CABINET

25 FEBRUARY 2022

REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A.1 **SCRUTINY OF THE HOUSING ISSUES IN THE DISTRICT - EXTERNAL PARTNERS**
(Report prepared by Keith Durran)

BACKGROUND
At its meeting held on 10 January 2022 (Minute 33 refers) the Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee ("the Committee") had undertaken an enquiry (within the Corporate Plan Theme of Community Leadership) into how joined up public services were to address the housing needs in the District. As part of the Committee's enquiry, the Committee was provided with a written report from the Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing. The report referenced the Council's Housing Strategy (approved in October 2020) and how the Council was working with statutory and non-statutory partners to deliver homes to local people, tackle homelessness, make best use of the Council's housing stock and to support residents in their homes and communities. The Committee was given information on the how the strategy focussed on external partnership working to achieve its priorities. The Committee heard oral submissions from three external partners. Ivan Briggs, Operations Manager at Anglia Care Trust Ivan gave 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. He addressed the need for accommodation for those most vulnerable individuals who were rough sleeping. Richard Priest, Social Housing Consultant, Priest Property Consultants Richard gave a short presentation to the Committee on his work to secure investment in accommodation in the district to increase the supply of private rented accommodation for the most vulnerable and to improve conditions and management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's). The vehicle he referenced for that investment was a RealEstate Investment Trust. Gavin Cowling, Team Manager (Essex) Peabody Floating Support Gavin gave a short presentation on the work his organisation carried out to support clients with their housing and other related difficulties. He indicated that advice for new tenants was an area to look at opportunities to improve so that there was the best signposting of those tenants to services that could help them across a broad spectrum of issues they were facing (including debt advice). The Committee was advised that the disruption to the lives of individuals and families going through an eviction situation (with uncertain future housing provision to go to) was great indeed and that action to avoid that eviction, where possible, could definitely improve the lot of those individuals/families.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION(S) TO CABINET

The Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to:-

RECOMMEND Cabinet to:-

a. *encourage real estate investment trust investment in purchasing low quality HMO's and investing in them to produce good quality self-contained affordable units.*

b. *sign posting those who apply to join the housing register to organisations to support debt management, maximising benefits, over-coming isolation and other issues they may struggle with.*

c. *securing additional accommodation for those with vulnerabilities who are rough sleeping, to continue and develop early intervention with Landlords to resolve issue rather than moving to evictions.*

PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENT(S) AND RECOMMENDATION(S) TO CABINET

Portfolio Holder's Comments

"The meeting served as a useful reminder of all the work that goes on in our housing service and the wide range of partner organisations who we work with to support residents of our District. The recommendations to Cabinet all tie back to commitments already made in our Housing Strategy and in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies and as such I have no further comments to make."

Recommendations to Cabinet:

That the recommendations made by the Community Leadership Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted and the response of the Portfolio Holder thereto be endorsed.