

08 June 2021 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Published: 28.05.21



The meeting will also be livestreamed to YouTube here https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLT1f_F5OfvTzxjZk6Zqn6g. Members of the public who wish to attend in person, are requested to wear face masks and observe social distancing procedures. For health and safety reasons access may be limited and will be on a first come first served basis.

Housing & Health Advisory Committee

Membership:

Cllrs. Bonin, Dr. Canet, Clack, Perry Cole, Cllr Coleman, G. Darrington, Edwards-Winser, Firth, Griffiths, Harrison, Maskell, and Parkin

Agenda

There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. Appointment of Chairman		
2. Appointment of Vice Chairman		
3. Minutes To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 February 2021, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
4. Declarations of Interest Any interests not already registered.		
5. Actions from Previous Meetings (if any)		
6. Update from Portfolio Holder		
7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
8. 'One You' programme Update	(Pages 5 - 8)	Kelly Webb Tel: 01732227474

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|-----|---|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 9. | Empty Homes in the District - Update | (Pages 9 - 14) | Rebecca Wilcox
Tel: 01732227272 |
| 10. | To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board
To note the minutes of the meeting of the Health Liaison Board held on 26 May 2021. | To follow | |
| 11. | Work Plan | (Pages 15 - 16) | |

EXEMPT INFORMATION

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2021 commencing at 5.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllr. Coleman (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Clack, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, Griffiths, Harrison, Parkin, Piper and Roy

An apology for absence was received from Cllr. Foster

60. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing and Health Advisory Committee held on 24 November 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

61. Declarations of Interest

There were no additional declarations of interest.

62. Actions from Previous Meetings

There were none.

63. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman reported that there were a range of pressures that the Housing and Health Team were currently facing, particularly with the impact of Covid-19 related homelessness and the increased pressures on temporary accommodation. Homelessness approaches presenting in crisis as a result of domestic abuse and family breakdowns were increasing and putting immense pressures on the team resources. There was an excellent response coming forward and the HERO Team continued to support the increase of those who needed advice. This included helping 456 with Covid-19 related referrals, 17 people had been helped to apply for mortgages holidays and the team were dealing with increasing problems with unemployment, advice on benefits and 175 emergency packs distributed. A positive response had been that 11 of the homelessness households had moved into Private Sector lettings.

Members were advised that Rebecca Wilcox had been appointed as the new Head of Housing and would be starting in March. Rav Kensrey had been in post as the new Homelessness Prevention Manager, and the new team structure was in place. A new Accommodation Team had been created, looking at the range of housing options offered in the District and a new team leader, Jenny Weston would be

Agenda Item 3

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 9 February 2021

taking up this post. Jess Morgan, currently a HERO Officer had been successful in her application to the Housing Accommodation Officer role, with recruitment underway for a new HERO Officer. Having the team fully staffed would help reduce the pressures on the team.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Next Steps accommodation programme was providing support under the Everyone In initiative which required all local housing authorities to house rough sleepers during the pandemic. The team had been successful in its application to MHCLG for £168,000 revenue funding being used for accommodation costs occurred, as part of the additional temporary additional expenditure. Additional funding had also been secured for further supporting the individuals, particularly with complex needs.

Following the renewed partnership agreement with West Kent Housing Association, work was being undertaken to maintain Vine Court Road as supported accommodation in the district and jointly funding refurbishment to enable rough sleepers to be housed there.

The Chairman advised that additional funding had been secured from MHCLG's Green Homes grants of nearly £1.5m had been secured to look at insulation measures for mobile home properties that tackle fuel poverty and make the homes more energy efficient. It was hoped that 130 units could benefit from the grant scheme.

In conclusion, the Chairman advised that the One You team were looking at online services that could be offered.

Members asked questions on the Portfolio Holder's update.

