

22 November 2022 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Published: 14.11.22

The meeting will also be livestreamed to YouTube on the Council's channel here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLT1f_F5OfvTzjZk6Zqn6g



Housing & Health Advisory Committee

Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Maskell; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Harrison
Cllrs. Bonin, Bulford, Dr. Canet, Clack, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, Edwards-Winser, Esler and Griffiths

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. Minutes To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 June 2022, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 10)	
2. Declarations of Interest Any interests not already registered		
3. Actions from Previous Meetings (if any)	(Pages 11 - 12)	
4. Update from Portfolio Holder		
5. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
6. Mental Health Update	(Pages 13 - 26)	Kelly Webb Tel: 01732227474
7. Health And Wellbeing Action Team Half-Year Report	(Pages 27 - 44)	Kelly Webb Tel: 01732227474
8. Budget 2023/24: Review Of Service Dashboards And Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)	(Pages 45 - 76)	Alan Mitchell Tel: 01732227483

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 9. | Summary of the Emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy | (Pages 77 - 144) | Alison Simmons
Tel: 01732227272 |
| 10. | Making Best Use Of The Social Housing Stock - Under Occupation Initiative | (Pages 145 - 150) | Sharon Donald
Tel: 01732 227131 |
| 11. | Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy | (Pages 151 - 190) | Sharon Donald
Tel: 01732 227131 |
| 12. | Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan | (Pages 191 - 208) | Sharon Donald
Tel: 01732 227131 |
| 13. | Work Plan | (Pages 209 - 210) | |

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 6 June 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllr. Harrison (Vice - Chair)

Cllrs. Bonin, Bulford, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, Edwards-Winsor, Griffiths and Harrison

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Dr. Canet, Clack and Esler

Cllrs. P. Darrington and Osborne-Jackson were also present.

Cllrs. Dickins and Grint were present via a virtual media platform which did not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

51. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Maskell be appointed as Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the year 2022/2023.

(Cllr. Maskell in the Chair)

52. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Harrison be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the year 2022/23.

53. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2022 be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record

54. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

55. Actions from Previous Meetings

There were none.

56. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

Agenda Item 1

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 6 June 2022

There were none.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman, with the Committee's agreement, brought forward consideration of item 8 - Quercus Housing - increasing the delivery of affordable housing in the Sevenoaks district (Minute 57).

57. Quercus Housing - Increasing delivery of affordable housing in the district

The Chief Officer, People and Places presented the report which recommended that the Council approve £15 million to be drawn down by Quercus Housing over a 10-year period to deliver affordable housing in the district.

The report laid out that Quercus Housing remained ambitious in achieving the delivery of affordable homes in the Sevenoaks District and was seeking a longer term position to support this ambition and develop a project pipeline for the next 10 years. Quercus Housing had identified sites that were under development by the Council, including Stangrove, White Oak and Farmstead Drive, where Quercus Housing could acquire the affordable units.

An indicative pipeline of projects was discussed. Each site would be looked at on a scheme by scheme basis and subject to the usual due diligence, financial assessment and securing relevant permissions, such as planning.

Projects costs, financial viability assessment and borrowing requirements would be impacted by existing inflation levels and would therefore be undertaken on a site by site basis. Quercus Housing would benefit from an ongoing income stream on the assets that should increase in value over time which would reduce the overall risk.

Members asked questions of clarification and the Chairman used his discretion to allow the Chairman of the Finance and Investment Advisory Committee in attendance to address the Committee. The Chairman of the Finance and Investment Advisory Committee expressed a desire for an illustrative model of how the borrowing might be used in order to generate funds to pay the loans. It was explained that this would be completed on a scheme by scheme basis.

In response to questions Officers advised that any profits generated by Quercus Housing would be retained by Quercus Housing and utilised for further affordable housing. The business cases would be approved on a case by case basis as approved by the Quercus Housing Board in line with the business plan approved by the Quercus Housing Guarantor Board which was made up of Cabinet Members. This would then go to the Deputy Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive. Officers emphasised that the cases would be considered individually and would have to be identified as affordable.

In response to questions it was confirmed by Officers that up to 45 units could be delivered in the 10 year timeframe. If more sites were viable on the proposed

funding model then additional funding may be looked into. Two developments had already been completed Gladedale House and 11-13 High Street, Swanley. The viability for the developments would be constantly assessed including land viability assessments and maintenance costs over a comprehensive timeframe.

Members discussed the importance of the affordable housing proposals and noted that the Council continued to work with other local housing providers and landlords. The proposals would provide another way to meet the demand for affordable housing. Members noted that the assets would ultimately be owned by the Council as the shareholder of Quercus Housing.

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

- a) a financial facility of up to £15m to be drawn down by Quercus Housing over a 10-year period from prudential borrowing obtained by the Council and to be used for the purpose of delivering affordable housing, be approved; and
- b) the Deputy S151 Officer in consultation with the Chief Executive be delegated authority, to agree the terms of any borrowing to be determined at the point of draw down.

58. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder gave an update to the Committee.

The new Homelessness Prevention Manager and a new Head of Housing had been recruited and were welcomed by the Chairman.

11 to 13 High Street, Swanley had formally launched providing 15 new affordable units for the local community. Furthermore, a positive meeting had been had with Rockdale Housing regarding a potential joint venture at Abbeyfields, Riverhead.

The Rough Sleeper Initiative funding update would be presented to the meeting as a report on the agenda (minute 62)

The Better Care Fund allocation had been approved and SDC had been awarded £1,303,129. This was for the disability facility grants which created adaptations in the home for disabled residents.

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme had been introduced and as of 24 May, 125 homes had been inspected from a pool of 143 matched households. The Chairman and Portfolio Holder expressed his thanks to the team for their hard work.

The rural housing needs survey had been re-run from 9 May 2022 in Horton, Kirby and South Darenth.

Agenda Item 1

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 6 June 2022

The Health Liaison Board met on 25 July, updates were provided on, among other things the Integrated Care Systems, Run- Walk- Push against dementia event and the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Some concern was raised by a Member as to the Out of Hours Homelessness partnership with Centra and the processes that were utilised. The Chairman noted that the issue would be discussed as a later item on the agenda (minute 63). Officers asked that any service concerns Members had should be brought to them as soon as possible.

Members discussed parking concerns around 11 to 13 High-Street Swanley. It was raised that there was a negative result on the neighbouring trading estate. Officers confirmed that residents of the site had free parking permits nearby at Bevan Place and Officers were monitoring the situation. Any concerns could be reported to the Council. Members raised concerns about the parking problems being exacerbated by the Bevan Place site and noted that further consideration would be required once the new site was completed. The Chief Officer, People and Places identified that she would investigate the use of parking by residents of 11 to 13 High Street and feedback to members in response to concerns.

59. Draft Housing Strategy 2022 - 2027

The interim Head of Housing presented the report which proposed the second draft of the Housing Strategy following consultation. Responses had been positive and there was good support for the proposed schemes. Areas of note included protecting the green belt, the type and quality of new housing, energy efficiency and the need for more affordable housing.

The themes contained in the draft Housing Strategy 2022 - 2027 were subject to public consultation between 14 February and 18 April 2022. Over 140 responses were received. It was considered that a broad range of participants responded to the consultation. Subsequent to the consultation, it remained the case that officers believed the themes of the Housing Strategy addressed the housing needs and aspirations of local people, whatever their background.

Members discussed the number of responses. Officers highlighted that the consultation had been publicised by the Communications team via Social Media and the Council's Magazine, Inshape among other places. Members discussed the possibility of posting out the consultation as pre-paid to stakeholders and residents so as to encourage further engagement. Officers suggested that the cost to this alternative would be great and the quality of response may not ultimately be improved. The cost to response ratio would have to be carefully considered. It was noted that consultation events had been held with members, town and parish councils, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations supporting homelessness. Historically, it had been difficult to generate feedback for Housing Strategy Consultations. It was suggested that should the strategy be recommended, Officers would present additional engagement figures to Cabinet to highlight the length and breadth of the consultation.

In response to questions it was emphasised that the Council's Housing Register Allocations Scheme 2022-27 which was to be considered on the agenda (minute

60), was a separate document and had generated more engagement as this had a more direct impact on residents and would generate a different, more immediate interest from respondents.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That the Committee

- (a) note the feedback received from the public consultation;
- (b) consider and recommend to Cabinet that it be recommended to Council that the draft Housing Strategy 2022 - 27 be adopted

60. Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocation Scheme 2022 - 2027

The Interim Head of Housing presented the report which outlined the Council's Housing Strategy Allocations Scheme. The report presented a second draft of the Housing Register Allocations Scheme 2022-2027, which had been refined in light of feedback received from a recent public consultation.

The Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Scheme enabled the Council and its partners to work together to ensure that those in most need of affordable housing were prioritised. The Council operated a Choice Based Letting Scheme and the Housing Register Allocations Scheme set out a framework that described how to register, the assessment process and property allocation process. Over 500 responses were recorded including from Members, partners and key stakeholders. The Committee noted their thanks to all those involved in the consultation process.

A few respondents had commented on the difficulties faced by young people who wanted to move to their first independent home, but who were impacted by high property prices and rents combined with low wages/zero hour contracts. As was drafted, people sharing facilities (e.g. young people still living at home with their parents and sharing cooking and bathing facilities, who wanted to live independently), were not classed as having a housing need and were not eligible to join the Housing Register. Therefore, it was recommended that an additional category be added in Band D (low priority) and to create a Local Lettings Plan to give an element of priority, which would be agreed on a site-by-site basis, to this category of applicant on selected schemes.

The current scheme did not require applicants to disclose whether they were staff or Members of the Council or related to, partner of, or living with staff or Members of the Council. It was recommended that this requirement be introduced to protect the Council's interest and that of its employees and elected Members. It was recommended that their status be flagged on the Council's computer system, and failure to disclose this information could result in the application being suspended or cancelled as determined by the designated manager. It was also recommended that applicants for vacant pitches on the Hever Road traveller site were required to join the Housing Register, in the same way that all other

Agenda Item 1

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 6 June 2022

applicants requiring housing assistance were required to do. It was suggested that a bespoke allocations policy be prepared for the letting of pitches on Hever Road.

Members discussed the proposal to retain a 'low priority' category band D. It was expressed that adding excess numbers of people onto the register would be unnecessary and have the potential to stretch the Council's resources. Officers confirmed that the long waiting times and low-priority status of young people living with their parents meant that younger, key-workers were discouraged from attaining a place on the register. The additional category would allow a small amount of those essential workers to gain a small percentage priority on the register which would help those younger key workers in high-value areas.

Officers confirmed that for clarity the local connection criteria would be re-iterated under the new band category.

Members discussed the need for a local connection requirement should a resident wish to join the housing Register. Residents could be left in limbo should they not be able to afford property within the Sevenoaks district despite being able to find affordable property outside the district. Officers outlined that the constraints of the District did cause problems in terms of the Green Belt and Housing development restrictions.

Members asked questions of clarification regarding the local connection criteria's effect on homeless inhabitants and temporary accommodation. Officers confirmed that the local connection criteria were correlated to a family member or previous home under homeless law. It was confirmed that the homelessness and allocations policies were separate. Applications for temporary accommodation and the housing register were established under separate legislation. The previous local connection criteria had been 6months. The new criteria had been extended to three years via employment and living which would encourage those that were committed to obtaining social housing. This also encouraged users to seek private accommodation. It was also emphasised that social housing demand outstripped supply.

Members asked clarifying questions as to the requirement to disclose working for or being related to Council employees. It was confirmed that this was recommended for the purposes of transparency to ensure fair claim to social housing. Officers suggested being mindful about a failure to disclose the information being subject to discretion for a period of three years to encourage users to come forward.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

Resolved: That

- a) the feedback received from the public consultation be noted; and

- b) following consideration, it be recommend to Cabinet to recommend to Council that the second draft of the Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 be adopted.

61. Sevenoaks District Council Out of Area Placement Policy

The Chief Officer People and Places presented the report which proposed the Council's Out of Area Placement Policy.

The demand for both temporary accommodation (TA) and settled accommodation was growing across the district with the number of applicants approaching the Council for resettlement support growing each year. Alongside the increase to local demand, the Council was also competing for both TA and longer-term accommodation with other districts and boroughs including unitary London Authorities, whom have a far more generous budget and funding streams than Sevenoaks District. There was a lack of available move on properties. These pressures led the Council to consider the manner in which resources were allocated based on household composition; community contribution including work and volunteering; and social and welfare needs. The proposed Out of Area Placement Policy set out how the Council sought to work with households based on their priorities, presenting needs and affordability in order to offer the most appropriate accommodation for both TA and through the Private Rented Sector as a longer-term housing solution.

Members discussed the report and asked questions of clarification.

It was confirmed that a financial incentives package was being looked at to encourage landlords to get involved. Private sector offers were encouraged to prevent homelessness and prevent residents getting stuck in temporary accommodation.

Members expressed some concern regarding vulnerable people being moved out of the area. It was confirmed that permanent relocation was possible for those that wanted it but that this was not an ideal solution and could cause problems long-term for residents if they wished to return. It was also confirmed that the Council kept track of temporary accommodation placements. Costs and duration were tracked. In-district accommodation was also encouraged with support being offered to those in temporary accommodation including schooling and transportation needs. Members also raised concern regarding the breadth of choice being provided for those with temporary accommodation needs.

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 adopt the Sevenoaks District Out of Area Placement Policy.

62. Rough Sleeper Initiative update

The Chief Officer People and Places presented the report which presented an update on the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI), a grant provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) to local authorities to provide local support for people living on the streets.

The report provided an update on how the funding had benefitted the Sevenoaks District in the 12 months prior and provided an update on DLUHC's announcement of a fifth phase (RSI 5), which would cover the period 2022 - 2025. The deadline for bid submission was late February 2022 and the decision would be published following the Government embargo soon after.

Any interventions funded would be contained within the RSI funding envelope and no match funding or additional administration costs were required to accept and manage the funding. Successful outcomes would reduce future costs arising from repeat homelessness, and associated costs to the public purse from rough sleeping.

Members discussed the report and asked questions of clarification. Sevenoaks had a low number of rough sleepers. The previous rough sleeper count had observed only 1 person. The scheme also provided an array of outreach support for the complex difficulties faced by rough sleepers and single homelessness.

Resolved: That

- a) the key achievements in supporting rough sleepers in the Sevenoaks District as a result of receiving Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding in 2021-22, be noted; and
- b) the latest round of funding announced by the Government for the RSI and to outline the Councils submission bid for 2022 - 2025, be noted.

63. Homelessness out of hours service update

The Chief Officer - People and Places presented the report which gave an update to the Committee on the Council's contract with Centra to deliver the Council's homelessness out of hours service. Since October 2019, 135 calls were taken by the Out of Hours team which released increasing pressure on the Housing Advice team and provided continued support to residents out of office hours to find immediate emergency accommodation in line with legislation. The CCTV team took a weekly log of calls which were recorded for monitoring purposes along with internal Officer meetings. An on-call Housing Officer could be contacted by Centra in an emergency. The log was sent to Centra and the CCTV team in case of emergency.

Members expressed the importance of the out of hour's safety net. In response to questions Officers confirmed that during the initial months of the scheme in 2019, communications problems were identified but had been resolved since. Mental

health and social services support provided a challenge, but it was emphasised that from a homelessness perspective the scheme was working well.

In response to Member queries The Chief Officer - People and Places advised that any issues with the service should be reported to the team and would be looked into. Officers would review the reported incident and the contact information for the service in light of Member queries.

Action 1: For the Chief Officer - People and Places to report back to the Committee with an update on an incident reported by a member on 22 May 2022 relating to a homelessness gentleman, which could not be resolved due to CCTV being unable to contact the homelessness out of hours service or on call housing officer.

It was confirmed that the Housing team would pick up the problems from the Out of hours homelessness service during office hours and the two operated in unison. Discretion was used once users had been checked and their validity assessed for placement in accommodation.

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 that an extension to the current contract with Centra for a further three years to deliver the Council's homelessness out of hours service, be approved.

64. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

Resolved: That the minutes of the Health Liaison Board held on 25 May be noted.

65. Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted with the following additions:

September 2022

- Health and wellbeing action plan 2022/23
- Mental Health update
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9:09PM

CHAIRMAN

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Action(s) from the meeting held on 6 June 2022 (as at 10/06/2022)			
Action	Description	Status	Contact Officer
Action 1	For the Chief Officer - People and Places to report back to the Committee with an update on the contact information provided for the homelessness out of hours service.	Completed. Following on from an incident raised at Committee, the Head of Housing and CCTV Manager confirmed that their teams had the most up to date contact details for the Centra service. The CCTV Manager confirmed they had reviewed the out of hours call log regarding an alleged out of hours incident and no issue was logged regarding a homelessness incident relating to Centra.	Sarah Robson Ext: 7129

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MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 22 November 2022

Report of: Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: Mental Health Update

This report supports the Key Aim of: Community & Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Maskell

Contact Officer(s): Kelly Webb, Ext. 7474

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee

To note the report

Introduction and Background

- 1 In June 2021 we launched a mental health strategy for staff. This shows the work of the Council over the past year to address mental health concerns

Key Implications

Financial

Some for training, but mainly staff time

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None

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.

Agenda Item 6

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Wellbeing

This document supports wellbeing and looks at this throughout the document.

