

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JANUARY 2022

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING

A.1 HOUSING ISSUES IN THE DISTRICT – EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

(Report prepared by Tim Clarke and Peter Russell)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To give Members of the Committee an overview of the housing issues affecting the district and work the Council undertakes with external partners to resolve these issues.

INVITEES

Sharon Lock Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator and Sarah Cooper, Temporary Housing Co-ordinator, Anglia Care Trust

Sharon and Sarah will give a short presentation to the Committee on their organisation's work with vulnerable rough sleepers in the district and those at risk of sleeping rough and will answer questions.

Richard Priest, Social Housing Consultant, Priest Property Consultants (TBC)

Richard will give a short presentation to the Committee on his work to invest in accommodation in the district to increase the supply of private rented accommodation for the most vulnerable and to improve conditions and management of HMO's he has procured. Richard will answer questions from the Committee.

Gavin Cowling, Team Manager (Essex) Peabody Floating Support

Gavin will give a short presentation on the work his organisation carries out to support clients with their housing and other related difficulties and will answer questions.

BACKGROUND

The Committee initially requested a report on housing issues in the district and how these issues can impact on residents' social, mental and financial well-being. Officers were asked to invite a representative from Shelter to speak at the meeting but Shelter no longer have an operational base in the East Of England.

The Council adopted its Housing Strategy in October 2020 and the strategy set out the housing challenges facing the district. The strategy highlighted four key housing priorities for the Council as follows:

- Delivering homes to meet the need of local people
- Reducing and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping
- Making the best use of and improving existing housing and;
- Supporting people in their homes and communities.

The Committee will be given information on the how the strategy focusses on external partnership working to achieve the above priorities..

DETAILED INFORMATION

The Council's Housing Strategy was adopted at a time when the Council was facing a number of national and local challenges, notably the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council is determined, in its community leadership role, to work with statutory and non-statutory partners to **deliver homes for local people, tackle homelessness, make the best use of our housing stock and to support residents in their homes and communities**. The Council works in partnership with partners in the statutory and non-statutory sector to ensure that we can meet these priorities to improve the lives and health and well-being of our residents in all housing sectors and to ensure that the district remains a great place to live.

Delivering Homes to Meet the Needs of Local People

Delivering homes to meet the needs of local people is a key priority for the Council. The Council's Housing Allocations Policy contains a residency requirement for the majority of applicants so that applicants cannot apply for housing unless they have lived in the district for at least three years. The Council has adopted a Housing Acquisitions and Development Policy to facilitate the delivery of new Council homes in the district.

Whilst the Council is keen to add to its own stock, it also works with other Registered Providers (RP's) and Homes England to deliver new affordable homes in the district. There are currently 26 registered providers and charitable housing trusts operating in the district and 2,538 properties are owned between them.

Since the Housing Strategy was adopted, there has been an increase in the number of new homes delivered in the affordable sector as follows:

Number of TDC new-build homes	11
Number of dwellings acquired by TDC	17 (including 15 x S106 dwellings)
Number of new build rented homes by RP's	77
Number of new build shared ownership homes delivered by RP's	37
Total	142

This total figure is more than was delivered in the previous four financial years. Although the delivery of new homes has increased, there is a requirement to deliver 165 affordable homes each year to meet the target required in the emerging Local Plan. It should also be noted that since the housing strategy was adopted, the Council has sold 12 homes to tenants exercising their right to buy.

The Council is also engaging with the SME** development sector to deliver new homes in the district. In December 2020, the Council was one of three Council's selected to take part in a pilot scheme run by Local Partnerships – an organisation owned by HM Treasury, the Local Government Association and the Welsh Government -to engage with the SME sector to try and bring forward small sites in the district that could deliver Council housing. The Cabinet has agreed to continuously engage with the SME sector going forward and the Council will shortly be seeking tenders from the SME sector to deliver up to 20 dwellings on the site of the former Honeycroft sheltered housing scheme in Lawford. Other discussions are ongoing with other SME's to deliver housing and Officers have carried out an appraisal of land owned in the Housing Revenue Account where additional Council housing can be delivered.

Delivering rural housing in the district is a key priority and to meet this end, the Council has facilitated the creation of Community Land Trusts in the district and works with the Rural Community Council of Essex to establish rural housing need. Whilst rural housing will only deliver relatively small numbers of housing, the Council continues to work with external statutory partners to deliver larger, strategic sites in the district such as the Garden Community on the Tendring/Colchester border.

Reducing and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping in the district.