The Chairman took the opportunity to invite the Chief Officer, People and Places to address the Committee who advised that the biggest concerns for the teams were the increase of people reaching out for help at the later stages. The team were witnessing increasing high risk domestic abuse cases and more people attending in crisis as a result of lockdown, resulting in more emergency accommodation being required.

The District's Local Strategic Partnership has launched its Community Wellbeing Fund, which will focus on funding projects supporting digital inclusion, addiction, NEETs and mental health.

64. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

65. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

Resolved: The minutes were noted.

66. Proposals for a New Housing Strategy

The Housing Policy Manager shared a [presentation](#) on the proposals for a new Housing Strategy, which included the background and local policy context, with the current strategic priorities. The proposed timetable was discussed, alongside the proposed approach to be taken. Members were advised that the Homelessness strategy was a legal document and going forward it would be included as a separate part of the Housing Strategy.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: that,

- a) that the proposed timetable for the development of a new housing strategy, as set out in Appendix A be agreed;
- b) a new homelessness strategy be developed;
- c) the existing and other secondary housing intelligence be used to avoid the commissioning of external consultants; and
- d) a new affordable housing target be introduced, to be monitored and reviewed by the Housing & Health Advisory Committee as a standing item.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

With the agreement of the Committee the Chairman brought forward consideration of agenda item 9.

67. West Kent Housing Association update

The Chairman welcomed Tracy Allison, West Kent Association's Chief Executive (WKHA) and Cathy McCarthy, Housing Director WKHA, to the meeting. Members received a [presentation](#) on the partnership working, the challenges for maximising social housing, the potential for partnership approach, Covid-19 recovery and response due to Lockdown 3 and the 2021 focus. Members welcomed the messages within the presentation and were pleased to hear that repair works that were postponed due to Covid-19 were in the majority caught up. Members took the opportunity to ask questions regarding Moultain Hill site, in Swanley and looking at low carbon homes.

Resolved: That the presentation be noted.

68. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the report which set out in Appendix A the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy. Members were advised that following the introduction of the Housing Act 2004, local authorities must take enforcement action to deal with properties with any Category 1 and 2 Hazards, as assessed under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and could charge for any housing enforcement action which was a key change.

Members were advised that informal resolution would always be the starting place to help them comply with the regulatory requirements, however charges could be made under 7 types of enforcement actions under the Act. Members were also advised that some of the policies included as appendices had been previously approved but were included for a completeness.

Members discussed the policy and asked questions of clarification. The Committee was advised that if the level of harm was deemed to be categorised as Level 4 then this would result in prosecution action being started. It was also noted that there was a typographical error on page 21 of the agenda pack which should read rogue rather than rouge.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet, to recommend to Council that the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy as set out in Appendix A, be adopted.

69. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the Progress on the Housing register being moved to the meeting on 28 September 2021.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.10 PM

CHAIRMAN

‘One You’ Programme Update

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 8 June 2021

Report of: Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

This reports support the Key Aim of: Providing an update on One You services for the Housing & Health advisory committee

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Kevin Maskell

Contact Officers: Kelly Webb, Ext. 7474 & Daniel McDermott, Ext. 7121

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee: To receive and note the report.

Introduction and Background

- 1 One You Kent is a Lifestyle Improvement programme funded annually by Kent County Council’s Public Health service. Sevenoaks District Council received £119,430.46 in 2020/21 to deliver the service and is scheduled to receive this same amount again in 2021/22.
- 2 This funding is primary used to fund three posts (1x Health Team Leader and x2 One You Advisor). There is very limited funding outside of this to be able to support the other fixed costs for the service and to facilitate service delivery.
- 3 One You Kent adopts the national “One You” branding developed by Public Health England, with the ethos of encouraging residents to adopt healthy lifestyle choices.
- 4 The Sevenoaks District Council One You service supports residents to adopt a healthier lifestyle through the offer of free lifestyle improvement services supported by our One You Advisors, these are:
 - One-to-one lifestyle support; addressing and supporting change in behaviours like; becoming more physically active, reducing alcohol consumption, eating healthier and having a better mental wellbeing.

