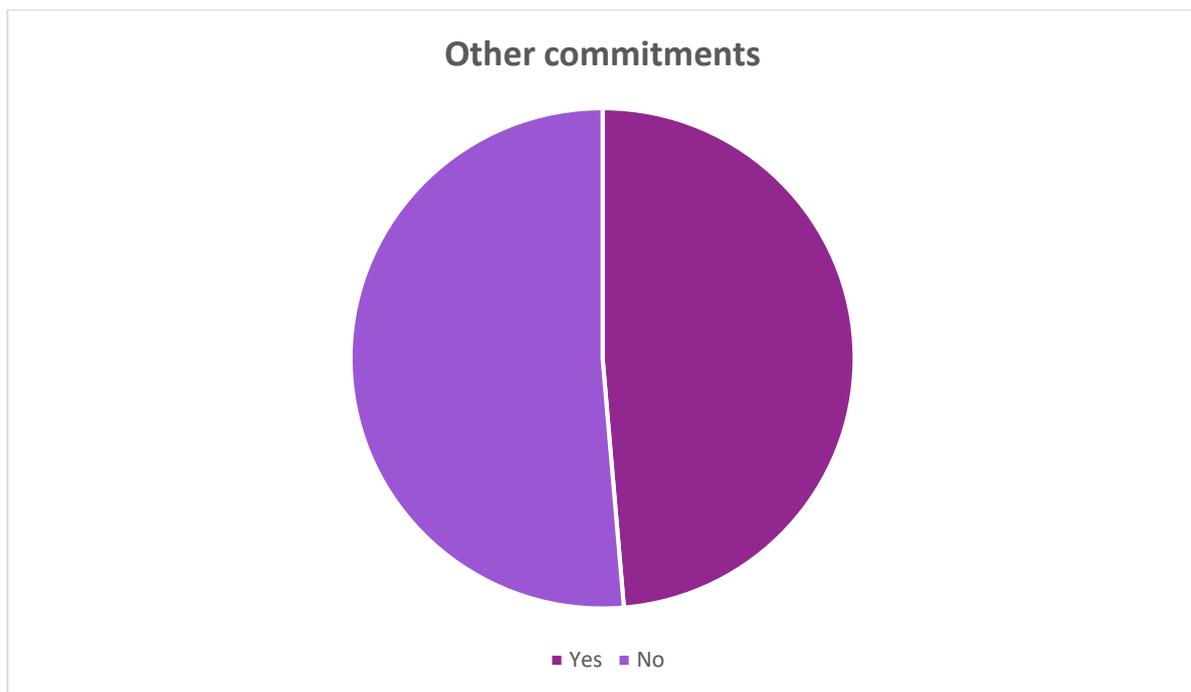
<p>A new commitment would be to pro-actively tackle empty housing in the borough, with a goal that no home sits empty for more than six months (understanding the sensitivities required around bereavement) and to proactively seek out brownfield sites for development/change of use. I haven't ticked the last box about the Local Plan, as I don't think the current draft is supporting housebuilding in appropriate locations, and I don't want a tick to imply endorsement of the plan as it stands. We should be working with neighbouring boroughs and doing all we can to save the green belt and avoid areas at risk of flooding. The bullet about 'ladders of opportunity' sounds nice in principle, but we need to acknowledge that not everyone will want or be able to buy.</p>
<p>Commitments to air quality concerns around the Borough and particularly near proposed locations for housing. The high levels on congestion on the A308 is of particular concern in this regard</p>
<p>Agree to reach carbon neutral by 2050</p>
<p>Ongoing consultation with impacted communities</p>
<p>Ensure all homes have private amenity space and are above min space requirements</p>
<p>Given the overcrowded and polluted roads we already have it is important that any housing deal element takes this into account</p>
<p>I will send in an email</p>
<p>review of existing private rented accommodation with a view to compulsory purchase</p>
<p>Create and enhance communities</p>
<p>Identify the need. Age range, needs. Ensure social housing /affordable housing is available in all communities</p>
<p>Need to look at housing requirements and desires for over 55's as shelter should not be the only option for people over 55 or how do you encourage people to downsize. As the population's health improves as we age people do not want to live in sheltered accommodation just because they are 55 or older. The question is how affordable is affordable housing in this Borough? Even at 80% of market rents, it probably is unaffordable for most borough residents. The council need not focus not only on discharging responsibility, but also ensure there is decent provision for Social rent tenants.</p>

