

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 July 2013 at 7.00 pm

At the above stated meeting the attached presentation was shown:

6. Questions to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety (Pages 1 - 10)

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Housing and Community safety Advisory Committee

Portfolio Holder Cllr Michelle Lowe

Homelessness/Housing Advice

- This is a statutory service and the Council is very proactive in avoiding homelessness by giving timely and appropriate advice. Homeless funding £92,000 pa
- Use of the private sector is maximised by offering loans for rent in advance and deposit bonds which are re cycled. Minimum use of B&B with Nil currently.
- The HERO service is externally funded outreach service through surgeries which provide holistic advice. Surgeries are also provided for KCC Children centres, Moat HA and West Kent HA for which income is generated. Covers Housing, benefits , training and finding jobs with support to go back into employment

Housing Standards /Accreditation

- This is a statutory responsibility to ensure homes in the district are of decent homes standard.
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating system identifies any areas of concern.
- Accreditation of properties helps to empower Landlords along with small grants and training.
- Licencing of mobile homes and caravans is undertaken and statutory as is Welfare funerals

Empty Homes/Under occupation

- To maximise affordable housing it is essential to use existing stock as limited opportunity to develop
- Both have had an **in depth scrutiny** process
- Up to 15 empty homes pa are brought back into use accessing KCC No use empty funding
- Various initiatives in place with West Kent HA to encourage down sizing and freeing up of family sized accommodation

Housing enabling/Housing Policy/Affordable housing

- Statutory responsibility for enabling role. To identify the housing need and work with Housing Associations , developers , planners and Home and Communities and other Agencies to maximise opportunities to fund and develop affordable housing
- Housing Strategy and sub strategies embrace the Community plan
- Rural exception sites and working with Parishes
- Significant funding successfully received from HCA

Gipsy site management and unauthorised encampments

- Hever Road Council owned Gypsy/traveller site (pitches) with Site warden (minimal cost)
- KCC Supporting People funding towards the service
- Three successful bids from DCLG the last one attracted 1.3 Million and has upgraded and re modernised the site to a high standard
- Encampments on Council land dealt with advice given to other land owners

Disabled facility grants

- This is a statutory responsibility funded by DCLG and SDC
- £250,000 ring fenced pa to West Kent HA for tenant aids and adaptations
- Problems with Home Improvement Agency in last few years with underspend of budget although there is the need and the Occupational Health service KCC
- Bringing HIA service in house for 1 year pilot

Housing Benefit and fraud

- Partnership in place with Dartford BC
- Managed at SDC
- Number of customer contact doubled in last 2 years (recession)
- Impact of welfare reform changes/benefit capping
- Universal credit and possible impact on claimants and staff
- Single fraud service (uncertain future of current service)

Environmental and Operational services

- Licensing

Premises, Personal, Taxis and Gambling

- Environmental Health

Food safety, Health and Safety at work, Air Quality, Environmental protection, licensing, Animal welfare and contaminated land

- CCTV

Plays a substantial role in protecting the public and assisting the Police (12/13 **59** arrests). Provides 24/7 out of hours telephone service for SDC as well as TMBC. Experienced Manager shared with TWBC (half salary paid).

Community safety

- Crime & Disorder Act
- Strategic Assessment
- Community Safety Action Plan
- CSU
- PACTs and EVAs
- Anti-Social Behaviour

Key Issues and Future Challenges

- Rising crime
- Domestic Abuse
- External funding constraints