Agenda Item 8

- Tier 2 Weight Management service; providing support in groups or on a one-to-one basis providing easy to follow guidance to help people to lose weight and maintain their weight loss.
- 5 The Sevenoaks District Council One You service also supports residents to become more physically active through the provision of exercise opportunities like our programme of health walks and group exercise classes run in the community.

Performance Update

- 6 Unfortunately COVID-19 had a significant impact on the One You service in 2020/21 and referrals to the service dropped by just under 60% (641 referrals in 2019/20, 264 in 2020/21). We believe this is due to a reduction in referrals in GP Practices and COVID-19 having a detrimental impact on residents willingness and ability to make positive behavioural changes at a time of significant stress and anxiety.
- 7 However, during 2020/21 we have achieved a number of positive outcomes with the clients we have worked with;
- 16% set a goal to become more physically active.
 - 22% received brief intervention supporting their mental wellbeing
 - 25% received brief intervention surrounding their alcohol consumption
 - 22% of clients were supported through our Group Weight Management intervention. Of those
 - 57% attended at least 9 sessions (defined as “completer”)
 - 92.9% of completers lose weight
 - 38.5% of completers lose 5% of their original body weight

Key Successes & Future Developments

- During 2020/21 we managed to adapt a service that had been previously only been delivered face-to-face for remote digital delivery. This enabled us to continue working with our clients remotely using applications like Zoom. This was a particular challenge for our Group Weight Management service but we were able to deliver four successful online programmes in 2020/21.
- We have drafted our new Health & Wellbeing Action Plan and are aiming to reinstate the Health Action Team meetings working with Community and Healthcare partners to achieve the objectives outlined in the plan.
- We have supported the development of the Mental Health Strategy in addition to Sevenoaks District Council’s involvement in the Kent & Medway Healthy Workplace Programme.
- We have merged our Health Walk programme with the Every Step Counts programme under the future banner of “Sevenoaks District Wellbeing Walks”. This change was prompted by changes within The Ramblers, but we hope this will support Sevenoaks Residents awareness and engagement with one connected community walks programme.
- Through our partnership work with Dartford, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils we have changed database provider to

enable improved data collection and reporting to tell a fuller and more accurate story of the impact the One You service is having on our local clients.

- We are currently working on reinstating our Health Walks programme in addition to our community exercise class offer. We are carefully ensuring that these offers are relaunched with COVID-19 safety in mind but also bringing services back at a better standard achieved previously.
- We are currently exploring opportunities to be able to deliver “Making Every Contact Count & Motivational Interviewing” training for the Sevenoaks District. This training has been positively received by other local authorities in Kent both within and outside of their organisations. The training gives people the skills to have positive, motivational conversations surrounding health and facilitates signposting to services that can address changes.

Appendices

None

Background

None

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places

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EMPTY HOMES IN THE DISTRICT - UPDATE

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 8 June 2021

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer - People and Places

Status: For consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: To provide an update on empty homes in the district.

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Housing Strategy to deliver more affordable homes in the district.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Kevin Maskell

Contact Officer: Rebecca Wilcox, Ext. 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee: To receive and note the report.

Reason for recommendation: Most local authorities have an Empty Homes Action Plan, setting out how they intend to minimise the number of long-term empty homes in their area. With a national housing shortage, leaving homes empty for long periods wastes a valuable resource. Empty properties can attract antisocial behaviour and negatively affect neighbourhoods.