Conclusions

For the Committee to note the report

Appendices

Mental Health Update Power Point

Background Papers

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places

Mental Health Update

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Kelly Webb, Health & Communities Manager

Mental Health Strategy - A year on

Our Mental Health Strategy was launched on 1 June 2021 as part of Mental Health Awareness Week. It covers:

- Good Mental Health
- What can be done to prevent mental ill health
- SDCs commitment to improving mental health

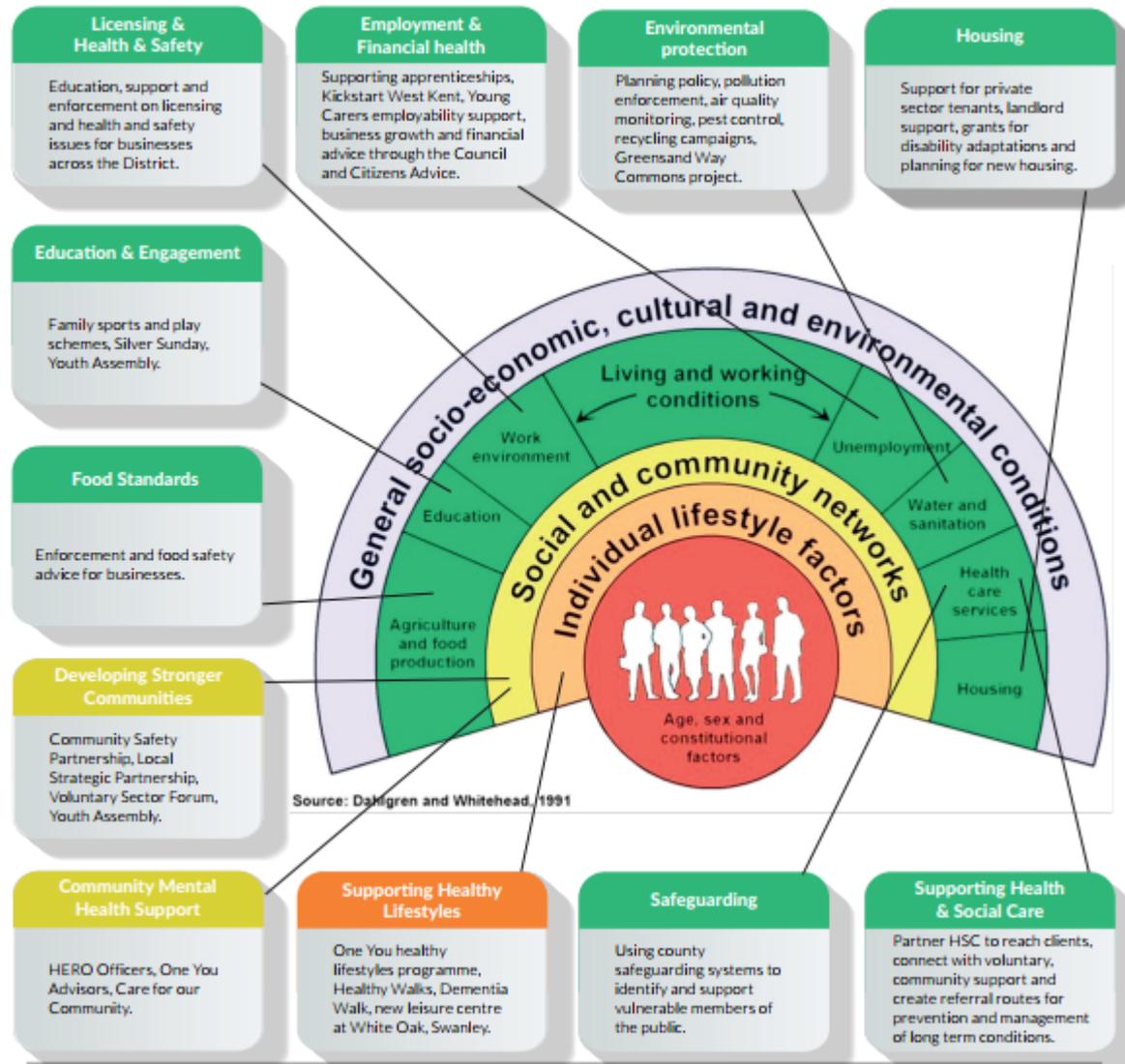
Our partners

The strategy focuses on mental health and wellbeing associated with the Council's role as an employer; the Council's role with its communities; supporting young people; raising awareness with Members; and activities with partners and the wider community.

This update represents a snapshot of the work undertaken by the Council.

Extensive support for staff is also provided by the HR team, including its Wellbeing @ Work, learning and development and recognition and awards programmes.

The Council's role



Wider determinants of health

The wider determinants of health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence people's mental and physical health.

A snapshot of the initiatives and projects to support wellbeing, including housing, economic development, communities and development delivered by the Council includes:

- Securing funding to deliver One You programme of health and wellbeing lifestyle changes.
- Securing funding to deliver a Youth Mentoring Project.
- Delivery of new affordable housing in Swanley (Elizabeth House).
- Delivery of Kickstart programme providing work experience and jobs for local young people.
- Progression of The Meeting Point in Swanley, providing business space and new homes.
- Successful bid to DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme to work in partnership with WKHA to deliver 11 units of supported accommodation for rough sleepers and single homeless..
- Secured over £1m in funding to support Disabled Facilities Grant programme.

Kent & Medway Healthy Workplace Awards programme

- The Healthy Workplace programme helps businesses of all sizes become healthier places to work.
- Task & Finish Group set up incl Health & Communities Team, Human Resources & Communications in April 2021
- Met with the Kent & Medway Co-ordinator in May to go through our pledges. Can take organisations up to 18mths to complete
- Bronze - submitted June 2021 and passed July 2021
- Silver - submitted - pending due to forums delivered by KCC.
- The programme is helping the Council and staff to find ways to be healthy at work.

Communications campaigns



Sevenoaks District Co... · 10 Sept 21

On [#WorldSuicidePreventionDay](#) we want everyone to know that they are not alone. If you're **mental health** is struggling and you're not sure where to turn, there is help available. Visit bit.ly/2AFv44f for resources & helplines.

#WSPD2021 #bethelight @IASPinfo

1 2 3

Sevenoaks District Co... · 25 Feb

Did you know, one in four people will experience **mental health** problems at some point in their life? If you have times where your mood is low, there are things you can do to help. Talking to someone is a good place to start. Don't suffer in silence, visit bit.ly/2AFv44f

76 views

2 2

Sevenoaks District C... · 09 Mar

Anthony Shipwright has won our Youth Group of the year award for his Eden Christian Trust Youth Club! The club provides teens in [#Edenbridge](#) with a safe place to socialise, play games & talk about **mental health**. Here's Anthony with our special guest, @NSPCC CEO Sir [@PeterWanless](#)

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Sevenoaks District C... · 03 Feb

Today we're supporting Time To Talk Day & encouraging everyone to talk more openly about [#MentalHealth](#). If you feel like you are struggling & need help, there is lots of support available locally. Find out more bit.ly/2AFv44f [#TimeToTalkDay](#) [#TimeToTalk](#) [#ItsOkNotToBeOk](#)

2 8

Sevenoaks District Co... · 17 Jan

This [#BlueMonday](#) check in on your friends to see if their ok. If they say yes, check again. If you feel like your **mental health** is struggling, there is lots of help available. Visit bit.ly/2AFv44f for support. [#ItsOkNotToBeOk](#) [#MentalHealth](#)

2 3

Sevenoaks District Co... · 10 Feb

The last two years have been difficult for children & teenagers. If you know anyone aged 11 to 18 whose **mental health** is suffering, we're running a mentoring scheme to give them someone to talk to. Find out more bit.ly/3t3m6qH

[#ChildrensMentalHealthWeek](#)

1 1

Sevenoaks District ... · 01 Dec 21

The festive period can affect people's **mental health** so it's important to help yourself & look out for those around you. Talking to someone about how you feel is a good first step. Find out more about **mental health** support here bit.ly/2AFv44f [#EveryMindMatters](#)

120 views

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Events: Big Sing 2022



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Agenda Item 6

Events: Family Fun Days



Events: Youth Mentoring Project



Going Forward - to December 2022

- Gold award to be submitted Kent & Medway awards
- Mental Health Training for staff
- Mental Health First Aiders Training being held in Oct 2022
- Staff Menopause Awareness event on 18 Oct 2022
- Volunteers Fair - Sept 2022
- Helping staff with specific counselling from West Kent Mind
- Winter health and wellbeing support programme delivered in partnership with Primary Care Networks
- Support for eligible pensioners and vulnerable households with utility and food costs as part of Kent Household Support Fund
- Launch of Here to Help leaflet to support staff and residents with the rising cost of living
- Continue Healthy Walks and Every Help Counts
- Community mobilisation programme
- Access All Areas event in Oct 2022
- One You Programme health and wellbeing programme delivered

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HEALTH & WELLBEING ACTION TEAM HALF YEAR REPORT

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 22 November 2022

Report of: Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: Update on the Health & Wellbeing Action Teams Action Plan - 2022-23 Qtr 1.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Community & Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Maskell

Contact Officer(s): Kelly Webb, Ext. 7474

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee

To note the report

Introduction and Background

- 1 In May 2021 we were asked by the Portfolio Holder to put this into place and reinstate the HAT but to include Wellbeing, we had an initial meeting with partner organisations and developed the action plan. Due to us being approximately 2 months behind of the start date (April 2021) it was agreed that partners would work on this one through the meetings rather than wait for the following year as we had missed the Cabinet process. The 2022-23 plan was put in place and agreed by the Advisory and Cabinet in January 2022, to be ready to start in April 2022
- 2 The appendix summarises the first quarter (April - June) of the action plan

Key Implications

None to SDC. It is a Partnership document

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Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None

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.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Wellbeing

This document supports wellbeing and looks at this throughout the document.

Conclusions

For the Committee to note the report

Appendices

Appendix A - Qtr 1 Action Plan Monitoring

Background Papers

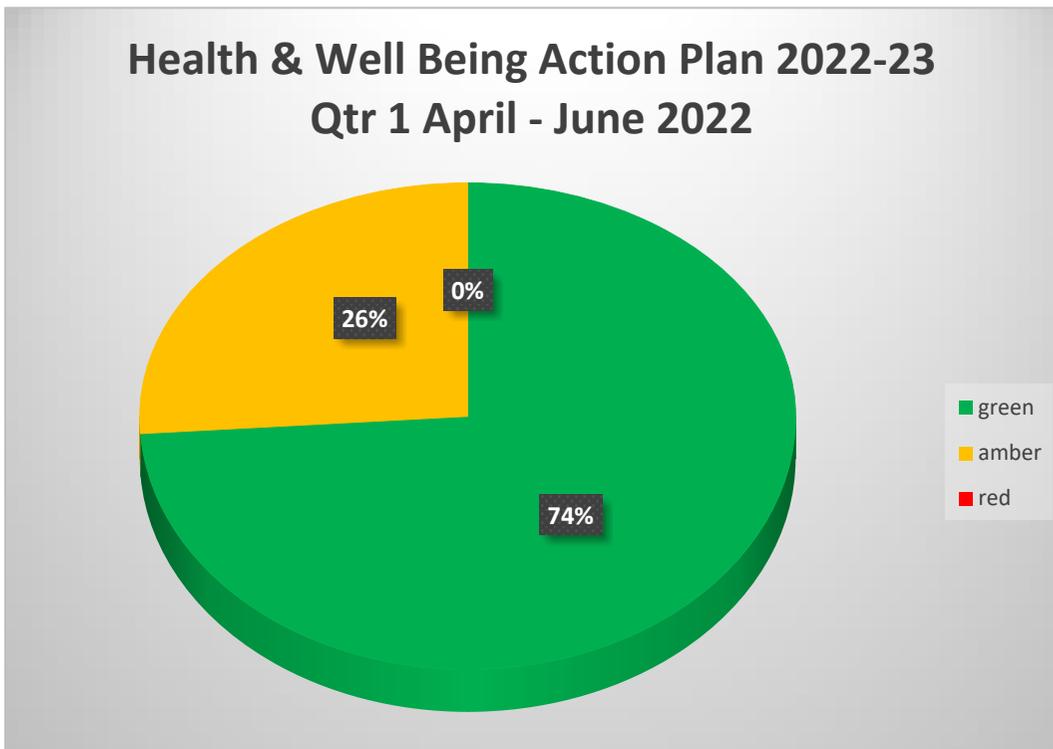
Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places

**SEVENOAKS DISTRICT
HEALTH & WELLBEING
STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN
2022-2023**

**Quarter 1 Monitoring Report
1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022**

Health & Well Being Action Plan 2022-23 Qtr 1 April - June 2022



Green	17
Amber	6
Red	0
Missing Information	0

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
Starting Well Actions					
SW1	Support a reduction in obesity and excess weight in children	KCHFT School Health Team	Health & Wellbeing Partnership	Green	Through the CCG this has now been set up as a priority for partner agencies. A sub group has been set up to look at targets such as:- Fast Food Cooking Skills Food in Schools Breakfast Clubs SDC Health & Communities Team will be running a family cooking programme in September
SW2	Enable Sevenoaks District Mothers to maintain breastfeeding for the first 6 months of their child's life	KCHFT Health Visiting Service		Green	Health Visitors and Children Centre's have been helping running new mums courses and breastfeeding initiatives
SW3	Support a smokefree home for Sevenoaks residents and enable more Sevenoaks Mothers to quit smoking during pregnancy	KCHFT Smoking Cessation Service	Health Team	Green	In Quarter 1 there have been 6 Quit Dates set by Sevenoaks Residents, one of whom was a pregnant mother.
SW4	Prevent the illegal consumption of alcohol in under 18's and subsequent hospital admissions resulting from excessive alcohol consumption	Kenward Trust	Sevenoaks District Council Licensing Team CSU	Green	This work is ongoing. Licensing & CSU look at proxy sales with retailers and education. Kenward Trust have engaged with a number of young people on the dangers of drinking.

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					The Best Bar None (BBN) scheme for licensed premises is being rolled out in the district. Officers from Licensing, Community Safety and Police assess the premises against criteria in the BBN survey.
SW5	Support Sevenoaks children and young people to adopt healthy lifestyle choices.	KCHFT School Health Team	Local Children's Partnership	Green	This is a priority for the LCP and they meet quarterly. Schools have been putting in more healthy options for young people The LCPG has been working with schools as part of their PHSE programme to promote healthy lifestyles and increase healthy lunch options for young people at school.
Living Well Actions					
LW1	Continue to provide services that contribute towards the reduction of smoking in Sevenoaks District with particular targeting for at-risk groups.	KCHFT Smoking Cessation Service		Green	In Quarter 1 there have been 6 Quit Dates set by Sevenoaks Residents, one of whom was in routine/manual occupations. Service referrals can be made as self-referrals or through services such as a GP.
LW2	Improve the diagnosis rate of Diabetes for Sevenoaks residents	KCHFT NHS Health Check Service		Green	The NHS Health Check plays an essential role in improving the diagnosis rate of diabetes in the

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					<p>Sevenoaks area as it provides a mechanism to check people's cholesterol, identify those at risk and refer individuals for clinical follow-up.</p> <p>17 Sevenoaks GP Practices are supporting or fully delivering NHS Health Checks. 4220 invite letters have been sent out to those who are eligible to receive an NHS Health Check. 22% of these have taken up the NHS Health Check.</p> <p>The NHS promotes the 'Healthier You' NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, identifying people at risk of developing type 2 diabetes and referring them onto a nine-month, evidence-based lifestyle change programme.</p> <p>Residents can 'self-refer' to the Diabetes Education Referral Hub (for Type 1 and 2) by visiting the hub's website The Diabetes Education Referral</p>

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					<p>Hub can be found at www.diabetes-education-km.co.uk/. The hub provides structured education support.</p> <p>GPs will promote World Diabetes Day.</p>
LW3	Encourage more Sevenoaks residents to consume alcohol within lower risk levels and limit hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions	Change, Grow, Live	Sevenoaks District Council Health Team KCHFT One You Team	Green	<p>The One You service has advisers trained to deliver Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice and Alcohol Extended Brief Intervention.</p> <p>Qtr 1 - 18% of clients attending Initial Appointment in this quarter were identified as having Increasing Risk or higher score when completing AUDIT-C. (7 Increasing Risk, 1 Possible Dependency). 100% of these were given Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice Intervention.</p> <p>At our one-to-one lifestyle advisor intervention, one client (2%) was identified to have an AUDIT score of increasing risk and as a result was offered</p>

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice intervention.
LW4	Support Sevenoaks adults to adopt healthy lifestyle choices that facilitate weight loss and increases in physical activity	Sevenoaks District Council Health Team	Sencio Everyone Active	Green	<p>Qtr 1 - 32% of clients attending our one-to-one lifestyle advisor intervention are supported to set a goal to increase their physical activity.</p> <p>89% of clients attending our one-to-one lifestyle advisor intervention are offered brief intervention to change their diet.</p> <p>89% of clients on our 1-2-1 weight loss intervention, demonstrate weight loss at the close of the service.</p> <p>91% of clients on our group weight management intervention demonstrate weight loss at the end of the intervention.</p>
LW5	Adapt the physical design of Sevenoaks District so that healthy lifestyle choices become a routine part of residents lives	Sevenoaks District Council Planning Team	Sevenoaks District Council Health Team	Green	Through funding Our Parks started in Sevenoaks, Swanley, Westerham and Edenbridge which were free classes for people to participate. They are

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					<p>light outdoor aerobics, stretches and use of outdoor gym equipment</p> <p>Sevenoaks District Council have implemented a Movement Strategy to increase the active commutability of the district.</p>
LW6	<p>Provide adapted health improvement services targeted at specific populations (where needed) to ensure all residents can benefit from good physical health</p>	Involve Kent	<p>Sencio Everyone Active</p>	Green	<p>Both Sencio and Everyone Active have provided services to ensure everyone can benefit. Both operators received KCC 'Reconnect' funding in Spring to deliver a summer programme to engage more children and young people in exercise and healthy activities.</p> <p>Communities Team are working with Everyone Active through this girl can funding for all women swimming lessons</p> <p>Through the Universal Wellbeing Contract, Involve Kent current fund seven activities for 55+ adults in Quarter 1. These activities are delivered by;</p>

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					Sevenoaks & Tonbridge Age UK, Every Step Counts, North West Kent Countryside Partnership, Kent Wildlife Trust, North Kent Mind, Everyone Active, Croydon Petanque Club and Actively Involved.
LW7	Encourage Sevenoaks District businesses and organisations to consider the Health and Wellbeing of their organisation and employees	Kent & Medway Healthy Workplaces Programme	Sevenoaks District Council Health Team	Green	SDC has received the Bronze award and is now in the process of obtaining the Silver Award for delivering a health workplace programme. When going for Platinum this will include encouraging businesses to take this up. Referrals for this service was given to London Golf Club and Brands Hatch. Two new businesses/organisations have started to take part in the Kent & Medway Healthy Workplaces programme.
LW8	Promote Cancer Screening initiatives to encourage more residents to take up Cancer screening when eligible.	All Organisations		Amber	Kent and Medway NHS take the lead on promoting cancer screening.

