

## **Policy, Finance and Housing Advisory Committee**

### **Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy update and review**

#### **Introduction**

This report provides the Policy, Finance and Housing Advisory Committee with an update on progress of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy that was adopted in 2019. It also seeks the views of the committee as part of the review process, of any areas of additional focus and ideas for solutions to some of these complex problems and barriers to delivery

#### **Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

The full strategy can be found at [Housing-and-Homelessness-Strategy-2019-2023.pdf](https://www.swale.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/Housing-and-Homelessness-Strategy-2019-2023.pdf) ([swale.gov.uk](https://www.swale.gov.uk)) the strategy has four strategic priorities which are:

1. Preventing homelessness
2. Reduce the need for emergency and temporary accommodation
3. Delivering the right homes in the right places
4. Improve conditions in existing homes

#### **Preventing Homelessness**

We currently have 97 prevention cases, homelessness has seen an increase during the pandemic, and this is set to be a continuing trend due to the eviction ban being lifted and the significant changes in household incomes. The end of furlough will also no doubt have an impact.

#### **Progress to date**

- Prevention team created and procedures developed to assist with securing accommodation. One officer focussed purely on landlord liaison.
- Promotion of services and liaison with partner agencies to identify potential homeless cases as early as possible (not just 56 days as per legislation).
- Landlord Incentive Scheme reviewed and developed. 19 properties have been through the scheme. Currently 11 live properties. The scheme provides 6 months rent in advance (paid back by tenant) and additional tenancy support from our team, reducing the risk to the landlord.

#### **Barriers to delivery**

- Increased levels of homelessness.
- Limited affordable move-on options.
- Underlying social, health and economic issues that prevent residents holding down a successful tenancy.

#### **Reduce the need for emergency and temporary accommodation**

At a snapshot in June we had 261 households in temporary accommodation, of which 146 have children, 115 do not. 175 households are currently accommodated within borough, 86 households are in temporary accommodation outside of borough. At times last year we had 300-400 households in temporary accommodation.

We are supporting 38 former rough sleepers in accommodation through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (36 within borough, 2 in Medway) and a further 2 rough sleepers on the streets.

#### Progress to date

- Housing Allocations Policy reviewed, and changes implemented. Since the policy change on 30 November we have housed 94 households with a main duty, 20 households with disabled children requiring their own bedroom and 13 households who required an adapted property.
- Increase in affordable housing delivery (see later update) and strong work with registered providers in the borough to provide social housing move on accommodation to those in temporary accommodation. In 2020/21 103 households were moved out of temporary accommodation into social homes compared to 91 in 2019/20 with only 18 in 2018/19.
- Creation of strategic multi-agency housing group to look at long-term issues for high needs clients. Regular engagement and liaison with KCC commissioned services.
- Establishment of Rough Sleeping Initiative in the borough. This service has grown over the past 2 years. We have just received our 3<sup>rd</sup> year funding of £652,622. This will enable us to increase the team and provide specialist support as well as delivering 10 Housing First properties.
- Delivery of Everyone In.
- Successful application to the Next Steps Accommodation Programme which has secured 5 units of long-term accommodation for rough sleeper move-on. Multi-agency partnership project with Riverside Homes and Forward Trust.
- Market engagement has taken place for a joint tender with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Councils to look at procurement of our nightly let accommodation provision for temporary accommodation. The objectives of this procurement are to ensure adequate standards of accommodation is in place as well as ensuring competitive costs.
- Fortnightly meetings with MHCLG to review housing work and escalate issues in relation to Swale.

#### Barriers to delivery

- Increased levels of homelessness. We have seen an increase during the pandemic due to relationship and family breakdowns and a range of hidden homelessness issues.
- Limited affordable move-on options.
- Underlying social, health and economic issues that prevent residents holding down a successful tenancy.
- Ability to deliver against MHCLG Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme prospectus timescales.