Introduction and Background

- 1 A 'long term' empty home is defined as being vacant for over 6 months.
- 2 Council Tax date is used by Local Authorities (LAs) as a starting point for identifying long term empty home because there are specific classification and exemptions to determine liability for council tax purpose.
- 3 The main classifications we look at are 'long term empty home' and 'long term premium'. (Premium means properties empty and unfurnished over two years - these are charged 200% council tax).
- 4 In addition, accessing council tax date allows us to obtain owner details and contact information.
- 5 Accessing council tax data is restricted to specific circumstances by law and subject to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Data can be accessed as follows:
 - Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2003 is used when the Empty Homes Officer requires:

Agenda Item 9

- a) Information regarding an individual property or properties on a reactive basis, and
 - b) A periodic report on empty homes across the Borough.
 - Section 237 of the Housing Act 2004. Use of information obtained for certain statutory purposes including:
 - a) For any purpose connected with the exercise of any of the authority's functions under any of Parts 1 to 4 in relation to any premises, or
 - b) For the purpose of investigating whether any offence has been committed under any of those parts in relation to any premises.
 - Section 237 is used for individual empty homes that have progressed to a stage where the Council is exercising any powers under Parts 1 to 4 in relation to that particular property. Parts 1 to 4 include powers to enforce housing standards and the power to make Empty Dwelling Management Orders.
- 6 Empty homes are also identified through complaints by the public (typically where a property is unsightly, in disrepair, causing a nuisance etc.) and referrals from other council departments.
- 7 Many long term empty homes are 'transactional empty homes', so we generally focus on those empty over two years and/or properties causing a problem to the local area.
- 8 Why do properties remain empty?
- Long time to sell/sale falls through
 - Disrepair
 - Lack of funds to renovate
 - Family disputes or probate issues
 - Ill health/owner going into care
 - Sentimental reasons (emotional ties to the property)
 - Property inherited & owner unsure what to do
 - Bad experiences of letting
 - Planning issues
 - Owner waiting for an upturn in housing market
 - Lack of time/pressure of other commitments.

Position statement

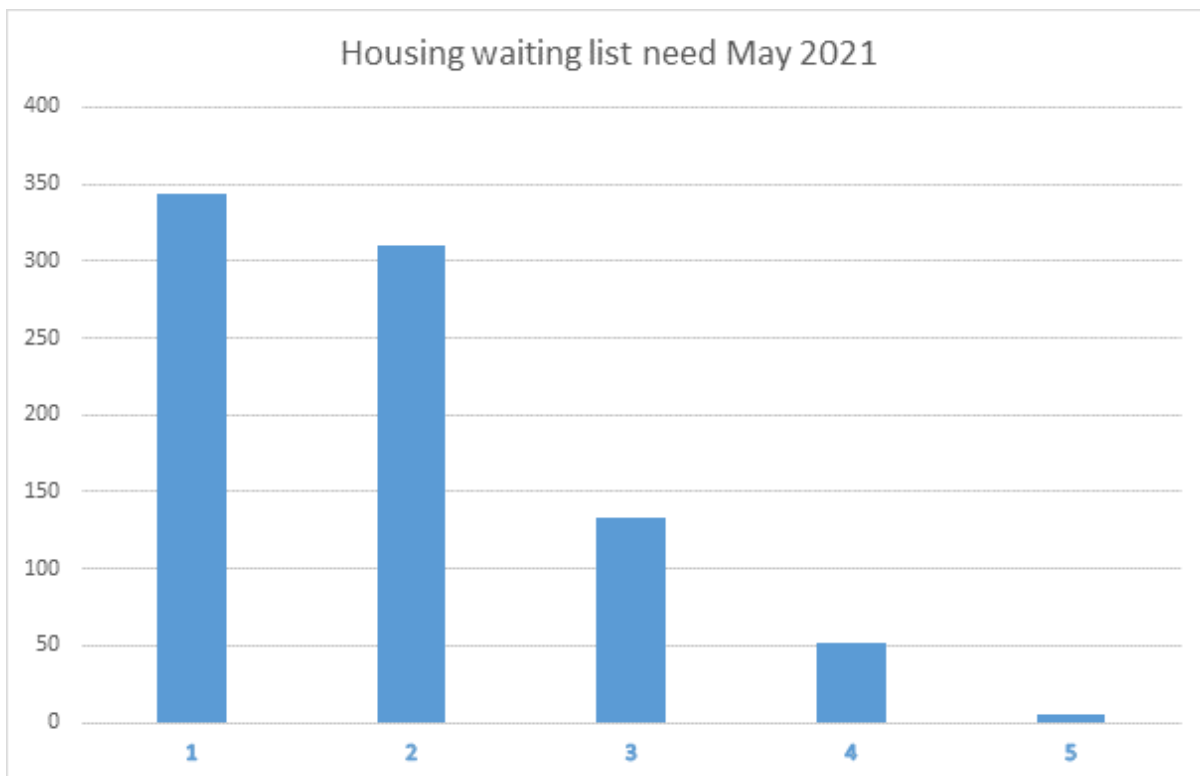
- 9 The number of properties identified under the definition as of the 31st March 2021 can be seen in the table below (including previous years), this number has then been analysed, and 83 out of 346 have been empty for more than 2 years. As the data shows there has been a significant reduction in empty homes across this District in the last 12 months, at present we have not had