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					The Council has worked with the NHS and will see Breast Screening return to Swanley in September this year.
Ageing Well Actions					
AW1	Improve the diagnosis rate of dementia in the district	Health & Wellbeing Partnership		Amber	<p>Primary Care Networks in the district have trained GPs who will carry out checks including, medical history, blood or urine tests and do a short mental test.</p> <p>GPs can make referrals to The Memory Clinic where specialists can assess and make a diagnosis. The Clinic is currently held at Darent House next to Sevenoaks Hospital.</p> <p>The Partnership will promote Dementia UK, who can be contacted on 0800 888 6678 for their leaflet on getting a diagnosis</p>
AW2	Provide specialist services targeted at improving the quality of life of residents affected by dementia	Sevenoaks Area Dementia Friendly Community & Swanley Area Dementia		Green	<p>Through Funding a new dementia café opened in Feb 22 and has an average of 22 attendees each week.</p> <p>Walk Push Run was held in May 22 with approx. 300 attendees</p>

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
		Friendly Community			<p>Age UK's Dementia day care runs at Hollybush Day Centre two days a week. Dementia trained staff offer a range of stimulating activities to aid memory as well as health and wellbeing support. Dementia Day Care is currently available on Mondays and Wednesdays.</p> <p>Age UK's Independent Living Support Service offers dementia support in the home for clients living with dementia at any stage.</p> <p>Age UK launched its Memory Loss and Dementia Pack in July 2022. Please visit https://www.ageuk.org.uk/bp-assets/globalassets/sevenoaks-tonbridge/original-blocks/our-services/local-information-packs/memory-loss-and-dementia-sevenoaks.pdf</p>
AW3	Work with older residents to prevent falls and limit the potential for hip fracture in older residents	Involve Kent, West Kent Falls Prevention	Age UK Sevenoaks & Tonbridge Sevenoaks District Health Team	Amber	The Falls Team have not yet run any programmes, but Pop Up Sue has done a number of sessions across the District to

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
		Service & Virgin Care Falls Team	Sencio Everyone Active		<p>help older residents with mobility problems.</p> <p>In future quarters, Involve Kent are hoping to launch the delivery of a postural stability course in Otford and Swanley.</p>
AW4	Ensure residents can receive support to stay safe, healthy and independent in their own homes for as long as possible	Sevenoaks District Council Private Sector Housing Team		Green	<p>Through the work of the Private Sector Housing Team, houses have been adapted to ensure that residents can stay safe and well in their own homes.</p> <p>Annual funding has been renewed as part of the Better Care Fund to provide Disabled Facilities Grants and Safe and Secure Grants, supporting home adaptations.</p> <p>A Hoarding Co-ordinator has been appointed to deliver personalised support to customers in their homes aiming to address and reduce the risks connected to their hoarding.</p>
AW5	Promote the importance of staying well at winter in older populations	Sevenoaks District Council Health Team	All Public Supporting Organisations	Amber	The team is working with the Primary Care Networks to promote the Autumn Covid-19

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					<p>booster as part of the Council's Community Connectors leaflet.</p> <p>Primary Care Networks will be working with the team to deliver drop-in sessions at local GP surgeries as part of the Silver Sunday programme.</p> <p>The Council's 'Here for You' information leaflet provides households with information on the rising cost of living and local community support.</p> <p>The Council is supporting eligible pensioners with a cost of living payment as part of the Kent Household Support Fund</p>
All Life Courses					
ALL1	Target services towards areas and residents of greatest need without preventing all residents from accessing support.	All Organisations delivering client centered services	Health & Communities Team	Green	Through Involve and SDC there have been a number of community initiatives delivered across the District that have now been taken on by local communities or Town Councils such as card club and art projects

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
ALL2	Enable more professionals to have conversations with residents on health and wellbeing	Kent County Council - MECC		Amber	<p>Make Every Contact Count is adopted by the district's key voluntary sector organisations and as a result referrals are made to other support services.</p> <p>Imago and Involve provide centralised Care Navigator support and are able to support referrals with health and wellbeing support, alongside referrals to other agencies, including the Council. Primary Care Networks also link to the Care Navigator support.</p>
ALL3	Ensure non-digital advertising is employed to promote services to those residents with limited digital access.	All Organisations delivering client centered services	Compaid	Green	<p>Inshape magazine has promoted a number of health initiatives including health walks and why weight</p> <p>The Council works with Imago to publish a Community Services Directory, which is shared with Primary Care Networks.</p> <p>Compaid commissioned to deliver digital training and provide devices and data to</p>

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
					support customers with limited digital access.
ALL4	Support the reduction of wider determinants of health that can have a negative impact on resident’s mental health.	Imago Community and Involve Kent		Green	<p>Sevenoaks Primary Care Network is working in partnership with the Council to deliver a programme of information drop-ins (for housing, benefits, community activities and groups, volunteering) with older people as part of Silver Sunday.</p> <p>More work with GPs will take place in Qtr 2</p> <p>The Council has worked in partnership with West Kent Housing Association and DLUHC to deliver 11 units of accommodation for rough sleepers and single homelessness with low level support needs, including mental health.</p> <p>Two job fairs were hosted in partnership with WKHA over the summer in Swanley and Sevenoaks.</p>

Ref	2022-23 Priority Action	Lead Agency	Other Partners	Status	Comments
ALL6	Encourage more client-facing organisations to engage in Mental Health Awareness and Mental Health First Aid training	West Kent Mind & North Kent Mind		Amber	Some training has taken place especially around host and guest for the Ukraine Scheme. West Kent Mind will be delivering Mental Health First Aid Training in October

BUDGET 2023/24: SERVICE DASHBOARDS AND SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (SCIAs)

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 22 November 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance and Trading

Status: For Comment

Also considered by:

- Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee - 24 November 2022
- People and Places Advisory Committee - 29 November 2022
- Development and Conservation Advisory Committee - 1 December 2022
- Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee - 6 December 2022
- Finance and Investment Advisory Committee - 10 January 2023

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

This report sets out updates to the 2023/24 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presents growth and savings/additional income proposals that have been identified which need to be considered (if applicable to this Committee), and requests further suggestions from the Advisory Committees, before finalising the budget for 2023/24.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it is proposed that the Council continues to set a revenue budget that assumes no direct funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This will result in the Council continuing to aim to be financially self-sufficient.

To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period will be challenging largely due to the uncertainties and ongoing financial impacts of national and international events.

No changes have been made to future assumptions at the stage which will be reviewed during the budget process, as usual. However, due to the April 2022 pay award expected to be significantly higher than previous years and an annual savings target of £100,000 already included, an annual budget gap of £735,000 is currently reported.

The Advisory Committees will comment on the growth and savings/additional income proposals included in the reports, and their recommendations will be considered by Cabinet as part of the process to remove this gap. By addressing these issues, this Council will once again be in a strong financial position that other councils would aspire to.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Matthew Dickins

Contact Officer(s): Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

Alan Mitchell, Ext. 7483

Recommendation to each Advisory Committee:

- (a) Advise Cabinet with views on the growth and savings/additional income proposals identified in Appendix E applicable to this Advisory Committee.
- (b) Advise Cabinet with further suggestions for growth and savings/additional income applicable to this Advisory Committee.

Reason for recommendation: It is important that the views of the Advisory Committees are taken into account in the budget process to ensure that the Council's resources are used in the most suitable manner.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council's financial strategy continues to aim for long-term financial health and continues to work towards improving financial sustainability. It has been successful through the use of a number of actions including:
 - implementing efficiency initiatives.
 - significantly reducing the back-office function.
 - improved value for money.
 - maximising external income.
 - the movement of resources away from low priority services.
 - an emphasis on statutory rather than non-statutory services.
- 2 Over this period, the Council has focused on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with residents and stakeholders.
- 3 Using the data sources available to the Council, this report sets out a budget over the 10-year period but recognises that it is likely that more accurate data will become available and current assumptions may need to be updated.

- 4 In setting its budget for 2011/12 onwards, the Council recognised the need to address both the immediate reduction in Government funding as well as the longer-term need to reduce its reliance on reserves. The outcome was a 10-year budget, together with a four-year savings plan, which ensured the Council's finances were placed on a stable footing but that also allowed for flexibility between budget years.
- 5 With the Revenue Support Grant provided by Government having ceased from 2017/18 it is important that the council remains financially self-sufficient by having a financial strategy that is focused on local solutions. These solutions include:
 - continuing to deliver financial savings and service efficiencies.
 - growing the council tax base.
 - generating more income.
- 6 The intention of this report is to provide Members of each Advisory Committee an opportunity to give their views on potential growth and savings/additional income items that could be included in the updated 10-year budget that will be presented to Council on 21 February 2023.
- 7 The 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2022/23 and Beyond' report has been presented to Cabinet to start the budget setting process for 2023/24.

Financial Strategy

- 8 In order to maintain a viable Council that continues to deliver on its main priorities and the services it provides to its residents, the Council continues to adopt a Financial Strategy that embraces the following principles:
 - Remain financially self-sufficient.
 - Be clear about the Council's future financial prospects, with a ten-year budget as an integral part.
 - Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting.
 - Make effective use of reserves and capital receipts.
 - Manage our money carefully, monitor monthly and constantly strive for better value from our spending.
- 9 A summary of the Financial Strategy can be found at **Appendix H**.

Review of the 10-year Budget Process

- 10 An audit of the 10-year budget process was completed by Mazars (working for Internal Audit) in 2021 and their findings were that the Council has adequate, effective and reliable controls in place over budget setting and long-term financial planning.

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Financial Self-Sufficiency

- 11 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 set out an ambition for the Council to become financially self-sufficient which was achieved in 2016/17. The current Council Plan aims to continue with this approach. This means that the Council no longer requires direct funding from Government, through Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus, to deliver its services.
- 12 This approach was adopted in response to the financial challenges the Country was faced with in bringing its public spending down to ensure it was able to live within its means. In practice this has seen Government funding to local authorities dramatically reduced since 2010/11 with Sevenoaks District Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18.
- 13 The decision to become financially self-sufficient is intended to give the Council greater control over its services, reducing the potential for decision making to be influenced by the level of funding provided by government to local authorities.
- 14 The Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge in December 2021 commented that 'Sevenoaks District Council takes a long-term view of financial planning with a focus on self-sufficiency. The council's 10-year budget is innovative, an example for the sector and supports long-term decision making. This extended financial framework provides an excellent platform which has supported effective budget management and planned, long-term, decision making.'
- 15 With the Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18 and New Homes Bonus reducing from 2018/19, this approach remains appropriate. The attached 10-year budget assumes no Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. Any funding received from these sources will be put into the Financial Plan Reserve which can be used to support the 10-year budget.
- 16 Cabinet are keen to remain financially self-sufficient which has served the Council well and ensured it is one of the most financially stable local authorities in the country. In the 2020/21 budget, a new target was set to replace reliance on Business Rates income over the coming years. However, due to the impact of Covid-19, inflationary increases and the greater uncertainty as Government reviews have been deferred, this remains a future aim. This ambition will allow this Council to move ahead in the knowledge that this council has the financial resources to provide the services that the district's residents need into the future.

Service Dashboards

- 17 The intention of service dashboards is to provide Members with improved information during the budget setting process to provide context and inform any growth and savings/additional income ideas that Members may put forward.

- 18 The Service Dashboards cover a summary of the services provided, objectives, achievements and opportunities, challenges and risks and performance.
- 19 **Appendix A** contains the Service Dashboard for this Advisory Committee, **Appendix Ai** contains the Performance Indicators and **Appendix B** contains the budget for those services.

Savings Plan

- 20 **Appendix C** to this report sets out a summary of the savings/additional income and growth items approved by Council since the 10-year budget strategy was first used in 2011/12, which have allowed the Council to deliver a 10-year balanced budget.
- 21 The savings plan requires a total of over £8.6 million to be saved between 2011/12 and 2022/23 which is an average saving of £721,000 per annum.

Current 10-year Budget Position

- 22 The 10-year budget set out in **Appendix D** has been updated from the version agreed by Council on 22 February 2022 by rolling it forward one year.
- 23 No changes have been made to future assumptions at the stage. However, due to the April 2022 pay award expected to be higher than previous years and an annual savings target of £100,000 already included, an annual budget gap of £735,000 is currently included.
- 24 The National Employers for local government services have made a final offer for 2022/23 of £1,925 per person. This equates to an average increase of 5.8% in the Council's staff costs against a figure of 2% in the ten year budget. In cash terms, this is estimated to be £600,000 above the budgeted assumption. A response from the unions is awaited. It should be recognised that the current cost of living crisis has had a severe effect on colleagues on lower salary grades.
- 25 Cabinet on 20 September 2022 agreed that in the interests of prudent financial management this be considered as two costs: the mid-year 2022/23 expense and the separate ongoing commitment in future years.
- 26 First, offsetting the increase in staff costs in 2022/23 with any net surplus that may arise from our membership of the Kent and Medway Business Rates Pool - based on previous years, this is estimated to be £250,000. Second, drawing the balance from the Budget Stabilisation Reserve. Both steps are consistent with the principles which govern the use of the funds since, in the case of the former, the receipts are ordinarily treated as a windfall and therefore committed to reserves to meet future expenditure and, with the latter, the Budget Stabilisation Reserve's purpose is to assist in smoothing out peaks and troughs over the course of the ten year budget period. Furthermore, to ensure there is no long term impact on the Budget

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Stabilisation Reserve, a corresponding savings or income be identified as part of the 2023/24 Budget which can replenish the Reserve over the course of the ten year budget - in other words, committing to reserves an anticipated £35,000 per year.

- 27 For the future expenditure (i.e. 2023/24 onwards), this will be addressed through the budget setting process, adopting the same approach which has seen the authority successfully meet other financial challenges.
- 28 The following table shows the current budget gap for 2023/24:

2023/24 Budget Gap	£000
Net savings assumption	100
Pay award April 2022 estimate	600
Reimburse Budget Stabilisation Reserve for 2022/23 impact of April 2022 pay award estimate	35
Total	735

Proposed Growth and Savings/Additional Income Items

- 29 Growth items are items that are in addition to non-service issues and risks, such as grant settlements, impacts of economic change and other pressures highlighted in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2023/24 and Beyond' report considered by Cabinet on 10 November 2022.
- 30 A number of growth and savings/additional income items will be proposed at the Advisory Committees with the aim of helping to achieve the savings/additional income required to bridge the budget gap.
- 31 The proposed growth and savings/additional income items relating to this Advisory Committee are listed in **Appendix E** (if applicable).
- 32 Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) contain further details for all proposed growth and savings/additional income items. SCIAs applicable to this Advisory Committee can be found in **Appendix F** (if applicable).
- 33 As previously reported, the options are likely to cover a number of areas including:
- Service efficiencies
 - Additional income
 - Re-prioritisation of reserves including use of the Budget Stabilisation Reserve.

- 34 It should be recognised that it is not usual to use the Budget Stabilisation Reserve to fix a problem of this size but noting the potential level of variations and complexities that are likely to arise during the budget process, more time may be required to find a longer term solution.
- 35 When looking at prospects for year 11 onwards, there is still likely to be a need to take further actions as these years come into the rolling 10-year period.

Role of the Advisory Committees

- 36 A training session on the budget process was provided to Members in 2019. If Members require any further training or require any additional details on the content of this report and appendices, please contact Adrian Rowbotham or Alan Mitchell prior to the meeting.
- 37 Views of the Advisory Committees on the growth and savings/additional income items proposed together with any additional suggestions will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 January 2023.

Process and Timetable

- 38 This report is the second stage of the budget process as shown in the Budget Setting Timetable (**Appendix G**).
- 39 A Budget Update report will be presented to Cabinet in on 12 January 2023 to provide details of progress made before the Budget Setting report is presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2023.

Key Implications

Financial

All financial implications are covered elsewhere in this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications.

For the effective management of our resources and in order to achieve a sustainable budget it is essential that all service cost changes and risks are identified and considered.

Challenges and risks are included in the Service Dashboards and each Service Change Impact Assessment (SCIA) includes the likely impacts including a risk analysis.

A separate Risks and Assumptions report will be presented to the Finance and Investment Advisory Committee and Cabinet.

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Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

Individual equality impact assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) to ensure the decision-making process is fair and transparent.

Net Zero Implications

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero with regards to carbon emissions by 2030.

Individual net zero implication assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs).

Conclusions

The Financial Strategy and 10-year budget process have ensured that the Council follows a logical and well considered process and approach in dealing with the many difficult challenges that it has faced. They have also helped to ensure that the Council is well placed in dealing with more immediate and longer-term challenges.

By becoming financially self-sufficient at an early stage, this Council has become much more in control of its own destiny.

The attached 10-year budget shows that this Council is aiming to continue to be financially stable going into the future with a level of assurance that any council would aspire to. However, with a range of issues nationally and internationally impacting the council's finances to an unknown extent at this point in time, this is the most challenging budget process this Council has faced for many years.

The Council aims to continue to provide value for money services to a high standard ensuring that the decisions made lead to an achievable 10-year budget. Members will need to consider the impact on service quality, staff and well-being.

Members' consideration and scrutiny of the relevant services is an essential and key element in the budget process. If the net total of growth and savings/additional income proposals identified by the Advisory Committees and approved by Cabinet does not reach the £735,000 target currently identified,

additional savings will be required that may result in service changes, to ensure a balanced budget position.

Appendices

Appendix A - Service Dashboards relating to this Advisory Committee

Appendix Ai - Performance Indicators

Appendix B - 2021/22 Budget by Service relating to this Advisory Committee

Appendix C - Summary of the Council's agreed savings plan and growth items

Appendix D - 10-year budget

Appendix E - New growth and savings/additional income items proposed relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix F - Service Change Impact Assessment forms (SCIAs) for the new growth and savings/additional income items relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix G - Budget Setting Timetable

Appendix H - Financial Strategy

Background Papers

[Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2023/24 and Beyond - Cabinet 10 November 2022](#)

Adrian Rowbotham

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance & Trading

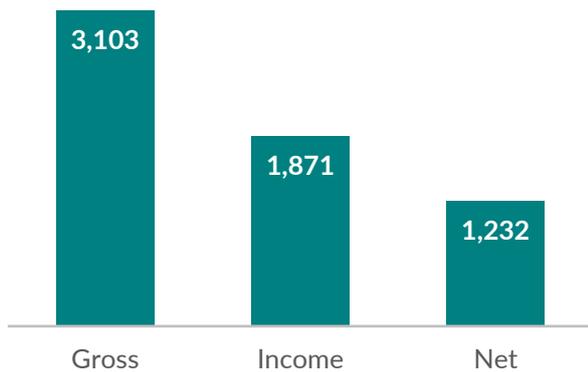
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Service Dashboard Portfolio for Housing & Health

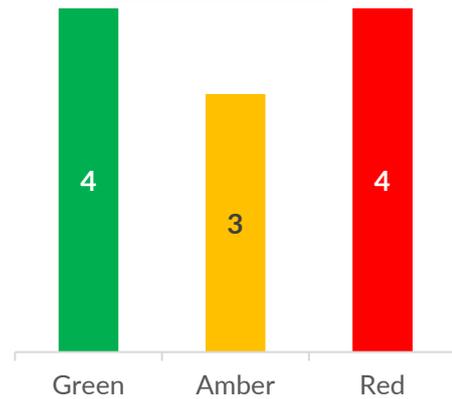
The services we provide

Housing strategy & policy, housing standards, housing needs, homelessness, empty homes, gypsy and traveller, disabled facilities grants, health, energy efficiency, fuel poverty, HERO, wellbeing

Revenue Budget (£000)



Performance



Service contribution

Statutory service



Income generating



Working in partnership



Council Plan

Wellbeing ✓

Environment ✓

Economy ✓

Housing ✓

Community Safety ✓

Health ✓

Achievements & Opportunities

- New Housing Strategy adopted.
- Delivery of 15 affordable rent homes in Swanley by Quercus Housing.
- Delivery of 17 homes for supported housing/affordable rent in partnership with West Kent Housing and HFT.
- Reduced number of households in temporary accommodation by 20%.
- Completed 200 property inspections in support of Homes for Ukraine.
- Secured £700k funding to deliver energy efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heating solutions to low-income households living off the gas grid.
- Secured £677,230 funding from the Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund.

Challenges & Risks

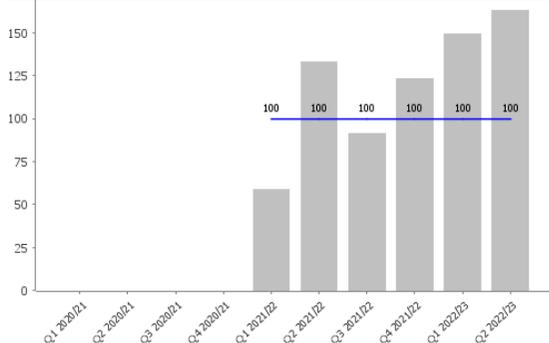
- Homelessness arising from cost of living pressures on households.
- Provision of new social housing to meet the District's needs.
- Land and property values / viability.
- Rising private sector rents and static Local Housing Allowance rates.
- Increased homelessness and pressures on emergency accommodation costs arising from the Homes for Ukraine scheme host placements ending.