#### **Deliver the right homes in the right places**

##### Summary of affordable housing delivery

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Affordable</b>	<b>Affordable Rent</b>	<b>Social Rent</b>	<b>Shared ownership</b>
2020/21	283	140	45	98
2019/20	100	54	0	46
2018/19	76	19	0	57
2017/18	132	72	0	60
2016/17	144	90	0	54
2015/16	60	24	0	36
2014/15	156	109	0	47

Several sites are in development, of sites which have already partially delivered we expect to see an additional 145 affordable dwellings delivered, in addition 9 sites approved by planning with Registered providers already in place which should start delivering by 2024, these sites should deliver a further 563 new affordable dwellings (286 section 106 and 277 non-106). Figures exclude sites granted planning that have yet to have an registered provider confirmed and sites where planning has not yet been approved.

Break down by RP:

<b>RP</b>	<b>Affordable Units Due</b>	<b>Sites</b>
Clarion	33	Lady Dane Faversham
English Rural HA	6	Staple Street, nr Boughton
Golding Homes	20	Perry Court Faversham
Hyde	299	Stones Farm Bapchild, Ham Road Faversham & Station road Teynham
Moat	65	Crown quay lane & Roxbury Gate Sittingbourne
Optivo	53	Davington Fields Faversham
Sanctuary	139	Milton Pipes Sittingbourne
West Kent HA	93	NW Sittingbourne, Ospringe Red Brick works & Faversham Lakes
<b>Total</b>	<b>708</b>	

Progress to date

- Strategic Housing Needs assessment carried out as part of Local Plan review
- Rainbow Homes Ltd created and appointment of Development Manager has taken place to work up the 139-unit scheme on identified Council land.
- Strong relationships with Registered Providers to develop in the borough. Hyde Homes have utilised their Homes England Strategic Partnership funding to deliver Station Road Teynham and Stones Farm sites.
- KCC are working up “Accommodation with care and support” statements with specialist/supported/older persons housing delivery to be influenced by demonstrated need.

- Faversham CLT continue to grow and have utilised funding from the CHF to enable the housing needs survey and other preliminary works to be completed.

#### Barriers to delivery

- Viability issues and current Local Plan requirements significantly limits delivery on the Isle of Sheppey.
- Registered Providers ability to take on units from small sites.

#### Improve Conditions in existing homes

Current estimated number of long-term empties (over 6 months) is 593, with 92 of those having been empty for 2 years or more. 17 empty dwellings have been brought back into use since the start of the civic year.

Currently dealing with 138 active cases/investigations in the private rent sector.

#### Progress to date

- All known mandatory licensable HMO's have been licenced and are generally well managed. We continue to review any HMO's that we come across to check standards and provide advice to landlords relating to the standards we expect in smaller non licensable HMO's.
- We continue to work in partnership with other Kent local authorities in relation to warm homes and ECO grant funding for insulation this will run until December 2021 via KEEP. We are also currently part of a consortium which is ending in August unless extended by Government, the funding allowed residents on low income to access various energy grants and off gas connections with SSE, with Dartford acting as lead authority for government for the funding known as LAD1/1B.
- We are currently working with government nominated agents Greater South East Energy Hub and their agent Happy Energy. The scheme should make £420K worth of green energy grants available to eligible residents within Swale it will target residents living in poor energy rated properties and on low.
- The Housing Assistance Policy was amended in October 2019 and again in January 2021. The changes increased funding in areas that we found had a positive impact on helping people to live safely in their homes and to allow additional funding at times where the cost of the work was above the mandatory grant limit of £30k, other changes reduced some of the administrative work to help speed up grants and utilise the Better Care Funding / Disabled facilities grants (DFG) which had significantly slowed down due to the pandemic. We have also amended the policy to assist vulnerable people to access funding to improve and repair heating and provide insulation if needed.
- The Staying Put Team (HIA) continues to promote the service and works with all agencies outlining what help is available.

- The Home safety checks were undertaken to a lesser extent during covid but checks resumed after restrictions were relaxed and clients felt more comfortable allowing people in.
- The hospital and falls work, has been very successful and referral numbers have increased significantly since the policy was changed.
- Continue to work with KCC to promote the NO Use Empties loan scheme to owners and to date 76 new residential units have been created from 26 empty properties within Swale at a cost of £2,108,500.
- Good engagement and resolution with landlords on enforcement issues. Enforcement work and advice to owners continues to take place

#### Barriers to delivery

- Willingness for tenants to engage in the process on enforcement or minimum energy standards.
- Complex nature and ability to deliver government energy schemes.
- Empty Properties brought back into use is a long and sometimes complex process.

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July 2021