Listen to the local people
Increase capital gains tax on second homes or personal property portfolios
Ensure all new development is counted - thousands of new homes have been built across the borough in recent years and the council are struggling to provide basic services despite receiving additional income
sustainable human and wildlife environment
Why should council supply private rentals?
More effective and determined pre-application negotiation with developers
Can we rephrase commitment to infrastructure to 'alongside' rather than 'before'
Give proper consideration to gypsy and traveller issues
Review current social housing provision and management, could in house ownership increase council assets and revenue in the future?
With a 9-year waiting list Social House is the most important
Commitments need to have an emphasis on regeneration that new build. Links to the Council's climate change strategy
Ensure that we make the best use of empty properties
Consider how we ensure that any new homes include the right mix of housing types
How can we make sure that developments which receive planning permission move through to build stage?
Consider the need for supported or semi supported accommodation in the Borough
We need accessible and adaptable wheelchair user homes
Ensure that we make the best use of empty properties
Question whether a focus on home ownership detracts from other tenures needed i.e. the Council delivers home ownership products every year but are these what is needed?
Take a common sense approach to development proposals
Ensure we define what we mean by 'appropriate' – one size doesn't fit all
Consider the approach the Council takes to second homes in the Borough

6. Please tick which of the following commitments you think will ensure we meet our objective to promote wellbeing



7. Are there other commitments which would ensure we meet our objective to promote wellbeing?



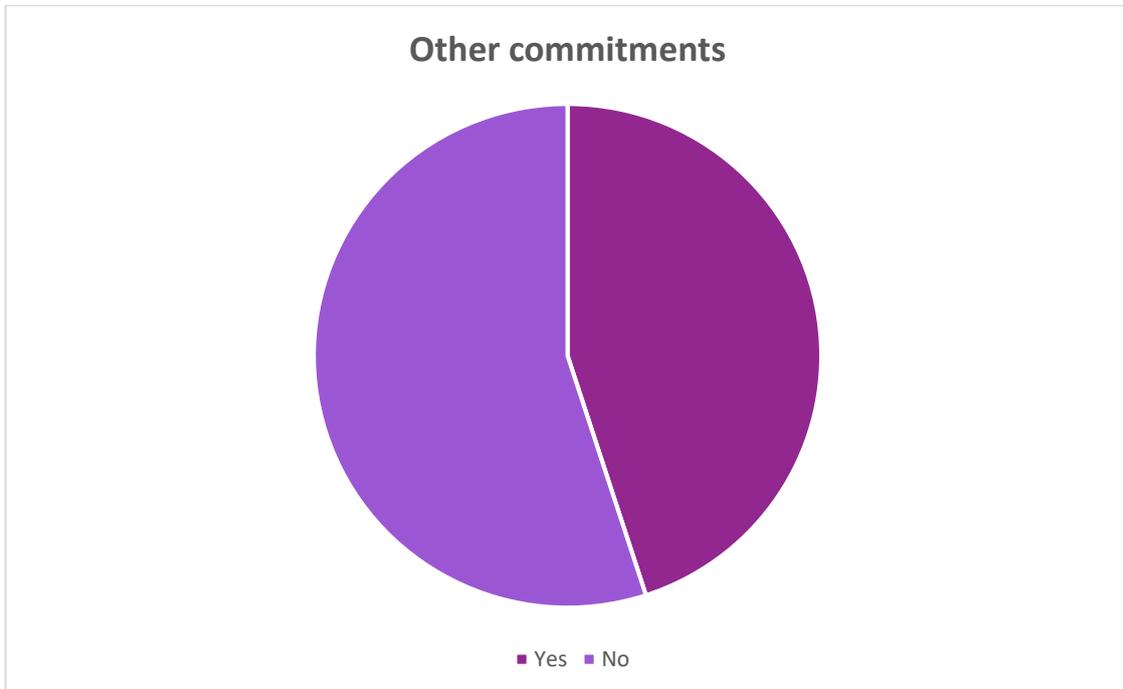
Comments:

<p>These are all worthy goals, hard to disagree with any of them. Would add that in light of the pandemic, we also need to consider light and space. If any of us were under the illusion that cramming people into small, dark shoe boxes might be a good idea, we should no longer be. We can't look on new homes as a place where people will simply rest their heads at night — COVID has shown us that homes can quickly become prisons. I visited one resident who was shielding, and her living room was almost pitch black on a bright, sunny day, because the room was north-facing, bounded by a tall hedge and had a balcony above the window. Another resident came to the door in floods of tears because she felt so isolated and depressed. COVID should force us to completely rethink what constitutes minimum requirements for housing.</p>
<p>I like the bullet about climate change obviously but wonder what is meant by 'incentivise'. Couldn't we simply 'require' them to support our climate change targets?</p>
<p>Disabled Facilities Grants: not just the most vulnerable, but anyone who needs them.</p>
<p>Ensure there are suitable pavements and walkways on any roads with housing (Oakley Green Road is a case in point). Suitable cycle ways as well</p>
<p>Preserve integrity of local communities</p>
<p>Expand abilities for green spaces and community gardens</p>
<p>I will include in an email</p>
<p>More interaction with local community/on the ground organisations</p>
<p>Ensure that home sizes are larger than national minimums and have a decent sized private external amenity space. This is key for family occupation as evidenced in current Covid period</p>
<p>Providing the right housing in the right place to support existing communities and the needs of current residents.</p>
<p>More funding for mental health support for example Floating support. More funding towards the older generation to promote Health, Wellbeing and Digitisation - modern feeling day centres - work with Housing Providers over 55 accommodation to bring services to the schemes to utilise what can sometimes be unused space - consider more Extra Care services</p>
<p>More focus on suitably designed new build housing for households with mobility and wheelchair needs.</p>
<p>Keep rural areas rural</p>
<p>Control building and population density</p>
<p>Request a change to the equation to affordable housing and start using wage index to set affordability rates</p>
<p>Get the overcrowded families into more space. Single adults in their 30s still living at home into flats</p>
<p>Creating a sustainable human and wildlife environment</p>
<p>A greater emphasis on genuinely sustainable development.</p>
<p>Our commitment is to be 'net zero by 2050, at the latest'</p>
<p>Look to preserve rather than replace, the impact of acres of concrete are proven to be of impact to people's mental health</p>
<p>protect the environment at all costs</p>
<p>Consider the impact that unemployment has on health and wellbeing; should there be actions to help people to find suitable employment to improve their access to the housing market</p>
<p>Should an overarching element to the commitments be to work closely with other departments and partners?</p>
<p>Suggestion to move the commitment relating to expanding the housebuilding of the Property Company into objective 1</p>
<p>Question relating to how health outcomes will be improved</p>
<p>Reflection that this granular detail belongs in the delivery plan</p>
<p>Really good set of commitments</p>
<p>Insist on facilities and infrastructure in any new developments</p>
<p>Some concerns shared in relation to central government planning policy hindering development</p>

8. Please tick which of the following commitments you think will ensure we meet our objective to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping



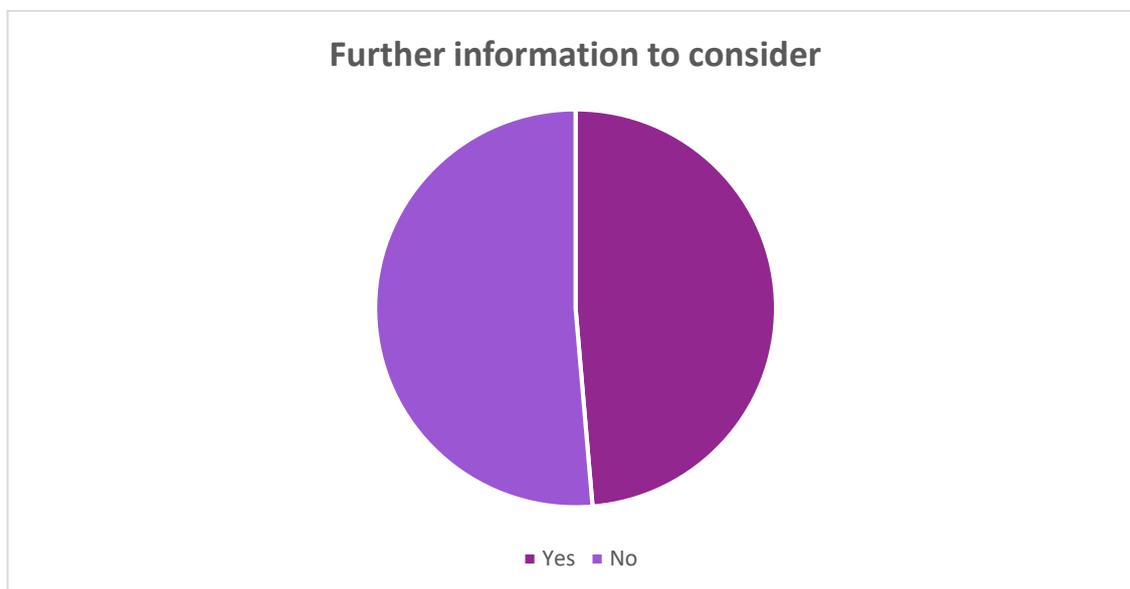
9. Are there other commitments which would ensure we meet our objective to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping?



Comments:

<p>A new commitment would be to explore the idea of street 'pods' where people can check themselves in, in an emergency. We have to accept the fact that not everyone will be able to cease taking drugs and alcohol in exchange for more formal accommodation, and, therefore, we need to consider alternative success pathways. This article suggests the idea will save Reading Council money: https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/reading-pods-homeless-given-green-18716927 Again, hard to disagree with any of these. Would caution against seeking out new charitable partners until we're confident that we're supporting the existing ones in every way we can – because it may be that with the proper support, they meet the needs of residents. Let's not dilute the support they're able to give. The technology bullet is too vague to assess, really. Leveraging technology obviously sounds like a good idea, but we need to consider how people who are genuinely homeless / sleeping rough will access it.</p>
More attention given to mental health issues
Local temp units that are inside the borough
Will include in an email
More pro-active interaction with on-the-ground organisations who provide help to rough sleepers
Reduce the number becoming homeless and provide support to get them back to work
Provide temporary accommodation in the central areas so it is easier for residents to access public transport, support services etc.
Need to work to identify the root causes and create solutions which reduce the causes rather than the symptoms. Earlier interventions and wider support for those individuals who may be heading towards homelessness. Provide Supported housing for these groups to help them manage their tenancies and build independent living skills. Ensure a holistic provision of support for the individuals to prevent them from being homeless multiple times. Create an accredited landlord scheme to show landlords what safe, secure & sustainable accommodation looks like
Adopt the principles of Housing First which has been very successful in some countries e.g., Finland
Ask the charities such as "shelter" or "crisis at Christmas" what would help
Long term support for health, addiction, and intervention to re-establish those less fortunate back into society and not create short term solutions without the right support services
Contact empty buildings companies and work with them to house rough sleeping and homelessness and have some volunteering opportunities for them to give back e.g., Foodshare
Speak with the long term homeless to understand what they want and why.
Utilising technological, especially digital, solutions is wasted effort. The homeless can't get to them.
Ensure that any interventions result in permanent improv
The only long-term solution is to increase and improve social housing stock and provision, not rely on slum landlords for a solution.
Reorder the structure of the commitment so that the focus is on prioritising the strengthening of existing partnerships and in addition seeking new opportunities
Change maximise to optimise
Concerns raised my several in relation to the ability of residents in particular groups to access digital services
People don't always realise what technology is available