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Performance Report - Housing & Health Portfolio

Key:

Status	Colour	Details
	Green	At or above target
	Amber	Less than 10% below target
	Red	10% or more below target

Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status
LPI_CD H 04	Number of referrals to the One You Kent Service (SDC area)	163	100			406	400	

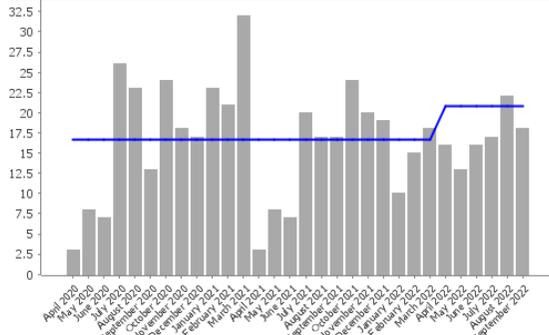
Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status
LPI_CD H 05	Number of individuals completing the One You initial appointment	94	75			222	300	
LPI_CD H 06	Percentage of participants of tier 2 weight management that have lost weight at the end of their active intervention	94%	75%			77%	80%	
LPI_CD H 07	Percentage of clients that have completed an end of intervention satisfaction service and recorded as at least "satisfied" with the 1:1 lifestyle support and weight loss services they may have received.	92%	90%			77%	80%	

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Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status
LPI_HS A 02	Number of households where a positive outcome has been achieved (homeless prevented or secures alternative accommodation)	34	15			242	130	
LPI_HS A 03	Number of households in all types of emergency & temporary accommodation	101	130			134	85	
LPI_HS A 04	Number of households in B & B	2	5			6	5	

Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status
LPI_PSH 02	Number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed	7	5			98	60	
LPI_CD H 01	Percentage of Health Action Plan on target	74%	80%			77%	80%	
LPI_HS P 01	Number of customers housed in PSL property	7	10			34	30	

Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status
LPI_HS R 01	Total number housed through Sevenoaks District Housing Register nomination	18	21			178	200	

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Housing and Health Advisory Committee					
Chief Officer	Budget Book Description		2022/23 Exp Budget	2022/23 Inc Budget	2022/23 Approved Net Budget
Revenue			£000	£000	£000
People & Places	GYPSY	Gypsy Sites	57	(63)	(6)
People & Places	HEALTHIMP	Health Improvements	34	0	34
People & Places	HOMELESS	Homeless	823	(175)	648
People & Places	HOUSEREG	Housing Register	65	(19)	46
People & Places	HOUSIHDFG	Disabled Facilities Grant Administration	0	(50)	(50)
People & Places	HOUSING	Housing	162	0	162
People & Places	HOUSINIT	Housing Initiatives	63	0	63
People & Places	HOUSTRAILBLA	Housing Energy Retraining Options (HERO)	64	0	64
People & Places	PRIVSEC	Private Sector Housing	270	(5)	265
People & Places	STAFFHOUSE	Admin Expenses - People & Places Housing	1,011	(1,005)	6
People & Places	XCHOOSE	One You KPH	119	(119)	0
People & Places	XHOMEFUND	Homelessness Funding	435	(435)	0
			3,103	(1,871)	1,232

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Summary of the Council's Agreed Savings/Additional Income and Growth Items

Appendix C

Year	SCIA No.	Description	2011/12 - 2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	Later Years £000	Total £000
		Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee				
2021/22	-	Car Parking: assumed 25% reduction in 21/22 income improving by 5% per year	823	(206)	(617)	
2022/23	6	Direct Services: Swanley Sunday Market six month trial (reversal of temporary savings item)		94		
		Development and Conservation Advisory Committee				
2022/23	9	Development Management: additional application fee income (reversal of temporary savings item)			25	
		Finance and Investment Advisory Committee				
2020/21	10	Insurance contract renewal (reversal of temporary savings item)		87		
2022/23	7	Internal Audit: audit software upgrade (reversal of temporary growth item)		(16)		
2022/23	-	Health and Social Care Levy (reversal of temporary growth item)		(140)		
		Housing and Health Advisory Committee				
2022/23	1	Housing: Temporary accommodation (reversal of temporary growth item)			(300)	
		Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee				
2020/21	1	Apprenticeship Levy (reversal of temporary growth item)		(50)		
		People and Places Advisory Committee				
2022/23	-	New White Oak Leisure Centre	235	(19)	(216)	
		Minor movements between years		0	0	
		Total Savings/additional income	(8,646)	181	25	(8,440)
		Total Growth	4,016	(431)	(1,133)	2,452
		Net Savings	(4,630)	(250)	(1,108)	(5,988)

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Ten Year Budget - Revenue

Appendix D

	Budget 2022/23	Plan 2023/24	Plan 2024/25	Plan 2025/26	Plan 2026/27	Plan 2027/28	Plan 2028/29	Plan 2029/30	Plan 2030/31	Plan 2031/32	Plan 2032/33
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure											
Net Service Expenditure c/f	16,783	17,297	17,565	17,304	17,477	17,680	18,270	18,823	19,368	19,997	20,450
Inflation	510	518	524	513	519	527	537	545	554	564	574
Superannuation Fund deficit	0	100	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net growth/(savings) (approved in previous yrs)	4	(250)	(686)	(240)	(266)	63	16	0	75	(111)	90
New growth	0	0	0	0	0	100	100	100	100	100	100
New savings/Income	0	(100)									
Net Service Expenditure b/f	17,297	17,565	17,304	17,477	17,680	18,270	18,823	19,368	19,997	20,450	21,114
Financing Sources											
Govt Support: Revenue Support Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Lower Tier Services Grant	(103)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Services Grant	(159)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	(11,841)	(12,309)	(12,729)	(13,161)	(13,604)	(14,023)	(14,453)	(14,894)	(15,347)	(15,799)	(16,249)
Business Rates Retention	(2,226)	(2,271)	(2,316)	(2,362)	(2,409)	(2,457)	(2,506)	(2,556)	(2,607)	(2,659)	(2,712)
Collection Fund Deficit/(Surplus)	(27)	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Receipts	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)	(188)
Property Investment Strategy Income	(1,518)	(1,568)	(1,568)	(1,568)	(1,665)	(1,665)	(1,665)	(1,706)	(1,706)	(1,706)	(1,706)
Contributions to/(from) Reserves	(189)	(170)	(607)	176	176	176	176	176	176	176	148
Total Financing	(16,251)	(16,502)	(17,408)	(17,103)	(17,690)	(18,157)	(18,636)	(19,168)	(19,672)	(20,176)	(20,707)
Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit	1,046	1,063	(104)	374	(10)	113	187	200	325	274	407
Contribution to/(from) Stabilisation Reserve	(1,046)	(1,063)	104	(374)	10	(113)	(187)	(200)	(325)	(274)	(407)
Unfunded Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Assumptions

Revenue Support Grant:	nil all years
Business Rates Retention:	Business Rates Retention safety-net plus 2% per year
Council Tax:	2% in all years
Council Tax Base:	Increase of 730 Band D equivalent properties p.a. from 23/24, 580 p.a. from 27/28, 530 p.a. from 31/32, 480p.a. from 32/33
Interest Receipts:	£188,000 in all years
Property Investment Strategy:	£1.568m from 23/24. £1.655m from 26/27. £1.706m from 29/30
Pav award:	2% in all years
Other costs:	2.25% in all years
Income:	2.5% in all years except for off-street car parks which are an average of 3.5% per annum from 19/20 - 23/24.

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New Growth and Savings/Additional Income Proposals: Housing and Health Advisory Committee

SCIA Year	No.	Description	Year	Ongoing	2023/24 Impact £000	10-year Budget Impact £000
Growth						
2023/24	1	Homelessness	2023/24	N	36	36
Sub Total					36	36
Savings/Additional Income						
None						
Sub Total					0	0
Net (Savings)/Growth Total					36	36

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SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SCIA01 (23/24)

Chief Officer: Sarah Robson
 Service: Housing
 Activity: Emergency Accommodation
 No. of Staff: 5.8 FTE

Activity Budget Change	Cost Centre & Account Code of Budget	2023/24 Growth / (Saving) £000	Later Years Comments (ongoing, one-off, etc.)
Homeless households placed in temporary accommodation will be charged a nominal rate to cover occupation/utilities based on the property type they are offered.	94300/ HSHOMFM /9999	36	One-off

A. Reasons for and explanation of proposed change in service

In 2021, the Housing team proposed to introduce a small charge to households in emergency accommodation to contribute towards their accommodation/utility costs (gas, water, electric and TV licences) etc.

Whilst a Charging Policy (adopted by Cabinet) and Charging Schedule is in place, the Council is currently unable to offer a direct debit facility for the charges to be implemented. Therefore, we have been unable to realise income in year and hence added as growth item. Until this is in place, we are not able to realise the proposed income.

B. Key Stakeholders Affected:

None

**C. Likely impacts and implications of the change in service
(include Risk Analysis)**

None

D. Risk to Service Objectives (High / Medium / Low)

Low

E. 2022/23 Budget (£'000)

Operational Cost	846
Income	(175)
Net Cost	671

F. Performance Indicators

N/A

Actual	N/A
Target	N/A

G. Equality Impacts

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.

H. Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

2023/24 Budget Setting Timetable

Stage 1: Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2023/24 and Beyond

3 November - Finance & Investment AC

10 November - Cabinet

Stage 2: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)

22 November - Housing and Health AC

24 November - Improvement & Innovation AC

29 November - People & Places AC

1 December - Development & Conservation AC

6 December - Cleaner & Greener AC

10 January - Finance & Investment AC

Stage 3: Budget Update (incl. Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs), feedback from Advisory Committees)

12 January - Cabinet

Stage 4: Budget and Council Tax Setting Meeting (Recommendations to Council)

9 February - Cabinet

Stage 5: Budget and Council Tax Setting Meeting (incl. Council Tax setting)

21 February - Council

Note: The Scrutiny Committee may 'call in' items concerning the budget setting process.

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Financial Strategy



INTRODUCTION

In the years preceding this Strategy Sevenoaks District Council has proven itself to be highly successful in some of the most austere and challenging times faced by local government. This was only possible because of our award winning financial strategy and the achievement of a self-sufficient balanced budget within our unique 10-year budget framework.

With the cost of living crisis and events around the world, it will be important to have clear plans in place that may require difficult but necessary savings proposals.

Our Financial Strategy enables the Council to deliver its services effectively, in accordance with the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy. At the same time, it ensures that our spending is prioritised to deliver the promises our Members set out in the **Council Plan themes**:

- Environment
- Economy
- Housing
- Community Safety
- Health

OUR FINANCES

Our Vision Long-term financial health to deliver exceptional services and achieve the promises set out in the Council Plan.

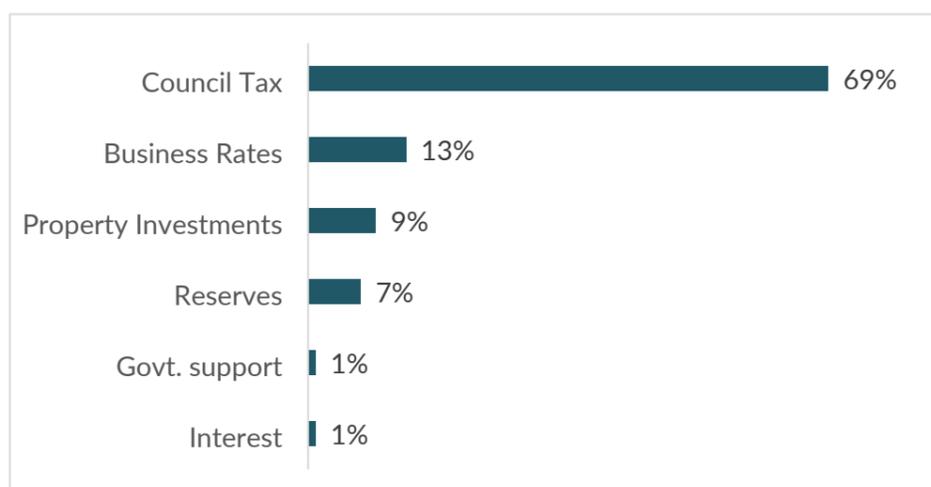
What's important to us:

- Our budget supports the Council's vision and priorities
- Taxpayers and customers receive quality services and value for money
- Innovation, efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- Maximising income from grants and other funding opportunities
- Taking a commercial approach where it will benefit our budgets and our residents and local businesses
- Good quality, risk managed investments to generate more income for local priorities

To be successful, we must:

- Remain financially self-sufficient
- Be clear about the Council's future financial prospects, with a ten-year budget as an integral part
- Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting
- Make effective use of reserves and capital receipts
- Manage our money carefully, monitor monthly and constantly strive for better value from our spending

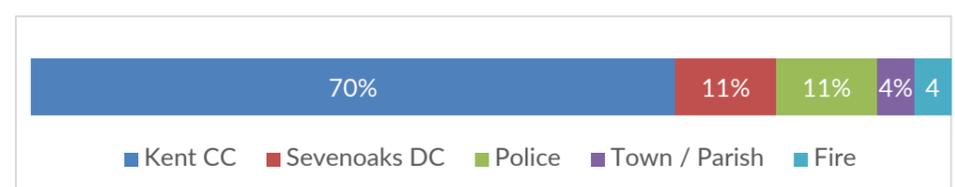
WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



COUNCIL TAX

Sevenoaks District Council collects the Council Tax charge for itself but also for Kent County Council, Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and all the local town and parish councils. Each authority sets its own charge that contributes to the total.

Sevenoaks District Council's part of the charge at Band D is £229.86, 11% of the total. Council Tax contributes about £11.8million to District Council services.



WHERE OUR MONEY IS SPENT

In 2022/23 the Council will spend about £17.3million on services for local people

	Cleaner & Greener £5.3m
	Development & Conservation £0.9m
	Housing & Health £1.2m
	People & Places £0.9m

	Finance & Investment £3.2m
	Improvement & Innovation £6.0m
	Other £-0.2m

OUR PRIORITIES | By keeping a focus on our priorities we will deliver our vision

Financial self-sufficiency



No longer relying on direct government funding gives greater certainty to our financial planning. It allows for long-term plans to be developed over our 10-year budget period.

- We will produce high quality financial reports and monitor our budgets every month
- We will address growth items and service pressures annually through the budget planning process
- We will manage inflationary pressures and prudent assumptions about future pressures and keep them under regular review

Savings & reserves



Creating a culture where there is a continuous drive for better value in our spend helps to create savings to balance our budgets. Alongside flexible and effective use of reserves, it allows for sustainable solutions to financial pressures

- We will seek to deliver a minimum of £100,000 in savings annually
- We will regularly review the use of reserves and maintain a minimum balance of 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget.
- We will make flexible use of the Budget Stabilisation Reserve to increase resilience in the budget setting process

Income & investments



Making best use of the Council's reserves and carefully managed borrowing. Seeking new opportunities for funding from grants and investments is increasingly essential to the Council's financial sustainability.

- We will bid for external funding
- We will adopt a commercial approach where it will be of benefit to our budgets and support the delivery of Council priorities
- We will make investments to bring in income to support the delivery of Council services

Delivering our Financial Strategy

Our Financial Strategy is supported by a number of related strategies and an action plan to help us achieve our vision and to deliver the ambitions set out by Members in the Council Plan.

How we work as a team of officers is critical to the success of the organisation and to help us achieve our aims, the Financial Strategy seeks to unite us all behind the same priorities and approach.

The outcomes we hope to achieve and the measures that will help us to determine whether we have been successful are set out below.



Outcomes and success measures

Financial self-sufficiency					
	Financial plans ensure there are no unplanned reductions to Council services		Overall proportion of Council budgets funded by income from council tax does not increase		A balanced 10-year budget is delivered annually
Savings & Reserves					
	Annual savings exceed the £100,000 target whilst continuing to protect services		The General Fund reserves retains at least 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget		Specific savings agreed as part of the annual budget process are achieved as planned.
Income & Investments					
	Successful bids for external funding generate new income and opportunities for the Council		Income from paid for services is in accordance with budget costs, is comparable to neighbouring authorities and is considered to provide value for money		Treasury Management, Property and commercial investments exceed expected yield

SUMMARY OF THE EMERGING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

Housing and Health Advisory Committee – 22 November 2022

Report of: Chief Officer People and Places

Status: For Decision

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 8 December 2022

Key Decision: yes

Executive Summary: This report presents the Homelessness Review and a draft Sevenoaks District Council's emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2028 to go out for consultation

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Kevin Maskell

Contact Officer(s): Alison Simmons, Head of Housing, Extension 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee:

To consider the outcome of the Homeless Review, the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and the proposed timetable for consultation and implementation and endorse recommendation (b) to Cabinet.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) To consider the outcome of the Homeless Review, the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and the proposed timetable for consultation and implementation
- (b) To approve the first draft of the emerging Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for public consultation, subject to any required amendment

Reason for recommendation: The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002, to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. The Strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years.

Agenda Item 9

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Housing Strategy 2022-2027 contains 4 key themes of focus for the District Council's housing service over the next 5 years. These include Theme 3: Reducing homelessness and improving routes into permanent accommodation.

Recognising that homelessness is a growing problem in the Sevenoaks District, this section sets out a 'whole journey' approach to addressing the issue. It starts with the housing market challenges that lie behind the rising homeless figures and moves quickly into how the Council will strengthen its approach to 'prevention.' There are sections on 'relief' of homelessness and rough sleeping.

There is a very important section on improving routes into permanent accommodation that includes several actions to create better pathways for people to access appropriate accommodation in a timely way, so that no one spends longer than a defined period in Temporary Accommodation. There is an appeal to partners to work constructively with the Council to improve outcomes for people who do find themselves without a home.

- 2 The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002, to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. The Strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years.

The Strategy must set out the Council's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

Homelessness Review and draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy

- 3 The Homelessness Service Review (Appendix A attached) provides information on the needs of people who have approached the Council's housing service for help since the last Homelessness Strategy was adopted. It considers what we have achieved, what has changed and how this relates to the changing environment and Government Policy. This will inform our Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy from 2023.
- 4 Following the completion of the review a draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy has been produced for consultation (Appendix B attached).

The objectives of the Strategy will cover:

PREVENTION	Quality housing needs and standards - services dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed assessment.
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	<p>Preventative casework - working alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless.</p> <p>Targeted preventions for the most vulnerable groups through the provision of agreed pathways into support.</p> <p>Strategic activities that seek to identify issues that drive homelessness across the District and apply remedies to reduce it.</p>
INTERVENTION	<p>Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting the County wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs.</p> <p>Partnership working - maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups.</p> <p>Temporary housing - provide a good quality, safe, secure, value for money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements.</p>
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS	<p>Re-housing establish a range of sustainable housing and move-on options for rough sleepers, vulnerable and homeless households.</p> <p>Support - deliver effective support services to help households maintain accommodation once housed.</p>

Next Steps

- 5 The draft timetable for reporting, public consultation and final approval for the implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is as follows:

Event	Date	Purpose
Housing and Health Advisory Committee	22 November 2022	Comments to Cabinet prior to public consultation on the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan
Cabinet	8 December 2022	Request for approval of the draft Homelessness

Agenda Item 9

		and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan for public consultation
PUBLIC CONSULTATION PERIOD – 9 December 2022 to the 5 January 2023		
Housing and Health Advisory Committee	7 February 2023	Feedback from consultation and presentation of final draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan for implementation
Cabinet	9 February 2023	Recommendation for approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan for implementation
Full Council	21 February 2023	Approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan for implementation

Other options Considered and/or rejected

There are no other options that could be considered as the Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002, to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

Key Implications

Resource (non financial)

There are no additional resource requirements arising from the approval of the Strategy.