There is a statutory duty on the Council to have a Homelessness Strategy in place and the Council adopted its Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024 last year. Prior to adopting the strategy and as part of the consultation process, a Homelessness Stakeholder event was held at the Town Hall where over 30 agencies were invited to give their views on tackling homelessness in the district and to help formulate the priorities for the strategy. The key strategic priorities in the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy are :-

- Earlier Intervention and Education
- Better Partnership and Holistic Working
- Increasing the Supply of Suitable Accommodation
- Exploring New Ways to Prevent and Tackle Rough Sleeping.

Although reducing and tackling homelessness is a statutory duty placed on the Council, the Council works with external partners to ensure it fulfils its duties to residents facing homelessness. Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 there is a “duty to refer” placed on statutory agencies to refer clients to the Council who are threatened with homelessness. The Homelessness Code of Guidance states that there is a duty on other agencies to reasonably co-operate with local housing authorities in discharging their homelessness functions.

The key statutory partners the Council works with are as follows:

- The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
- The Department of Works and Pensions (DWP)
- Essex Council Council
- Essex Police
- The NHS
- The Probation and Youth Offending Services

Although not statutory agencies, the Council also works with other agencies which are funded by the statutory sector to assist with homelessness, for example:

- Homeless Link
- The National Homelessness Advice Service
- Streetlink

The Council also works with charitable and voluntary sector locally, especially in relation to clients with specific needs as follows:

- Drug and Alcohol Support Agencies (Open Road and Phoenix Futures)
- Intensive Support (Catch 22)
- Young people (Youth Enquiry Service)

- Veterans (SSAFA and The Royal British Legion)
- Domestic Violence (Next Chapter)
- Generic Advice and Support (Citizens Advice Bureau, Peabody Floating Support & Faith Groups)
- Rough Sleeping (Anglia Care Trust)
- Supported Housing Providers (NACRO, Peabody Housing, Sanctuary Housing, Anglia Care Trust, Metropolitan Housing and Circle Housing & Support)

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, partnership working around homelessness issues in the district remains strong albeit there are less opportunities for partners to get together face-to-face to resolve issues. The Council allowed partners to work out of our offices prior to the pandemic but this has ceased due to more remote working. The Council has employed an Early Intervention Officer to work on complex cases with partners as well as a dedicated Accommodation Officer to work with private sector landlords to source accommodation. The Housing Solutions team is represented on a number of local forums where individual cases and the strategic planning of services is discussed and works with others to source funding for services in the district. The Council has worked with Essex County Council and other district and borough authorities to deliver county-wide protocols for young homeless people and intentionally homeless families.

Making the best use of and improving existing housing

Making the best use of and improving existing housing is a key priority for the Council. The Council has adopted a Houses in Multiple Occupation Policy to work with landlords and letting agents co-operatively to improve standards in this sector and to tackle unlawful properties. Lack of co-operation will lead to enforcement action. The Council has commissioned a housing condition survey in Jaywick Sands, funded by the DLUHC, which will inform how we can improve housing conditions and the energy efficiency of homes in Jaywick Sands in partnership with statutory and non-statutory partners.

The Council has declared a climate emergency and we aim to reach net zero carbon by 2030. To help achieve this ambition, the Council works with central Government, BEIS, the energy companies and the South East Local Energy Hub to deliver affordable warmth schemes in the district to tackle fuel poverty and improve the energy efficiency of homes.

The Council works in partnership with Essex County Council and other partners to deliver disabled facilities grants and discretionary loans to vulnerable residents in the district. This improves the health and well-being of our residents and can reduce the burdens on our partners in the NHS and Social Care.

Supporting people in their homes and communities

Good health begins in the home and therefore it is vital that our residents can be supported in their homes and communities. As a landlord, the Council works with our partners on the Tendring Community Safety Partnership to tackle anti-social behaviour in our stock which can have a detrimental impact on our residents' mental health. Our Older Persons Housing Team supports our older residents in sheltered housing and the wider community and works with statutory and non-statutory partners to ensure our older residents receive the support they require to lead better lives.

The Council has recently assisted four Afghan families to settle in the district in partnership with the Home Office, the Local Strategic Migration Partnership, Essex County Council and Essex Intergration, who provide support to the families in their new homes and community.

****Small and Medium Enterprise. Generally, an employer with less than 250 employees. In this context of developers, it applies to the vast majority of local firms as opposed to the bigger companies like Taylor Wimpey, Persimmon etc.**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines, following the presentations by officers and partners, whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.