the opportunity to understand the reason behind the drop in numbers, however in the short term we can view this as a positive move.

a. Key data

Year	Total
2016	413
2017	324
2018	464
2019	484
2020	535
2021	346

- 10 People and Places underwent a structure review between September and December 2020, which assimilated the Empty Homes work fully into the Private Sector Housing Team while ensuring the team work alongside the Accommodation Team to understand the priority properties to consider. The reason for this action is to ensure best use of resources and support our long term vision of supporting additional housing provision for local households in need.
- 11 Following the departure of the Housing Policy Manager, recruitment has commenced for a new Housing Strategy Manager with interviews taking place in early June 2021, in the interim the Private Sector Housing Team Leader and Housing Enabling Officer are reporting directly to the Head of Housing.
- 12 A draft action plan was created by the previous Housing Strategy Manager. Following his departure we have set up an officer group (at present consists of housing officers) to review and progress the draft action plan to completion. In the interim the Private Sector Housing Team having being reviewing potential IT software to support our work going forward. The software includes full case management, policy support and enforcement suite.
- 13 It is noted other officers from across the Council will be requested to participate if required to support.
- 14 The key principles set within the draft action plan are as follows: Evidence, Funding, Promotion, Enforcement, Energy efficiency and carbon outputs, Economic development and Monitoring performance.
- 15 Due to the number of properties that are currently empty this paper recommends that on completion of the action plan review the team will concentrate on one and two bedroom properties as this is where the District's housing need lies at present. (Graph below highlights the bedroom need according to our housing waiting list, May 2021)



Other options Considered and/or rejected

Other options to consider was to re-write the action plan, which considering the key principles support the corporate and housing service planning would not be an efficient use of officers time.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications relating to this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

To comply with legal statute regarding the management of empty homes including enforcement.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

A healthy housing market will always include a proportion of empty homes, as houses are bought, sold and refurbished and tenants move in the private rental

market. The Council will concentrate its efforts on empty homes which are eyesores and/or causing problems to neighbours, but will also help owners of non-problematic empty homes to use, let or sell them. This includes efforts to bring homes back into use before they reach the definition of long-term empty (i.e. six months or more).

The proposed Empty Homes Action Plan will reduce the number of long-term empty homes, providing more homes for sale and rent in the district. The action plan will outline a range of options to help owners of long-term empty homes to use, let or sell their property. In cases where owners refuse to engage with offers of advice and assistance, and where the property is dilapidated and/or causing a nuisance to neighbours, enforcement action will ensure that homes are not wasted and do not blight neighbourhoods.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People and Places

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Housing and Health Advisory Committee Work Plan 2021/22 (as at 25/05/21)

8 June 2021

- Health Liaison Board minutes
- 'One You' programme Update
- Empty Homes Update

28 September 2021

- Health Liaison Board minutes
- Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)
- Progress on Housing Register

23 November 2021

-

8 February 2022

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