Financial

All immediate activity summarised in the Strategy is accounted for within existing budgets. Any additional activity identified as part of the Strategy action plan will be considered for feasibility within the normal yearly budgeting activity.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

The Council has a range of statutory duties relating to housing, homelessness, and reviewing housing conditions. This Strategy will assist the Council in meeting those duties.

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.

However, a full equality impact assessment will accompany the final Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan to consider any implications.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the District or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

The Council has a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002, to have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. This Strategy will assist the Council in meeting those duties.

Appendices

Appendix A - Homelessness Review

Appendix B - Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – People and Places

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Sevenoaks District Council
Homelessness Review
August 2022

Introduction

This Homelessness Service Review provides information on the needs of people who have approached the Council's housing service for help since the last Homelessness Strategy was adopted. It considers what we have achieved, what has changed and how this relates to the changing environment and Government Policy. It will inform our Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy from 2023.

Achievements 2016-2022

During the life of the current Strategy the Council have:

- Successfully prevented 1,988 households becoming homeless since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2017.
- Adopted and embedded working practices to comply with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- Embedded dedicated homelessness prevention support through our HERO team.
- 2 additional officers were appointed to the Council's HERO team to support at risk tenants to remain in their home.
- Between 2016-2017 and 2021-2022, we awarded a total of £6.53 million (before Kent County Council's top slice) in grants to adapt homes to make them more suitable for people with physical disabilities and enable them to remain at home.
- Updated the Housing Allocation Policy in 2022 to ensure it best meets the housing needs within the District and complies with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- Since 2018, Quercus Housing has delivered a total of 24 affordable housing units in the District.
- Between 2016-2017 and 2021-2022, a total of 434 affordable housing units have been completed in the District in partnership with Registered Providers, of which 219 were genuinely affordable social housing (affordable and social rented tenures) and 192 shared ownership tenure.
- Relaunched our landlord incentive scheme, appointing Help2Rent to extend our offer to landlords.
- Launched a Financial Hardship Working Group and use this to share information with partners and community groups about the help and support available for residents experiencing financial difficulty.
- Worked with Compaid to commission a digital inclusion and literacy support package, including devices, mobile data and training to support households placed in temporary accommodation access support and information.

Agenda Item 9

- Provided grant funding to support voluntary sector agencies working within the District to deliver advice and support services for people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Officers in the Housing Service have developed specialisms in work areas such as domestic abuse, single homelessness, ex-offenders and vulnerable adults to develop and improve links with partners and ensure that key priorities in the Strategy Action Plan were addressed.
- Appointed an Armed Forces Officer Champion as part of our HERO offer.
- Established working relationships with other partners such as the Probation service through the Accommodation for Ex-offenders (AFEO) programme and established best practice in coworking and service referral systems.
- To address the needs of rough sleepers, in 2021-2022 secured almost £300,000 under the Rough Sleeper Initiative 4 and a further £677,230 under Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 for 2022-2023. This funding will provide coordination, outreach and complex needs support to rough sleepers and those in risk of rough sleeping.
- Appointed a Housing Pathway Coordinator to deliver the Rough Sleeper Initiative.
- To address the needs of customers experiencing domestic abuse, appointed a dedicated Domestic Abuse Coordinator to support customers and signpost to partner agencies.
- Published and updated the Housing Advice and Housing Options Guide. This guide includes details of the help available within the District for people who are homeless or rough sleeping, or at risk of becoming homeless.
- Worked in partnership with West Kent Housing Association to enable a total of 4 Housing First units of accommodation at Orchards Close.
- Worked in partnership with West Kent Housing Association and Kent County Council to submit a successful Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme funding bid to deliver 7 units of supported accommodation for rough sleepers, with Kent County Council providing support through their Kent Homeless Connect Service. The Council contributed £269,000 Section 106 monies to help bring forward the redevelopment of the scheme.
- Vine Court Road, supported accommodation completed in September 2022 and 2 residents have moved in. Support for residents is being provided by Look Ahead.
- The increase in our Accommodation Officer capacity has enabled the provision of additional support to households placed in temporary accommodation, assisting them to identify items needed to set up home in their temporary or move on accommodation, and resolving issues whilst living in temporary accommodation.
- Provided in collaboration with West Kent Housing Association and Moat Housing 46 self-contained temporary accommodation housing units, which are cost neutral to the Council and enables households to stay within the District rather than be housed out of area.
- The Council worked with HFT (a charity providing housing and support for adults with learning difficulties) to change the use of an empty property in Edenbridge and provided funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant to develop safe and secure move on accommodation for up to 6 mothers and

babies. The scheme completed in September 2002 and will welcome the first residents November 2022.

- The Housing Service structure was revised in 2020-2021 and a new manager post was created to oversee both the Homelessness Prevention, Advice and Register/Allocations teams.

Homelessness

National Context

Homelessness Legislation and Policy

The homelessness legislation is set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and provides the statutory framework and duties for local housing authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The legislation was amended via the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002. These amendments required housing authorities in England to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the results of a review of homelessness in their District.

The legislation extended the groups of people who housing authorities had a homeless duty towards, now including homeless 16 and 17 year olds, Care Leavers aged 18 to 20, people who were vulnerable as a result of being in care, the armed forces, prison or custody and people who were vulnerable because they had fled their home due to violence.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into effect on 3 April 2018 and significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on housing authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. Housing authorities are required to provide homelessness services to every household who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, and not just those who are considered to be in priority need. These duties include:

- An extension to the period that a household is considered to be threatened with homelessness, from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage.
- A new duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for every household that is threatened with homelessness. This duty can generally take effect for a period of up to 56 days.
- A new duty for those who are already homeless so that housing authorities will take steps to support households to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation. This duty can generally take effect for a period of up to 56 days.
- A new duty to refer, where public bodies in England will have a duty to refer an individual's case (with consent) to an identified housing authority.

The Homelessness Reduction Act has reformed homelessness prevention services.

Agenda Item 9

The Government formed a Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 and an Advisory Panel to support delivery of the Strategy which aims to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027.

There are a number of activities that the Council must undertake in order to meet the requirements of the Act. To provide some context, the following is intended as a brief summary of the customer journey through our services since the Act was introduced and sets out the key activities and duties imposed on local authorities to prevent or relieve homelessness.

A customer approaches the Council directly or is referred by another statutory body under the Duty to Refer, then:

- The Council investigates the housing application to see if the customer is already homeless or may be homeless within 56 days.

If the customer is already homeless then under the Relief Duty the following actions are taken by the Council:

- Reasonable steps to help the customer find accommodation.
- If the customer has no local connection to Sevenoaks District, the Council can refer the customer to another authority under the Power to Refer.
- Works with the customer to form a Personal Housing Plan.
- If homelessness is not relieved, continues to assess the customer's circumstances and apply the remaining tests of homelessness.
- Make a main housing duty decision.

If the customer could become homeless within 56 days, then under the Prevention Duty the following actions are taken by the Council:

- Takes reasonable steps to prevent homelessness.
- Works with the customer to form a Personal Housing Plan.
- If homelessness is not prevented, then a Relief Duty is owed.

If the customer is not homeless now or threatened with homelessness within 56 days:

- Has a duty to provide advice and information.

Changes in Legislation

Since the adoption of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021, there have been other substantial, ongoing legislative changes impacting accommodation and provision of services to people in housing need. These are discussed below:

The Tenant Fees Act 2019

This Act prohibits landlords and letting agents from requiring a tenant, licensee, or

other relevant person to pay fees, other than permitted payments, in connection with specified private rented sector tenancies/licences. This would normally come in the guise of renewal fees or credit check fees. It caps all deposits to 6 weeks' equivalent rent. This is a positive change as it makes access into the private rented sector more affordable as upfront fees and rent deposits are minimised.

The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

This requires a landlord to ensure his property meets minimum safety standards. Violations can range from mould, small, cramped living spaces, lack of adequate sanitation facilities, insecure doors, and windows, excess cold and potential for trips and falls. This Act empowers tenants to obtain redress in the courts for sub-standard accommodation. Poor standard accommodation in the private sector can increase the need for tenants to move to more suitable and affordable social housing.

Renters Reform Bill 2022

This proposed to amend the Housing Act 1988 to abolish Assured Shorthold Tenancies. Thereby disabling a landlord's ability to commit to a fast track eviction under Section 21 of the Housing Act, as this section will be repealed. Although more grounds for eviction will be introduced in the Bill, it will oblige landlords to prove the grounds of the eviction to a Court. Removing the fast track to evictions approach, substantially increases the security of tenure for private renters. The Bill is currently going through the legislative process.

Planning for the Future – Planning White Paper, 2020

The White Paper was launched on 6 August 2020, alongside a Government consultation on changes to the planning system. The proposed changes covered a number of key areas including delivering First Homes.

First Homes are homes for sale to first time buyers, at a discount on market value, with such discount held in perpetuity. The Council does not have an up to date Local Plan, therefore First Homes are required to be included as an affordable tenure. In December 2021, the Council introduced a local First Homes Policy to ensure new homes are available and affordable to as many local people as possible. The local Policy gives priority to those with a local connection to the District, it stipulates a 50% discount compared with the national cap of 30%, and it sets a reduced income cap compared with the national cap. The concern remains that the inclusion of First Homes in the calculation of a developer's contribution to affordable housing under a Section 106 agreement may reduce the number of social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership (part rent/part buy) homes being provided. The local First Homes Policy and wider Affordable Housing Policy are being viability tested as part of the emerging Local Plan process.

The consultation considered the threshold for developer contributions. Planning Practice Guidance Planning states that contributions (including affordable housing) should be sought only for major developments, which for residential development means 10 or more homes or a site with an area of 0.5 hectares or more. The

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consultation document proposed to extend the support given to economic recovery by raising the threshold to developments comprising 40 or 50 homes. In Sevenoaks District, any increase to the threshold would have a significant detrimental effect on our ability to provide new affordable housing. Following sustained public concern, the proposal was dropped.

On 2 February 2022, a Levelling Up White Paper was launched. Many of the white paper's provisions such as those for encouraging the use of brownfield land and promoting beauty and good design were foreshadowed in the White Paper Planning for the Future. The potential impact, should the Government's proposals be implemented, would be an acceleration of the delivery of infrastructure and housing development but not necessarily affordable housing.

Homelessness in a County wide context

Kent Homeless Connect

Kent County Council is the lead partner for Kent Homeless Connect, where support is delivered by Porchlight, Look Ahead and a network of specialist providers on behalf of Kent County Council, helps vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The service is available to vulnerable adults living in Kent, aged 18 and over, with complex support needs (such as mental health, substance misuse problems, or learning difficulties) who are:

- Rough sleeping
- Homeless
- At risk of becoming homeless
- Impacted by homelessness

In addition Kent County Council help those move away from homelessness for good, by bringing together elements of outreach, supported accommodation and floating support to offer tailored support to:

- Vulnerable people
- Enable them to be healthy
- Find a stable home
- Manage their tenancy or their finances

Kent Housing Options Subgroup

The Council are members of the Kent Housing Options Subgroup. All the Kent Local Authorities and Medway Council are represented on this group, which works together to improve on excellent Housing Option services provided across the County, to monitor performance, share best practice and liaise with partner organisations and agencies.

The aim of this subgroup is to continue to share best practice in terms of homelessness, housing options, allocations, lettings and service delivery. To respond and ensure that services are monitored and developed to meet changes in legislation, to explore solutions and working practice to assist in the delivery of new affordable urban and rural housing.

Homelessness in a Local context

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a priority for the Council and there is a corporate commitment to make real improvements to the lives of local people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, this is reflected in the Council's strategies and plans.

COVID has had a significant impact on the UK as a whole. In Sevenoaks District, there were 16 known rough sleepers at the start of lockdown, however 29 individuals were helped into accommodation in response to the Everyone In initiative, of which 24 individuals were helped to move on once the lockdown ceased. This is a significant success in a period of unprecedented circumstances. However, it highlights the hidden homelessness in the District.

It remains important for the Council's Housing and Health service areas to work collaboratively to find suitable local solutions for providing access and referrals to health and social care services, as well as access to education, employment, training and advice that will help to build housing and health resilience across the District.

There has been a rise in the percentage of pensionable age and elderly people living within the District. This is the fastest rising population demographic in the country and is reflected locally, which will require careful thought about longer term housing and wellbeing solutions that are suitable for an ageing population.

Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping in the District is traditionally low in comparison to national statistics. All English Local Authorities are required to carry out either an annual estimate or count and report the figures back to central Government about the number of people known to be rough sleeping on a given night. We have seen the numbers of people reported as sleeping rough gradually reduce since 2017 and in November 2021, we counted only 1 rough sleeper in the District during the official count with DLUHC.

We know that many people sleeping rough require more support than just somewhere to live and need help from other services to help manage issues such as mental health and substance abuse. It is therefore critical that we ensure vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can access the appropriate help and support.

The COVID Everyone In initiative whereby all Councils were required to accommodate all rough sleepers regardless of duties owed to them, demonstrated in many cases that rough sleepers would take up offers of accommodation if it meant the risk to them was reduced and the offer was more desirable to their aspirations.

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Therefore, providing a range of accommodation in the District that will improve the housing offer and meet a wider range of needs, will continue to be our priority and longer term solution for customers in housing crisis.

The Council have commissioned Porchlight to deliver an outreach and complex needs service to identify and support people who are found to be rough sleeping or identified as single homeless in the District. This is funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding.

Since 2017 we have focussed on increasing the options available to rough sleepers and ensuring accurate verification of rough sleepers based on the agreed definition.

From our data we can confirm that over the course of the year 2021-2022 a total of 40 individuals were reported as rough sleeping. Of the 40:

- 16 were verified as sleeping rough
- 24 reports gave insufficient information to attempt or rough sleepers were not found for verification

Of those 16 who were verified rough sleepers:

- 13 were assisted to secure other accommodation or refused/or did not engage with the Council

Verification of any reports received about people sleeping rough requires additional staff time but is vital to ensure that those sleeping rough are engaged with at the earliest opportunity.

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

The Council operate Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during periods where the weather is forecast to be 0 degrees or lower for 3 consecutive days. This protocol is very similar to the Everyone In initiative but has traditionally only been activated at the coldest times of year.

We provide financial support to anyone wishing to access SWEP beds and provide an opportunity for rough sleepers to engage with other local health and support services, with the aim to reduce the risk of them returning to the streets when the weather improved.

Our data so far indicates that to fully meet the needs of rough sleepers and achieve the Government's goal to end rough sleeping by 2027, we need to:

- Monitor the current levels of rough sleeping, and resource services to tackle this.
- Monitor future likely levels of rough sleeping and put support in place to mitigate this.

- Work with partners to secure appropriate accommodation for those who are rough sleeping or are threatened with homelessness and to help them build housing resilience.
- Review effectiveness and quality of accommodation offers to rough sleepers and develop an improved housing offer.

The Overall picture

Who seeks help with housing?

Whilst the small number of households who are rough sleeping place an urgent demand for housing services, there are a greater number of people who are assessed by the Council as being threatened with homelessness within 56 days or at immediate risk of homelessness. Of the 376 households in 2021-2022 who were owed a statutory homeless duty, 205 were owed a prevention duty compared to 145 the previous year, and 171 were homeless and owed a relief duty compared to 128 the previous year. In 2021-2022 a further 622 were not threatened with homelessness within 56 days and therefore no duty owed however these households would have received advice and information to assist them in finding a housing solution. This demonstrates that most work undertaken by the Housing Service relates to homelessness prevention.

Housing and homelessness enquiries are predominately received through applications made online to join the Housing Register, contact by telephone and email and some direct face to face contact with the duty housing officer. The team provide a triage role for initial face to face and telephone enquiries and assist residents with form filling when necessary. All calls received by the Council for housing related enquiries go through the Customer Solutions Team initially and are passed to the Housing Service when more complex advice is required, or the customer advises that they are at risk of homelessness.

There is a dedicated email address to receive referrals under the Homelessness Reduction Act Duty to Refer, and specified officer in the Housing Service is the single point of contact for such referrals. Households with an open Housing Register application can use their individual registration log in details to email updates on their circumstances direct to the Council's housing case management system. The number of general housing advice enquiries taken is not recorded by the service, but data is available on the number of advice and prevention cases opened (prior to 2018) or registered as a working case through the HCLIC system, post 2018 when Act was implemented. It will be important to improve the monitoring of general housing advice enquiries, to better understand the demand for services and the quality of advice offered at each point of contact.

In the last 3 years, it is estimated that 2,526 people each year approach the Council to request advice and information about their housing circumstances. Some of those approaching only require general one off advice and are then able to independently resolve their housing issue. Other households require intervention and additional support, and prior to the introduction of the Act this was dealt with through advice and prevention work, to help the customer resolve their housing difficulties.

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Since the introduction of the Act in April 2018, we have had to change the way cases are processed or recorded and actions closed. Due to this, it is difficult to compare data and trends from previous years. This review has highlighted the potential for variations in how housing data is recorded and the opportunity to record the number of contacts with the service to demonstrate the true demand. The people needing to access our service come from all demographics in Sevenoaks District.

Household composition

The table below shows the household makeup of housing applicants to whom the Council owed a prevention duty as the household circumstances demonstrated that they were at risk of homelessness within 56 days.

Year	Total owed prevention duty	Family with Dependent Children	Single Male Adult	Single Female Adult
2018-2019	342	180	80	82
2019-2020	203	114	46	43
2020-2021	145	72	34	39
2021-2022	205	105	54	46

The highest demand for homelessness prevention services comes from families with dependent children, followed by single male and female adults.

The table below shows the household makeup of housing applicants to whom the Council owed a relief duty as their circumstances demonstrated that they were homeless or at risk of immediate homelessness.

Year	Total owed relief duty	Family with Dependent Children	Single Male Adult	Single Female Adult
2018-2019	81	40	32	9
2019-2020	76	21	37	18
2020-2021	128	43	58	27
2021-2022	171	70	68	33

The highest need and demand for housing and homelessness services is from single male and female adults, both of which require very different accommodation and support solutions. It will be important to ensure the housing offer in the District can accommodate both and that proactive communications are targeted to provide advice and support at the earliest opportunity before crisis happens in order to raise awareness and prevent homelessness.

Support needs

It is recognised that the many customers needing assistance to prevent homelessness or to relieve their homelessness have other support needs. DLUHC data shows that

households did not disclose a support need. The highest support need is that of mental health support. This is explored further below.

Mental Health issues

A household's support needs are considered as part of the assessment of their overall housing need and the duties owed by the Council to relieve or prevent homelessness. Mental health can impact on a household's ability to sustain their accommodation and therefore we work in partnership with mental health services to ensure that customers are informed about the help and support available to them. As a general provider of service in mental health, Kent NHS Foundation Trust delivers NHS mental health services outside of hospital, at home and within the community. The Trust helps those living with mental health needs to manage their current health and live independently.

Physical or Health disabilities

In assessing whether the duty is to prevent homelessness or relieve it, we will consider the individual circumstances and establish if the household's existing home is suitable to meet their needs. Where the property cannot be modified and is unsuitable, there may be a duty to accommodate them (relief duty). If the household's circumstances warrant a prevention duty, this will be established following completion of inquiries and the housing need assessment. Modifications to accommodation to make it suitable to meet the longer term needs of households with disabilities, can be achieved by a disabled facilities grant, small works grant or an adaptation. It may be the case that a referral to Adult Social Services under a Safeguarding Protocol is necessary. To assess the needs of those stating they have physical needs, our assessments are guided by an inhouse Occupational Therapist that works jointly across the Council and Kent County Council.