10. Is there any further information you think the Council needs to consider?



Comments:

<p>We have to stop talking about affordable housing and tenure mixes in such vague terms. Residents still have no idea how much social housing will be supplied. We have people sleeping on sofas, adults sharing bedrooms with children etc. They are joining the waiting list with no idea they have 5+ years to wait. We need to see demand for social housing against what we can reasonably deliver and a plan for those who fall outside of that delivery. Maidenhead is very expensive, and even affordable homes for sale will be out of the reach of many.</p>
<p>There is no point building hundreds of houses if the infrastructure is not sufficient to support them. Congested roads and long delays at junctions will lead to huge frustration from existing residents</p>
<p>Trust is important and takes time with anyone facing difficulties, retention of good, trained communicators is important</p>
<p>In a market with limited supply Help to Buy has pushed up house prices making the transition from rent to buy more difficult for some. Any entry level properties that the Council builds and retains must remain affordable</p>
<p>Ensure housing development is spread over the borough . Avoiding green belt . Maintaining green spaces between locations .</p>
<p>Properly review new and existing development plans to avoid rogue landlord situations</p>
<p>ensure that local character and street scene is preserved</p>
<p>The strategy consultation needs to provide all the information regarding housing need fit the borough.</p>
<p>Strengthen links with MHCLG and Homes England to maximise funding opportunities for all tenures of housing to be delivered across the Borough. Early conversations are vital to ensure opportunities can be captured when funding programmes are announced. The Council needs to invest in the Support services that currently exist, for example the Mental Health Floating support service which is beneficial to mental health clients in the borough. There is a growing need for these types services which complement some of the work done by the Housing Options team to prevent Homelessness, and support people to live independently. Have one</p>

housing register for applicants and tenants to ensure allocations are transparent across the district
Spend the people's money wisely and fairly, forget party politics and work for the community
Deciding upon appropriate sites for development requires deep analysis of infrastructure and transport links as well as the full impact on the environment.
Residents of a certain age cannot downsize as they have adult sons/daughters sliving at home
Far, far too much to enter in this push poll.
Consider the unequal distribution of gypsies across the Borough
We should require RPs to submit customer satisfaction data when submitting for RBWM's S106 proprieties.
Prioritise brown field development over green belt as an implacable aim
The current strategy was not made available and cannot be found on the website
There is no mention of the Transformation strategy and how these work together, yet we have been told that this is central to all activities within the Borough going forward. There is no mention of communities, yet this is at the heart of much of the transformation strategy. This is where building communities based on current and future need, could be implemented. For example, we would like to see consideration of over 50s communities being developed with mixed ownership including, social housing, owned and equity release homes. These would be built in a manner that would allow easy adaptation as the residents needs change, this would support the aging population to remain in their own homes for life or at least as long as feasible.
The figures in the presentation state the average number of social housing properties allocated in a year is 124 (including sheltered) compared with the 769 households applying to join the council's housing register. Neither of these figures include the overcrowded families waiting to be allocated a larger property. There is no identification of current housing need by any demographics and therefore no projection as to the demographic need going forward. Unless that is identified we have no evidence base to set a strategy, that must include, Social, affordable rent, affordable ownership and sheltered housing. We have been told by housing associations that there is a shortage of three bedroomed houses, this needs to be quantified and evidenced so the strategy is reflecting current and expected future needs.
We would like to see some research into the number of empty properties in the RBWM, these cause a nuisance to neighbours when they are left unmaintained, we would also like to know the number of empty investment properties that are left empty while they appreciate. The RBWM should include a no long-term empty property policy within the strategy.

Next steps:

Feedback provided during the consultation will now be analysed and key themes identified. The draft strategy will be uploaded in line with feedback received and a final draft presented to Cabinet for approval at the February cabinet meeting.