Drug or Alcohol dependency

If, at the time of approach for housing assistance, an individual is misusing substances and not engaging in specialist support, they are encouraged to engage through a Personal Housing Plan to access and engage with relevant support services (Homelessness Reduction Act duty). This is because stability needs to be established in order to maintain a long term tenancy. A tenant will need to control, manage, or resolve their substance misuse habits in order to sustain their tenancy and money management.

As part of Personal Housing Plans, individual households can be referred to support services or can access support themselves via the Council grant funded or commissioned services such as debt and money advice and drop in services provided by Citizens Advice.

Age of applicant

The Council owed a homelessness duty to 387 households in 2021-2022 approximately 200 were aged between 18 and 34 years; 157 were aged between 35

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and 64 years and the remainder aged 65 or higher. A snapshot of our Housing Register in October 2021 indicates that the majority of housing applicants across the whole register in the Sevenoaks District are aged between 18 and 64 years with approximately 13% aged 65 or higher, of which there are an increasing number of households in the 80 plus age group. The homelessness duty and Housing Register data largely reflect each other and the local population statistics. It will be important to ensure a continued supply of affordable accommodation to meet all age ranges and needs but due to the impact that Welfare Reform changes have on affordability of accommodation, this will increase demand, particularly for those affected by benefit caps and inability to claim benefit for accommodation that has bedrooms surplus to requirements.

Young people face significant difficulty in accessing accommodation. This is due to life inexperience, parental or home exclusion and poor financial power. Therefore, special attention needs to be given to this age group.

16 and 17 year olds

If a young person aged 16 or 17 presents as homeless, every attempt is made to assist them to return home, where it is considered safe to do so. We consider the home, if safe, to be the most appropriate and effective place for them to be for financial security and support.

All young people in this age category are initially referred to Kent County Council's Social Services who have a Resettlement Team, to try and facilitate a move home wherever possible. If this cannot be achieved, a joint assessment will be carried out to establish whether the young person is to be supported under Section 17 or Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989. Kent County Council identifies that all 16 and 17 year olds at risk of homelessness within the County are assessed under the Children's Act 1989 and ensures there is a pathway for Care Leavers, with housing options available to them. This arrangement has been positive in ensuring that only 1 out of 13, 16 or 17 year olds have needed to be placed into temporary accommodation over the period of the review.

18 to 34 years old Single Person Households

Sevenoaks District is covered by 2 Broad Rental Market Areas (these are areas in which Local Housing Allowance rates are set). These rates have been frozen for all property types since 2012, whilst rental prices have continued to increase annually.

As Welfare Reform changes have meant that single young people under the age of 35 are not eligible to claim the full amount of benefit to cover the cost of rent on a 1 bedroom flat, there is a significant shortfall between the contractual rent and the single room allowance. This has an impact on affordability and increasing demand for more affordable social housing.

Family Households

Whilst families are not impacted by the same benefit restrictions as single person

households, they still face significant issues when it comes to being able to secure accommodation where they are in receipt of low income or are impacted by the benefit cap introduced by Welfare Reform changes. This can make the private rented sector unaffordable for some families and increases the demand on social housing. The number of households applying as homeless as a result of parental eviction or unable to stay with family/friends has consistently been the most common reason for homelessness, falling in front of domestic abuse and loss of an assured shorthold tenancy.

Ethnicity of lead applicant

A snapshot of the Council's Housing Register in October 2022 shows the ethnicity of the lead housing applicant. The majority fall within the White Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/British ethnicity group or White any other background group. The second largest group includes White Other origin.

Ethnicity of lead applicant	2021-2022
Asian or Asian British - any other	6
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	8
Asian or Asian British - Indian	5
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	5
Black or Black British - African	13
Black or Black British - any other	0
Black or Black British - Caribbean	9
Chinese	0
Irish	4
Mixed - any other background	2
Mixed - White and Asian	1
Mixed - White and Black African	3
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	13
Arabic	3
Not stated	205
Other	0
Other ethnic origin	4
White Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	680
White - Any other background	38
Total	999

It will be important to ensure our data collection and analysis identifies any gaps in provision of housing services and how we can better target the information and advice to support improved access and understanding. The learning from responses to COVID and input from people with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping will help us to better understand how we can reduce any barriers to housing across different ethnicities and cultures.

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Prevention and Relief work at Sevenoaks District Council

Enquires, Advice and Closure

The table below shows how data is recorded since the introduction of the Act and the information submitted to DLUHC.

Year	Total number homeless applications assessed	Of which: number of households assessed as owed a duty	Number of households owed a Prevention Duty	Number of households owed a with Relief Duty
2017-2018	1,162	1,162	1,077	85
2018-2019	1,326	573	374	199
2019-2020	1,097	398	204	194
2020-2021	1,180	395	144	251
2021-2022	999	376	205	171

This does not record the total number of households who contacted the service and who were assisted with advice and information, therefore does not provide the full picture of service demand.

Duty Acceptances

As explained earlier the Homelessness Reduction Act places extra duties on Councils towards the public by extending definitions of *threatened with homelessness* and introducing a *Relief duty*, therefore it is important to separate the assistance given under each of the duties and the other cases where advice may have been given and the case closed. Cases where duties are accepted take up the majority of officer time and therefore are an indicator of substantial housing need and homelessness in general.

Number and reason for homelessness approaches for the month of July for years 2019 to 2022:

Reason for Homelessness	July 2019	July 2020	July 2021	July 2022	Total
Domestic Abuse	5	3	8	13	29
End of Private Tenancy	5	9	13	14	41
End of Social Housing Tenancy	3	2	5	4	14
Family/friends no longer will to accommodate	7	39	28	18	92
Left Prison	0	5	3	2	10
Left Hospital	0	0	0	2	2
Disrepair	1	0	2	3	6

Relationship Breakdown	0	2	6	1	9
Other	6	15	9	2	32
Total	27	75	74	59	235

The chart clearly demonstrates the increase in ‘family and friends no longer willing to accommodate’ in July 2020 (39) at the start of COVID.

A further spike in approaches due to applicants fleeing domestic abuse is shown in July 2022 (13). This increase follows the Domestic Abuse Bill being signed into law on 29 April 2021 which placed the following duties on local authorities:

- A duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation.
- Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have priority need for homelessness assistance.
- Ensure that when local authorities rehouse victims of domestic abuse, they do not lose a secure lifetime or assured tenancy.
- Provide that all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have priority need for homelessness assistance.

There is evidence of an increase in private tenancies coming to an end in the July 2022 (14) snapshot. This may in part be due to a number of reforms put forward in a new White Paper, including the abolition of Section 21 (non-fault evictions).

Prevention outcomes

The main difference in the actions taken to prevent and resolve homelessness before the introduction of the Act and after, is that the need to assess *priority* and vulnerability at prevention stage has been removed and the level of all service is universal.

Most advice and prevention work is demonstrated in the arena of closed advice given, and interventions followed by case closure. It demonstrates well, the escalation of prevention work and it highlights the need to continue our commitment to provide outreach support and upstream prevention work. For many households, this will reduce the need for them to approach the Council at crisis point.

Methods of prevention

Using internally recorded data, the table below shows the method in which Homelessness Preventions were attained:

Prevention Measure	2020-2021	2021-2022
Mediation and/or counselling	86	24
Other assistance to remain in Social or Private (buying customers food)	1,097	2,037

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Conciliation with friends/relatives	29	48
Resolving rent issues in Social or Private (clearing rent arrears)	78	23
Crisis intervention by Mental Health teams	123	234
Secured debt advice (IVA, DRO Bankruptcy)	63	73
Mortgage Holidays	17	1
Information and advice only	1,236	1,464
Total	2,643	3,904

Secured Social Housing

The most effective tool to assist households to move to alternative accommodation is through an offer of accommodation via the Housing Register. As we are working within the Act duties, a formal Part 6 offer to discharge a full homeless duty is now rare. This rise shows that there is a dependence on affordable accommodation being available to help prevent homelessness within the District.

The Housing Register is for people in housing need and who have a local connection to the District. People are assessed against an approved Allocation Policy which provides criteria to assess a household's housing need and their eligibility for social housing in the District based upon their current circumstances. Households are nominated to properties owned by Registered Providers and allocated through the HomeChoice scheme. HomeChoice allows eligible applicants to apply for suitable properties each week that meet a household's housing need, anywhere within the Sevenoaks District. We currently allocate certain properties under specific circumstances to households in reasonable preference groups such as vulnerable homeless households and those fleeing domestic abuse. These households, when owed a homeless duty, are made 1 offer of accommodation. The new Housing Allocations Policy extends the 1 offer only Policy to all applicants, except those seeking 55+ housing or those downsizing. Our recent experiences with Everyone In to deal with the COVID crisis demonstrates we should consider households who are rough sleepers as a reasonable preference group.

Assisted to Private Rented Sector accommodation

Our second highest prevention tool to assist households to move to alternative accommodation is a move to the private rented sector, including support with rent deposit and rent in advance, subject to eligibility. Since adoption of the Core Strategy and the accompanying Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2011, over £275,000 Section 106 affordable housing commuted sum monies have been allocated to this area.

Information and Advice only

It is positive that many cases were resolved by issuing advice. Reconciliation with friends/relatives and advocacy were strong avenues of resolution and going forward all Housing Advice Team members will be trained further in such techniques. When mediating between disputing families and giving advice, the team aims to set out realistic expectations of what the Council can offer via a homeless application or the Housing Register.

Homeless Decisions and Acceptances

With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the need to make *main homeless duty* decisions have dramatically reduced as this action is now regarded as a last resort should other duties not be successful. The upstream prevention model traditionally adopted by the Housing Advice Team is now legislated and this has resulted in most cases ending with a prevention action.

Accommodation outcome following acceptance of Relief and main homeless duty

The only Homelessness Reduction Act duties that require an accommodation solution are relief duties and main duties. If a household has not obtained long term secure accommodation within 56 days, the Council is then obliged to make a full homeless decision where a full assessment of events leading to homelessness are considered. In these cases, on some occasions it can be assessed that the household does not qualify for further assistance.

The Council discharged our duty to most of the households we accepted as homeless, following an accepted nomination into social housing provided by Registered Providers. Homeless households, to whom we accept a homelessness duty, are placed on auto-bidding on the HomeChoice scheme and will receive 1 suitable offer of accommodation as per our revised Allocations Policy.

Prevention versus Homeless Relief Duties

Threatened with Homelessness (Prevention Duty owed) Homeless (Relief Duty owed)
Under the Allocation Policy we can add a preference for homeless or transfer applicants, to manage temporary accommodation and meet the specific needs of certain households. However, this is used very sparingly to ensure that other groups are not disadvantaged.

The Council can discharge our duties by way of a Private Rented Sector Offer, where suitable private rented sector property is available.

Use of a Part 6 offer to end homelessness (Reliance on Social Housing)

When a household is housed by being offered accommodation through the Housing

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Register, it is known as a Part 6 offer of accommodation (under the Housing Act 1996). This is applied where prevention actions have been exhausted.

This table shows out of all Sevenoaks District housing allocations 21% in 2020-2021 and 27% in 2021-2022 were provided to homeless applicants.

Allocation Type	2020-2021	2021-2022
General	115	95
Homeless	49	58
Transfer	73	62
Total	237	215

The percentage of lets to homeless households has risen by 6% in the last financial year.

Availability of new Affordable Housing Delivery

During the period of the review we have seen the number of allocations to Registered Providers accommodation fall slightly. This is partly due to a reduction in delivery of proposed new builds and a reduction of allocations to homelessness cases demonstrated later.

Year	Number of allocations to Council nominees
2018-2019	357
2019-2020	355
2020-2021	317
2021-2022	209
Total	1,238

The Sevenoaks District is bound by strict planning constraints. It is 93% Green Belt and over 60% Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These constraints mean the delivery of new homes has never been easy. However, delivery was further severely impacted by COVID, as was the case across the nation. The rising cost of raw materials and labour/materials shortages are continuing to have an impact. If the Government takes forward proposals to raise the site threshold triggering affordable housing contributions, this will further inhibit our ability to secure new homes.

The table below shows that the number of affordable properties delivered over the period of the review:

Type of property	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
All dwellings (net)	378	254	426	213
Affordable Housing (gross)	49	71	206	22
% of affordable to market	13%	28%	48%	10%

The provision of new, onsite affordable housing is only triggered on development sites comprising of 10 or more homes. Provision is subject to viability testing. Owing to the nature of Sevenoaks District, a sizeable proportion of development sites comprise less than 10 homes (small sites). Where small sites are located in Designated Rural Areas (Section 157 of the Housing Act 1985) and comprise 6 to 9 homes, National Planning Policy Framework gives scope for local policy to be adopted. The District Council has adopted local policy, meaning commuted sum payments are triggered in lieu of onsite provision.

There continues to be a gap in the provision of genuinely affordable housing (Social Rented and Affordable Rented housing) in the District and there are actions set out in the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 to address this.

The table below shows affordable housing completions broken down by tenure

Year	Social Rented	Affordable Rented	Shared Ownership	Other tenures	Total
2017-2018	0	23	26	0	49
2018-2019	0	53	18	0	71
2019-2020	0	95	107	4	206
2020-2021	2	0	20	0	22

Other Accommodation Options

With the data showing a drop in allocations to Registered Providers and a fall in new affordable housing completions in future, other ways to fulfil housing obligations are needed. It will be important to make best use of and improve housing conditions in the private rented sector so that this remains an attractive option to households who can afford to rent privately.

Access to Private Rented Accommodation

The private rented sector can be a realistic housing option for households in housing need. Although it is generally more expensive and offers shorter tenancies than the social housing sector, it can respond quicker to demand and provide more flexibility. However, for those on lower incomes, including those in paid employment, the choice of suitable private rented sector accommodation that is affordable can be limited.

With the Government legislating the abolition of non-fault evictions, the economic downturn post COVID and tightening of tenant rights, there is a concern that the number of private rented sector landlords letting properties in the area may reduce. We need to proactively promote the opportunity with private rented sector landlords (through the Landlords Forum or publicity) to let their properties through our Landlord Incentive package. Working with households on our Housing Register via Personal Housing Plans, to explore private rented sector property as a housing option will be important but the cost may, for some households, make this prohibitive.

The high private market rental values in the area is fuelled in part by Sevenoaks being

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well placed with good transport links to London. Sevenoaks District is recognised to be one of the most expensive places to live when comparing median earnings to property prices.

For households in receipt of full or part Local Housing Allowance, there is likely to be a shortfall between Local Housing Allowance rates and local rents, as shown in the tables below:

Shortfall between LHA rates and local rents

Property Size	LHA Rate - North West Kent BRMA (£pw)	Average Rent for Swanley (£pw)	Shortfall per week (£)
1 Bed	£155.34	£221.00	£65.66
2 Bed	£195.62	£288.46	£92.84
3 Bed	£241.64	£406.15	£164.51
4 Bed	£299.18	£496.15	£196.97
Property Size	LHA Rate - High Weald BRMA (£pw)	Average Rent for Sevenoaks Town (£pw)	Shortfall per week (£)
1 Bed	£159.95	£248.31	£88.36
2 Bed	£207.12	£412.15	£205.03
3 Bed	£260.05	£573.46	£313.41
4 Bed	£345.21	£690.46	£345.25

Data sourced September 2022 – [Home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk)

Property Size	LHA Rate - North West Kent BRMA (£pw)	LHA Rate - High Weald BRMA (£pw)	Average Rent across District 2021/22	Shortfall per week (£)
1 Bed	£155.34	£159.95	£224.31	£68.97/£64.36
2 Bed	£195.62	£207.12	£300.46	£104.84/£93.34
3 Bed	£241.64	£260.05	£379.85	£138.21/£119.80
4 Bed	£299.18	£345.21	£752.54	£453.36/£407.33

Data sourced September 2022 – [Home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk)

Whilst the average rent charged within the private rented sector varies based upon demand at any given time, the tables above provide a snapshot of the difference between the market/average rent being charged within the District and the shortfall for residents requiring support from Local Housing Allowance towards their monthly rent. This highlights the difficulty that many people on low incomes have with being able to identify accommodation they can afford and demonstrates why many landlords are reluctant to accept tenants claiming benefits. We are aware anecdotally, of landlords stating that they are unable, as a condition of their insurance, to let to tenants in receipt of benefits and our landlord offer includes cover for this via Help2Rent.

We are aware that affordability issues impact on those claiming out of work benefits and households where one or two members are in paid employment, still find it difficult to afford local rent levels.

Property Standards

Between 2017-2021, the Council issued 45 Enforcement Notices and improved 26 homes through enforcement action.

Houses in Multiple Occupation licensing was introduced in 2006 but extended to more premises from 1 October 2018 when the original requirement that premises only had to have a licence if there were 5 or more tenants forming 2 or more households, and had 3 or more storeys, was changed so that it applied regardless of the number of storeys. The legislative change resulted in an increase of 31% (5) of licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation. The number does fluctuate because of new Houses in Multiple Occupation being created and others ceasing to operate. Licenses typically last for 5 years. Houses in Multiple Occupation with fewer than 5 tenants are not subject to mandatory licensing but are subject to broadly similar standards and are checked periodically.

Between 2017-2021, the Council granted 371 Disabled Facilities Grants. The works carried out with grant funding ensure residents can remain safely in their own homes and continue to enjoy independent living. This prevents residents needing to be rehoused.

Between 2017-2021, the Council granted 173 Safe and Secure Grants which are designed to reduce admissions to hospital and promote independence that could include repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps, safety and security repairs or providing additional property modifications to promote independence for customers with a specific disability, diagnosed condition (or written evidence supporting a condition) with a Dementia to ensure they reside in their own home as long as possible.

Between 2017-2021 the Council granted 62 Hospital Discharge Grants which is to provide support to any customer being discharged from hospital. A Better Care Coordinator has been appointed funded through the Better Care Fund. This appointment has ensured that strong links between the Council and Health and third sector organisations have been built which in turn has provided opportunities to improve the lives of vulnerable people and in doing so provide a better service and quality of life.

Landlord Incentive Scheme

The aim of Help to Let scheme is to encourage landlords to work with the Council to help to assist local families in housing need whilst reducing the risk and hassle of private sector renting.

Help to Let will provide a tenant matching service for local landlords from our customer base, this will primarily be households that the Council have a duty to

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prevent or relieve their homelessness by securing alternative accommodation within the private rented sector.

In addition to the tenant matching service the scheme will offer the following services free of charge:

- No letting agency fees for tenant finding/matching services
- Right to rent checks carried out
- A full electronic inventory prepared
- Check in and check out
- A single point of contact within our Accommodation Team
- Post – tenancy visit within the first 6 to 8 weeks
- One property inspection per 12 month tenancy
- £500 towards repairs during each 12 month tenancy period

The financial incentives available under Help to Let are flexible and be tailored to our individual households depending on the households needs. The basic financial incentives are as follows:

- Bond or cash incentive (equivalent of 6 weeks rent)
- Free landlord insurance provided in partnership with Help2Rent

These financial incentives support the landlord with the provision of Local Housing Allowance weekly/monthly rates for rental throughout the agreed period. All incentives with our Help to Let scheme are funded through our Homeless Prevention Grant.

28 households have been rehoused under this scheme between April and October 2022. The majority of these households have been under a Prevention Duty.

Supported Housing Options

Many homeless applicants need support to sustain independent accommodation in the long term. Access to supported accommodation, transitional, longer term and crisis support services can reduce the risk of repeat homelessness.

Discretionary Housing Payments and pressure on affordability

Resolving rent issues in social or private rented sector involves the use of Discretionary Housing Payments which are administered by the Council's Revenues and Benefits Team. Discretionary Housing Payments are intended to support households to access or sustain their tenancies and are available to assist households for an interim period whilst they resolve their individual financial circumstances. They can be used to assist with clearing rent arrears, issues of affordability, benefit cap and in some cases for deposits or rent in advance to access new accommodation.

The Revenues and Benefits team work closely with the Housing Service to ensure customers are receiving advice and support where homelessness is identified as an

issue for requesting support with Discretionary Housing Payments. Issues of affordability within the District have consistently been one of the main reasons for people seeking assistance with a Discretionary Housing Payments and affordability affects households in both the social and private rented sectors. In the period of this review, over £736,785 was awarded to residents in Discretionary Housing Payments.

The table below shows the number of payments awarded and the central Government contribution:

Financial Year	Total Discretionary Housing Payments awarded	Central Government contribution
2017-2018	£177,847	£198,116
2018-2019	£185,668	£190,679
2019-2020	£164,004	£164,643
2020-2021	£236,266	£238,106
TOTAL	£736,785	£791,544

If the central Government contribution to the Council is not fully spent, then it must be returned. Therefore, although we may endeavour to spend as much of the allocation as possible, if Discretionary Housing Payments are not made during a financial year's payment run, they will come out of the next financial year's contribution. This explains some of the differences in amounts awarded against contribution total.

Use and availability of Temporary Accommodation

Use of Temporary Accommodation

The Council has a duty to offer Temporary Accommodation to:

- Households that present as homeless where there is reason to believe that they may be in priority need and they have nowhere to stay pending a homelessness decision.
- Households for whom following an assessment, a full homelessness duty has been accepted.
- Households deemed vulnerable and owed a Relief duty.
- Households who present themselves to the Council as homeless, are usually placed in temporary accommodation whilst enquiries are made into their circumstances, and a decision is made as to whether the Council owe a duty to continue to provide accommodation.

The Council works with applicants as far as possible to enable them to remain in existing accommodation until suitable temporary accommodation becomes available; however this is less likely to be possible for households who present at the point that homelessness has already occurred, and these households will be more likely to require emergency or Bed and Breakfast placements. The Council aim to place applicants into self-contained temporary accommodation if this is available. If there is

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a need for an emergency placement, or self-contained temporary accommodation is not available, Officers will make placements into Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the first instance. In some cases, households will then move on from Bed and Breakfast accommodation to self-contained temporary accommodation as soon as it is available.

COVID Everyone In impact

Between 23 March 2020 and 4 July 2020 when the Prime Minister announced that lockdown restrictions would end, the Council accommodated around 80 households in temporary accommodation across 7 different locations at a total cost of £184,373. The costs continue to rise whilst some households remain in the temporary accommodation until suitable secure accommodation can be found for them.

Sources of Temporary Accommodation

Bed and Breakfast accommodation

The Council have a small selection of options available to meet the needs of households requiring temporary accommodation. The option used will depend upon the urgency of the applicant's housing circumstances and availability of accommodation at the time of approach.

Where people approach needing accommodation in an emergency or with limited notice that they are to become homeless, the main option is likely to be Bed and Breakfast, which is paid on a nightly basis, or in a hotel.

Where out of area placements are used, we strive to meet the requirements of households with work or school commitments close to our administrative boundaries. Some out of area placements have been made at the request of the applicant, usually for personal safety reasons. These are only used as a last resort for a short period of time, until accommodation within the District can be identified.

Bed and Breakfast is not considered to be suitable accommodation for families and the law says it can only be used in an emergency and for no longer than a maximum of 6 weeks.

Self-contained Accommodation

If a homeless duty is accepted and the household has been placed in Bed and Breakfast or hotel accommodation as an initial placement, the Council will look to move the household into self-contained accommodation at the earliest opportunity.

The Council have an agreement with West Kent Housing Association and Moat to provide 46 self-contained temporary accommodation units in the District.

Time spent in Temporary Accommodation

We work to limit the amount of time households have to spend in temporary

accommodation. We provide support through our Accommodation Officers who visits families to ensure they are maintaining their temporary accommodation and applying for suitable properties available through our HomeChoice system. If households are not applying for all suitable properties available within an advertising cycle, officers will place bids on suitable properties on their behalf, to ensure they move out of temporary accommodation at the earliest opportunity.

During the review period, the number of households who remained in temporary accommodation for over 12 months, increased during COVID and has since decreased during 2021-2022 with 104 accommodated for over 12 months.

The table below shows the time spent in Temporary Accommodation for those owed an immediate emergency accommodation duty:

Time in Temporary Accommodation	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	Total
Under 6 months	78	89	105	92	364
6 -12 months	39	49	72	56	216
1-2 years	110	128	236	104	578

Expenditure on Temporary Accommodation

Households placed into temporary accommodation are charged rent whilst they are staying in the accommodation and can claim Housing Benefit to assist with this if they are receiving a low income.

2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
£77,05.99	£332,773.33	£501,240.88	£860,170.44	£1,483,056.35

Funding towards Homelessness Responses

Homelessness Prevention Grant

Central Government used to give local housing authorities funding for homelessness prevention work via a ringfenced grant. A few years ago, the ring fenced grant ceased, and the funding was incorporated into the Council's wider local government settlement but was visible as a discrete element of the total settlement. The Homelessness Prevention Grant allocation for Sevenoaks District Council is as follows:

2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
£178,842	£264,630	£364,043	£434,897

This funding has been used by the Housing Service to support a range of community and voluntary sector groups to provide services within the District that are focused on supporting the prevention of homelessness. Examples of where this funding has

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been used include to assist with rent and mortgage arrears, alongside financial difficulties paying their utility bills.

Rough Sleeper Initiative funding

The Council successfully bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding in 2021-2022 secured almost £300,000 under the Rough Sleeper Initiative 4 and a further £677,230 under Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 for 2022-2023. This funding will provide coordination, outreach and complex needs support to rough sleepers and those in risk of rough sleeping and our spend is programmed to deliver:

- Emergency Accommodation
- Housing Pathway Coordinator
- Assessment Resettlement Officer (Porchlight)
- Weekly Drop-in (Porchlight)
- Outreach Officer (Porchlight)
- Personalised Budget
- Private Sector Rented Funding

Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme

The Council successfully bid for Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme funding in 2021 and secured £233,175. This funding has covered the costs of the refurbishment of properties to provide supported accommodation for 2 years with permanent move-on accommodation at social rents.

Accommodation for Ex-Offenders

The service helps build partnership links and create housing pathways at point of prison release, risk of homelessness from family/host (who has offender history in the last 12 months), move on from specialist supported accommodation beds and hospital discharges.

This service is part of the established HERO service, providing support and advice to people at risk of rough sleeping, prison charges, responding to duty to refers and ensuring all customers are assessed for a full homelessness assessment. The Council's HERO service is a responsive prevention service, with mediation, conflict resolution interventions, access to grant assistance for rent deposit and rent in advance private rented sector accommodation.

This service links in with the Council's current outreach and inreach provision funded by the Rough Sleeper Initiative 5, and as the Council upscale the prevention interventions in the District to prevent homelessness.

The service will continue to work to undertake prevention and relief assessments with providing rapid responses to prison discharges ensuring no one sleeps rough and no second night out in the District.

The Council housed 6 ex-offenders and are working with another 12, some of whom are due to be released from prison during November and December 2022.

Using Section 106 Affordable Housing Commuted Sum monies

The Council has used Section 106 Commuted Sum monies totalling £6.269m to deliver 31 new affordable homes in the District, including 27 genuinely affordable homes where rents are capped at local housing allowance levels. Of these, 20 homes have been delivered by Quercus Housing across 2 schemes and 7 by West Kent Housing Association. The homes have been allocated to those on the Housing Register, with 15 homes specifically targeted at homeless households moving on from temporary accommodation and 7 for rough sleepers.

Section 106 monies have been used to fund initiatives which impact, directly or indirectly, on our homeless customers. These include a private rented sector landlords' incentive scheme to secure more homes in the private rented sector (see Assisted to Private Rented Sector accommodation above) and a downsizing incentive scheme to free up family sized social housing for reletting to those in need.

Total Section 106 monies expended on these various initiatives represents approximately 70% of all Section 106 monies spend since 2011.

Working in partnership

Strong and effective partnership working has been key to the successful prevention of homelessness in Sevenoaks. Our partners include:

- Porchlight
- Look Ahead
- CGI
- Priority House (NHS)
- Highlands House (NHS)
- Littlebrook mental health unit (NHS)
- DAVS (domestic abuse services)
- CAB
- Cross Light Debt Assistance
- KSAS (KCC scheme for emergency support needs)
- Abacus for all furniture needs
- Department of Working Pensions
- Royal British Legion
- SSAFA
- IPAG (Kent Police)
- Stalking Charities
- Social Services
- GP Practices
- Probation services for ex-offenders
- CROP (citizen's right for older people)
- Criminal justice system
- West Kent Housing Association

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Moat

Strong relationships, referral routes and jointly delivered services will continue to lead to better outcomes for the homeless.

Future Challenges and Priorities

Looking ahead into 2023–2028, the Council with our partners and stakeholders need to assess the content of this review and taking significant national events into consideration, understand the challenges that might lie ahead. We have assessed that the following factors will shape the way in which services are delivered, and any Strategy going forward, should endeavour to tackle and overcome them.

Challenges

Funding

Partnership working can be destabilised by short term funding. Partners need confidence in long term funding to develop and mature services in our favour. Yearly and short term funding approaches can foster short term thinking.

Affordability

A lack of social housing and private rented affordable housing options within the District and accommodation for low income households. There is an overall affordable housing need for 423 homes per year, as set out in the Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs. Between 2017-2021, the annual new delivery averaged at 87 homes. The private rented sector is increasingly unaffordable and the delivery in affordable housing has been impacted by the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

To be genuinely affordable, a rent should cost no more than 35% of gross income. This equates to someone on an income of £45k (median income) paying a monthly rent of no more than £1,312. In 2020, rents in the lowest quartile (the lowest 25% of rents) across Sevenoaks District were £1,001, making it necessary for most people earning average incomes, to access some form of affordable housing. The lack of a local definition of what constitutes housing that is affordable to occupiers means that the current supply of new affordable housing may not be affordable to those in greatest need. This could create an increasing threat of homelessness as the supply of social housing is reduced and private rented sector accommodation becomes unsustainable or increasingly unaffordable

Domestic Abuse services in Kent

There is a pooled budget for County Council led commissioning of services to support people affected by domestic abuse.

Customers with support/complex needs/older residents

A need for increased accommodation and support services in the District for people who sleep rough; support for customers to be tenancy supported to enable them to access and sustain their accommodation with social and private landlords. We need to ensure that a range of housing options are made available for younger people who have limited incomes, and older people and people with disabilities who require more support eg provision of additional Extra Care accommodation and accessible homes. The lack of an up to date Local Plan means the Council are currently unable to require homes that meet minimum standards, ie the Nationally Described Space Standards. As social housing tends to be let at maximum capacity, it is very important for homes to have reasonable space standards. Achieving higher building standards to enable us to help customers with accessibility and physical disabilities (Building Regulation Standards M4(2) and M4(3), is an even greater challenge.

Hidden Homelessness

The sudden rise in street homelessness at the start of lockdown on 23 March 2020, indicated many people were in insecure arrangements. This sector is incredibly difficult to quantify as many do not regard themselves as homeless. However understanding that many single males do not approach homeless services until crisis point indicates a need to identify this customer group at an early stage and provide suitable accommodation options and enhance outreach support.

Priorities

Financial difficulty and Financial Illiteracy

Households may experience financial difficulties in being able to access accommodation in the social or private rented sector or in trying to cover their housing costs and maintain an existing tenancy. The challenge of meeting housing costs versus limited household income applies across all tenures.

Rising Cost of Living

Rent arrears and utilities are rising hugely within our communities. Strong consumer demand for goods, rising energy prices and higher costs for businesses are reflected in higher prices within supermarkets, petrol stations and utility bills.

We saw the effects of food insecurity as we went in and came out of COVID, in certain areas of the District we saw malnutrition and hunger which is particularly alarming in the current context with high food demand and energy prices rising.

Requests for assistance with food parcels from our foodbanks within our District have risen to 2,037 since April 2022.

While using the Kent Household Support Fund of £120,000 to assist customers to pay utilities, rent arrears and mortgage arrears (within a limit), across the whole District of Sevenoaks.

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Greater demand is currently being seen in the Sevenoaks District for assistance with rent and mortgage payments, assistance to pay utility bills. During the month of August the Council have assisted a customer to gain a mortgage holiday, hence avoiding eviction.

The data shows an emerging trend of hidden homelessness

We need to identify this demographic who cannot, or find it difficult to, access Council support when they most need it to prevent homelessness or rough sleeping. This may include people who find it physically difficult to attend the centre, those who do not know about our services or those who for other reasons feel they cannot access our services.

Improve the financial resilience of our customers

By offering targeted financial support, this will help to address this affordability barrier and should be a key action within the Strategy. We will monitor the costs of affordable housing, encourage delivery of housing at social rents and consider the delivery of shared housing solutions, in partnership with Registered Providers. The Council will need to support solutions to facilitate access into social housing for those households who are not yet tenancy ready but need independent accommodation.

We must work in partnership

With other institutions such as the DWP, Criminal Justice, Health, Kent County Council, and other Kent local authorities to improve homelessness prevention via early intervention and referrals to appropriate advice and support services, joint commissioning, or delivery of services where possible, and improved protocols.

Provide an alternative narrative to those already homeless

Improve the communications to promote our services to those who need them and build trust within the communities of interest. Consult and engage people with lived experience to understand their needs, capitalise on their strengths and codesign solutions.

Ensuring Private Rented Sector is fit for purpose

Most households do not want to secure alternative accommodation in the private rented sector due to affordability and quality concerns. We must ensure that the private rented sector is an attractive alternative housing solution.

Data capture

We need to improve the way we record homelessness and rough sleeping prevention services. This will enable us to use this data effectively to inform service improvements. Nominations agreements and lettings should be monitored, and targets set to drive appropriate actions and behaviours. Staff training will help to

ensure consistency of approach to facilitating and recording the demands on the service but the solutions and positive outcomes.

Maximising delivery of Affordable Housing

Adoption of a new Local Plan will help the Council to maximise delivery of new affordable housing. Policies within the Local Plan will ensure affordable housing is developed which is truly affordable for local residents, meets prescribed standards to meet specific needs and contributes to the Council meeting its net zero targets.

Continued collaboration with existing partner Registered Providers, encouragement of new partners who share our strategic direction and the growing role of Quercus Housing will ensure Local Plan Policy is delivered on the ground.

The use of different forms of housing will assist specific groups, eg micro homes to help the single homeless.

Refreshed and enhanced under occupation scheme to free up more family sized housing in order to create movement in existing housing stock in the District.

Re-invigorated empty homes service to bring homes back into use for local people.

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Appendix B

**Sevenoaks District Council
Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy
2023-2028****Introduction**

The demand for homelessness services has increased steadily over the past 5 years. During the past 3 years, the Council's Housing Service received more than 2,526 requests for advice and assistance from family and single households seeking help. The impact of homelessness has a devastating impact on those directly affected, a social cost that extends into the wider community, and a financial cost that draws agency resources away from other key services.

Although Sevenoaks District within the national context has seen a rise in levels of homelessness, it remains in a position of not having a rough sleeping problem. However, the Council cannot be complacent, homelessness effects lives and life chances and 1 rough sleeper must be considered 1 too many.

This Strategy introduces a framework that sets out to reduce the impact that homelessness has on local individuals and households, and the priorities the Council will pursue to help do so.

What is homelessness?

This Strategy uses a definition of homelessness that includes both rough sleepers, single people and families that are threatened with, or present as homeless. In short, any household (individual, couple, or a family) that find themselves without a safe or secure place to call home.

Those who present as homeless do not have to be sleeping on the streets or lack a roof at the time they ask for help. Households can be considered homeless if they are:

- Having to stay with friends or family.
- Staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast accommodation.
- At risk of violence or abuse in their current home.
- Living in poor or unsafe conditions.
- Leaving an institution such as a prison or hospital, or the care system, with nowhere to go.

Contributing factors that have led to this national picture of increasing homelessness include:

- High housing demand and a lack of supply leading to high house prices and private rents with greater shortfalls between rents and Local Housing Allowance
- Shortage of social housing or truly affordable housing to rent

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- Increasing household bills and cost of living
- Cuts and reforms to welfare benefits
- Cuts in funding to statutory and voluntary services which support vulnerable people
- Buy to Let tax rules impacted the private rented market
- Impact of COVID pandemic

How has this Strategy been developed?

The relevant legislation has been adhered to in formulating and modifying this Strategy. It has been prepared in line with the statutory requirements set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, Section 1(4) of which requires housing authorities to publish a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, based on the results of a Homelessness Review, which we have undertaken as part of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 refresh.

In addition we have had regard to the Council's Allocation Policy and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for local housing authorities in England 2018, (updated 12th October 2021).

The homelessness review, undertaken earlier this year as part of the Housing Strategy refresh, provided an up to date picture of:

- Current and likely future levels of homelessness across Sevenoaks District
- Activities carried out and support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.

The wider public, local voluntary and statutory partners were invited to comment on the findings of the review, and their responses have been used to inform the shape and direction of this Strategy, which sets out how the Council will work with others to; put in place plans to prevent homelessness occurring; intervene effectively when it occurs; and deliver sustainable plans to support re-housing options.

National context

The operating environment in which local authorities must deliver services to reduce homelessness continues to provide a number of key challenges. Increasing house prices, rising private rented sector rents and the reduced income many local households have experienced as a result of the pandemic, continue to have an impact, sustaining the high number of households accessing services and needing to be placed in temporary accommodation.

Key issues to highlight include:

COVID: over the past 2 years the pandemic has, not unsurprisingly, had a significant impact on central Government Strategy. At a local level, this has resulted in teams refocusing services by; providing emergency accommodation to rough sleepers as

part of the Everyone In initiative; putting in place additional safeguards to help maintain social distancing in temporary accommodation; and delivering remote services as standard. A ban on private rented sector evictions, in place since the first national lockdown, expired at the end of May 2021. Along with the broader economic impacts of the pandemic, this has increased the level of demand on homelessness services and the potential impacts will need to be monitored in the months ahead.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017: the implementation of this Act, whilst putting in place welcome additional protections for those at risk of homelessness, has introduced extra demands on the work of local Housing Needs teams. The changes it introduced included:

- A new prevention duty, requiring local authorities to take reasonable steps to assist those likely to become homeless earlier, so within 56, rather than 28 days.
- A new relief duty, which applies to those already homeless when they ask the local authority for help. It requires local authorities to provide support for 56 days.
- A requirement to carry out a holistic assessment of the applicant's housing and support needs, then set out how these will be addressed in a Personal Housing Plan.

The combined impact of these changes has been to increase the overall number of applicants seeking help, alter the profile of those qualifying for assistance (in particular more single applicants and more households with complex needs are coming forward under the new duties) and increase the number of applicants placed in temporary accommodation.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Under this new Act, domestic abuse is recognised as a direct factor conferring priority need for the first time, so applicants no longer have to prove that the abuse is creating vulnerability, in order to qualify for help. This is a welcome change that will provide re-assurance and certainty for individuals and their families presenting as homeless because of domestic abuse and will simplify the decision making process for officers. The Act introduces a new definition of domestic abuse and requires that housing authorities, when rehousing victims, should provide a secure lifetime tenancy.

National Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018: this Government Strategy sets out their current plans for tackling rough sleeping. It comprises of three parts:

- **Prevention:** understanding issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing support.
- **Intervention:** helping rough sleepers with swift support tailored to their individual needs.
- **Recovery:** supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

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The Strategy, along with the funding received via the Rough Sleeper Initiative, set out to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it completely by 2027.

Local context

Property prices in Sevenoaks District are high, with the average median cost of a home in 2020 is £425,000 (source: [Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2022](#) (TRLHN)). The recent surge in market activity has only served to exacerbate this position. Such high prices set the context for a range of issues that restrict the access that many households have to local housing markets. These include (with all references relating to the TRLHN):

- **High house prices and rents:** house price ratios, which compare the relationship between average property prices and average earnings, showed that by 2020, median property prices were almost 12 times the local resident based full time salary. High house prices have a knock on effect on private rents, the high level of which continue to challenge the ability for local households to secure suitable housing. By 2020, the median rent (all bed sizes) stood at £1,296 per month, a rise of 40 percent over the past 10 years. A recent search on Rightmove (18 October 2022) illustrated the fact that the majority of private rents charged in Sevenoaks District are above the Local Housing Allowance, which caps levels of welfare benefit subsidy that can be claimed. Of the 39 advertised homes in Sevenoaks and Swanley, none were available at a rent below the respective Local Housing Allowance rate. With Local Housing Allowance rates remaining frozen, this picture is unlikely to change anytime soon.
- **Deprivation:** Indices of Multiple Deprivation, last published by the Office for National Statistics in 2019, provide a snapshot of relative deprivation in each locality in England, by looking at a range of factors including income, employment, education, health, and barriers to housing. These are combined into a single index. Overall, Sevenoaks District ranks as 295 out of 354 local authorities in England. Sevenoaks District has two Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are amongst the 20% most deprived in England, St Mary's and White Oak wards in Swanley.
- **Housing tenure and supply:** The total housing stock of Sevenoaks District was 50,947 in 2020, an increase of 2,886 homes, a rise of 6% over the past ten years (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – live tables). This was driven largely by new private sector provision (increase of 2,836 homes) and a smaller increase in Registered Providers (formerly known as Housing Associations) homes (62 homes). Overall, the growth in Registered Provider social housing stock has been small, once Right to Buy losses are taken into account. New affordable housing supply is an area that requires more focus if provision is to be expanded to help meet demand.
- **Housing demand and availability:** The demand for social housing is high and there are currently over 870 households waiting for homes on the Council's

housing register, each of whom meets one or more categories of preferential need. The availability of social housing, on the other hand, is restricted in terms of both new supply and the number of existing homes that become available to relet. During 2021-2022 a total of 194 West Kent Housing Association homes were let to new tenants, which represents a stock turnover of 3.5%. There remains a significant discrepancy between the levels of supply and demand.

The combined impact of high housing costs and restricted affordable housing in both the private and social rented housing sectors, presents a real housing challenge to residents of the District. These challenges restrict the housing choices of many households on middle incomes and severely restrict the choices of those on low and unstable incomes, many of whom have to compromise on the standard and suitability of the homes they can secure. These inequalities will continue to have a disproportionate impact on young people, single households, and those reliant on welfare benefits.

Strategic fit

This Strategy contributes directly to the housing ambitions set out in Sevenoaks District Council's Council Plan and our refreshed Housing Strategy 2022-2027 priorities, which are:

- Priority 1: Developing Sevenoaks' housing offer: building new affordable homes.
- Priority 2: Promoting quality and optimising the suitability of homes.
- Priority 3: Reducing homelessness and improving routes into permanent accommodation.
- Priority 4: Healthy people, homes and places.

In addressing homelessness the plan sets out goals to; focus on prevention; support households at risk of homelessness; and work in partnership to address the number of rough sleepers in the town.

Summary of findings from the Homelessness Review

The review set out to provide an up to date picture of the:

- Current and likely future levels of homelessness across the District.
- Activities carried out and support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.

The main causes of homelessness in the District remains static:

- Parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

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- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner.
- Other reason (eg homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel returned from abroad).
- Non-violent breakdown of relationship.
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

A summary of key findings from the review is set out below.

- **Service demand and operational response:** the review showed that the demand for services remains high and is likely to remain so into the foreseeable future. During 2021-2022, 999 households raised enquiries with the housing needs team, a decrease from 1,180 enquiries received the year before. 376 of these enquiries progressed through to a formal homelessness application, and of these, 205 households were found to be owed a prevention duty (because they were at risk of homelessness when they approached the Council) or relief duty (because they were homeless at the time they approached the Council).
- **Prevention duty and the Council's response:** the number of households whose prevention duty ended during the year is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2021-2022 this duty ended for 205 households, with the preventative activities undertaken by the Housing Service successfully securing accommodation for 130 of those seeking help. Around 36 went on to become homeless. Taking positive action to prevent homelessness in this way reduces both the social cost of homelessness on households and the financial costs borne by the Council.
- **Relief duty and the Council's response:** the number of households whose relief duty ended during the year is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2021-2022 this duty ended for 171 households, with the activities undertaken by the Housing Service successfully securing accommodation and addressing homelessness for 38 of those seeking help. As is the case with preventative measures, relieving homelessness in this way reduces the social and financial costs of homelessness. Around 130 of households remained homeless as their relief duty ended (after 56 days) and progressed to be assessed under the main homelessness duty.
- **Main duty assessments:** the number of main duty assessments undertaken has risen by 48% over the past few years, from 62 cases in 2018-2019 to 130 in 2021-2022. The Council has assisted many households earlier in the process under the prevention and relief duties as introduced in the Homelessness Reduction Act. However the Council has seen an increase in the number of approaches from households impacted by COVID, an increase in domestic abuse presentations and single households and those aged 16 and 17 year old. Single households are less likely to qualify as a priority than families, as having children is the key driver of priority need set out in the legislation. In 2021-2022 most households re-housed under the main duty accepted an offer of a

socially rented home with the remainder accepting an offer in the private rented sector.

- **Rough Sleeping:** the number of rough sleepers in Sevenoaks District continues to be low when compared with areas of a similar size. The annual rough sleeper count, which takes place in all local authorities each autumn, recorded 1 case in 2021, a reduction from 8 in 2020. The Rough Sleeping Initiative continues to provide ongoing support, carrying out proactive outreach work that identifies those sleeping rough and helps connect them with local services, but there remains a significant shortage of suitable move on accommodation in the District. This has been exasperated by the Government's Everyone In COVID plans, which provided much needed shelter for those at risk of rough sleeping, but has left high numbers of single, often vulnerable persons, in emergency accommodation. Addressing their support and housing needs is a priority.
- **Partnerships:** working with statutory and voluntary partners has been integral to mounting an effective local response to homelessness, and a wide range of dedicated partners have joined efforts to help prevent homelessness and provide support to vulnerable households. The new Duty to Refer pathway, introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act is working well, with partner agencies referring 1,687 enquiries to the Council between 2018-2022. The probation service, hospitals and prisons were the leading sources of referral.
- **Local trends and COVID:** over the past year, analysis of how the Housing Service has been operating indicates that the pandemic has had a local impact that reflects national trends. As such, the associated policies that have sought to restrict evictions and support the most vulnerable, have increased the proportion of single households, and reduced the number of households with children being assisted by the housing services team.
- **Impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act:** there is evidence that the shift towards assisting more single households was underway before the pandemic, as a result of the new prevention and relief duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act. In 2021-2022 single persons accounted for 201 of all those qualifying for assistance under the prevention or relief duties. Invariably, this means that the service is managing higher numbers of single and vulnerable people with mental health issues and other complex disadvantages.
- **Impact of the Domestic Abuse Act:** the new act was introduced in 2021 and placed a duty on local authorities to give support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and safe accommodation. Since its introduction, the Council has seen a rise in out of area placements, notably from London authorities. Domestic abuse now accounts for a significant number of our homelessness enquires and has seen 136 placements being made in temporary and emergency accommodation in 2021-2022.

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- Longer term trends:** Whilst in the short term there is likely to be some re-balancing of the profile of those accessing the service, as the impact of COVID cases, services are likely to continue to face a high level of demand from a more marginalised demand through preventative activity. In addressing these trends, the emphasis will need to be placed on putting in place high quality services that seek to reduce homelessness. Locally, we are seeing the rising cost of living impacting a rise in homelessness. The proposed removal of the Kent Homeless Connect support contract by Kent County Council will impact the provision of much needed supported accommodation and intensive support for rough sleepers with multi-complex needs and challenging customer base.

Strategic Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy will cover the following themes:

<p>PREVENTION</p>	<p>Quality housing needs and standards - services dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed assessment.</p> <p>Preventative casework - working alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless.</p> <p>Targeted preventions for the most vulnerable groups through the provision of agreed pathways into support.</p> <p>Strategic activities that seek to identify issues that drive homelessness across the District and apply remedies to reduce it.</p>
<p>INTERVENTION</p>	<p>Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting the County wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs.</p> <p>Partnership working - maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups.</p> <p>Temporary housing - provide a good quality, safe, secure, value for money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements.</p>
<p>SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS</p>	<p>Re-housing establish a range of sustainable housing and move-on</p>

	<p>options for rough sleepers, vulnerable and homeless households.</p> <p>Support - deliver effective support services to help households maintain accommodation once housed.</p>
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Each of these themes is underpinned by a series of objectives:

- Effective collaborations with statutory, agency and voluntary partners.
- High quality services that treat customers with respect and provide value for money.
- Skilled and well trained staff.

Pursuing an integrated approach that works with partners to assess and prevent the local causes of homelessness and rough sleeping, can help deliver best practice, reduce the barriers that restrict people from accessing services, and equip residents with the skills they need to sustain their tenancy in the longer term.

Monitoring

The Action Plan will be monitored on an annual basis to maintain progress against the set objectives.

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Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy: Action Plan 2023-2028

Theme 1: Prevention					
Objective	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
Quality housing advice, prevention and accommodation services - dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed case assessment	Train and develop a team of confident and experienced housing advice, prevention and accommodation officers to deliver high quality needs assessments and excellent customer service, with dignity and respect	<p>Develop and update skills matrix for all teams/staff</p> <p>Organise delivery of homelessness law and case law update courses</p> <p>Named staff champions with joint responsibility for leading specialist training/liaison in areas, such as domestic abuse, ex-offenders and mental health awareness</p> <p>Enhanced monthly monitoring of complaints and ensure outcomes are discussed at 1-1s to</p>			

		reduce levels of complaints			
	Develop IT systems to maximise efficiency, case management and reporting capabilities and align key customer processes	<p>Effective case management of homelessness applications and decisions in place</p> <p>Updated website content, with better quality information providing residents with opportunities to receive answers via self-service options</p> <p>Automated management reports detailing caseload, approaches, throughput, and demographics, to support the more effective monitoring of service</p> <p>Data reports that can be extracted and shared with partners to support the development of new</p>			

		<p>initiatives and funding bids</p> <p>Key customer processes, including applications for homelessness, housing register and change of circumstance forms, fully operational and online</p> <p>Automated processes in place that reduce the time spent on administrative tasks and improve customer outcomes</p>			
	<p>Work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners, ensuring customers can access advice and practical support which meets their needs and delivers</p>	<p>Hold regular forum with voluntary homelessness service providers, advice, and statutory agencies</p> <p>At least one partner agency invited to each monthly team meeting to discuss their service/project</p>			

	realistic housing solutions	Monitor referral arrangements in place to deliver preventative outcomes via commissioned partners			
	Align enforcement activities of Private Sector Housing Team to focus on prevention and relief outcomes and use of landlord incentives	Higher numbers of prevention outcomes and reduced risks of homelessness			
Preventative casework - working, alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless	Work effectively with other colleagues in the Council such as housing benefit, private housing, community safety, licensing, and income teams, to help resolve issues that may lead to homelessness	Improved standards in private sector accommodation resulting in fewer approaches due to disrepair			

	<p>Work with neighbouring authorities and named public bodies to review and maintain effective Duty to Refer pathways, to help drive the early identification of homelessness</p>	<p>Increased volume of timely referrals from agencies and support services, improving prevention outcomes for applicants</p>			
	<p>Create a dedicated hub of local partners, integrating the prevention work of Council teams, voluntary and statutory agencies, to focus on upstreaming preventative activities and coordinate casework</p>	<p>Hub established as the focus of preventative work and the lead in deploying early interventions targeted to those at risk of losing their home</p> <p>Increased volumes of planned moves to alternative Private Rented Sector homes and other housing options through negotiation and the use of incentives</p>			

	<p>Target early financial support for tenants (Discretionary Housing Payments, rent deposits and rent in advance) in partnership between Benefits, HERO and West Kent Housing Association</p>	<p>Reduced proportion of relief versus prevention outcomes managed through the housing services team</p>			
	<p>Promote an effective, value for money, landlord incentive scheme that encourages more private rented sector landlords to let homes to housing needs referrals</p>	<p>Scheme published/advertised to private sector landlords</p> <p>Landlord event held to promote the scheme</p> <p>Key point of contract for private sector landlords established and better working relationships with local landlords, local agents and the National Landlords Association</p>			

		Increased number of private sector properties available and reduced number of applicants in emergency/temporary accommodation			
Offering targeted preventions for the most vulnerable - through the provision of agreed pathways into support	Support education and awareness initiatives for young people to highlight the reality of becoming homeless	Develop a Sevenoaks District schools Homelessness Prevention Project			
	Jointly manage and review key Duty to Refer pathways for those leaving hospital and Care Leavers teams, to improve interventions for the most vulnerable customers	Reduced numbers of 18 to 25 year old homeless applicants Embedded pathways for Care Leavers reducing the numbers in emergency and temporary accommodation			

	<p>Develop pathways for prison leavers and those in the criminal justice system through the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AFE0) funding</p>	<p>Jointly funded HERO Resettlement Officer in post (funded by AFE0 funding)</p> <p>Reduced number of prison leavers entering emergency and temporary accommodation</p>			
	<p>Agree joint working pathways with Children's Services for families who may be intentionally homeless, to minimise the impact of homelessness on these households</p>	<p>Reduced number of intentionally homeless families with children in emergency and temporary accommodation</p>			

Theme 2: Intervention					
Objective	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting the County wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs	Work with key delivery partners to deliver a programme of support and initiatives, as part of the Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 funding	Agreed funding framework for rough sleeping services to sustain initiative for next 3 years			
	Develop a District wide support and accommodation approach for customers with the most complex support needs	An established multi-disciplinary team/hub where multiple complex needs cases across the District are managed in one place Reduced number of households with multiple complex need cases in emergency and temporary accommodation			
	Continue to use capital and revenue grants	Completed refurbishment of the West Kent Housing			

	<p>from DLUHC and Homes England, to provide dedicated move on accommodation for former rough sleepers and work collaboratively with relevant partners (for example, West Kent Housing Association and Look Ahead) to ensure the success of those placements</p>	<p>Association owned Vine Court Road and Orchard Close properties, funded by the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme capital grant round</p> <p>Support services within the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme revenue grant agreed and in place for Vine Court Road and Orchard Close</p> <p>Reduced numbers of rough sleepers</p>			
	<p>Engage with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies to target and deliver support where it is needed most and make best use of their well established</p>	<p>Established District wide homelessness forum for relevant for relevant partners</p> <p>Joint plan with voluntary groups for delivering Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) responses and winter</p>			

	working relationship with this group	<p>night shelters, in place</p> <p>Support rough sleepers and the wider street community by addressing their vulnerability and wider impact on community safety issues</p>			
Partnership working – maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups	Strategic commitment to partnership working across various multi-agency panels and forums to find solutions in the most complex of individual cases	<p>An established multi-disciplinary team/hub where multiple complex needs cases across the County are managed in one place</p> <p>Reduced number of multiple complex needs cases in emergency and temporary accommodation</p>			
	Strategic commitment to close working with Kent Districts and Boroughs to minimise duplication, pool resources and reduce costs	Regular attendance at the Kent Homelessness Officers Group			

	Continue with consortium applications for grant funding wherever possible, to help maximise funding successes	Successful joint bids with other Kent authorities for future funding opportunities			
	Contribute to County wide efforts to improve services and options for victims of domestic abuse	Enhanced housing options to support for victims of domestic abuse Domestic Abuse Housing Coordinator in post and in attendance at MARAC West Kent Domestic Abuse Forum continues to meet			
Temporary housing provide a good quality, safe, secure, value for money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements	Review existing emergency and temporary accommodation provision to ensure value for money across the portfolio	Reduced average cost of emergency per unit Quality portfolio of temporary accommodation properties to better meet a wide range of applicants housing needs in place			

		Continue to optimise the use of West Kent Housing Association and Moat Housing stock as temporary accommodation, over and above emergency short term placements			
	Review the Allocation Policy and make the best use of existing social housing stock	Allocation Policy updated, consulted, and approved Reduced void turnaround times by West Kent Housing Association			
Rehousing - establish a range of sustainable housing and move on options for homeless households	Ensure cohesive approach to private rented sector procurement and lettings of Assured Shorthold Tenancies and leased properties	Greater range of sustainable move on options for homeless households delivered			
	Work with partners in Kent County Council to ensure the commissioning and best use of supported	Reduce numbers of applicants in emergency accommodation awaiting move on to			

	accommodation across the County	supported accommodation			
	Accelerate the delivery of new affordable housing, as part of Quercus Housing and in partnership with the Council's strategic development team, developers and registered providers	Suitable affordable homes delivered in the District to address housing need			
	Ensure the Allocation Policy balances the needs of homeless and housing register applicants and review existing applications	Revision of Allocation Policy complete and Housing Register list up to date			
	Make best use of Disabled Facilities Grants to provide suitable adaptations across the public and private sector and a review	More residents continuing to live independently and Disabled Facility Grants statistics reflected in homelessness prevention outcomes			

	of needs undertaken as part of the new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2025-2030				
	Undertake regular assessments of housing need to inform delivery plans for new homes	Comprehensive housing needs assessment completed in partnership with the Planning Policy Team as part of Housing Strategy 2022-2027			
Support - deliver effective services to help customers maintain accommodation once housed.	Provide the HERO and One You services to bridge the gap between health, homelessness and employment/skills	Increase in homelessness preventions			
	Develop a standalone Tenancy Readiness package to support homeless applicants in specific areas of independent living and tenancy sustainment	Tenancy readiness package developed and implemented			

Theme 3: Sustainable Solutions

Objective	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
Ensure that the emerging Local Plan contains policies that optimise the delivery of a range of affordable homes through the planning system	Local Plan policies drafted	Included in Reg 18 consultation Local Plan adopted by Full Council (following examination)			
Explore the scope for a managed increase in Quercus Housing's delivery outputs	Develop a scoping paper for Purchase and Repair acquisitions to provide family sized affordable rent and/or temporary accommodation within the District	Revised Business Plan adopted by Quercus Housing Guarantor Board			
Continue to work with the Rural Housing Enabler (Rural Kent), Parish	5 year programme of local needs surveys undertaken	At least 30 new local needs homes delivered during the Housing Strategy			

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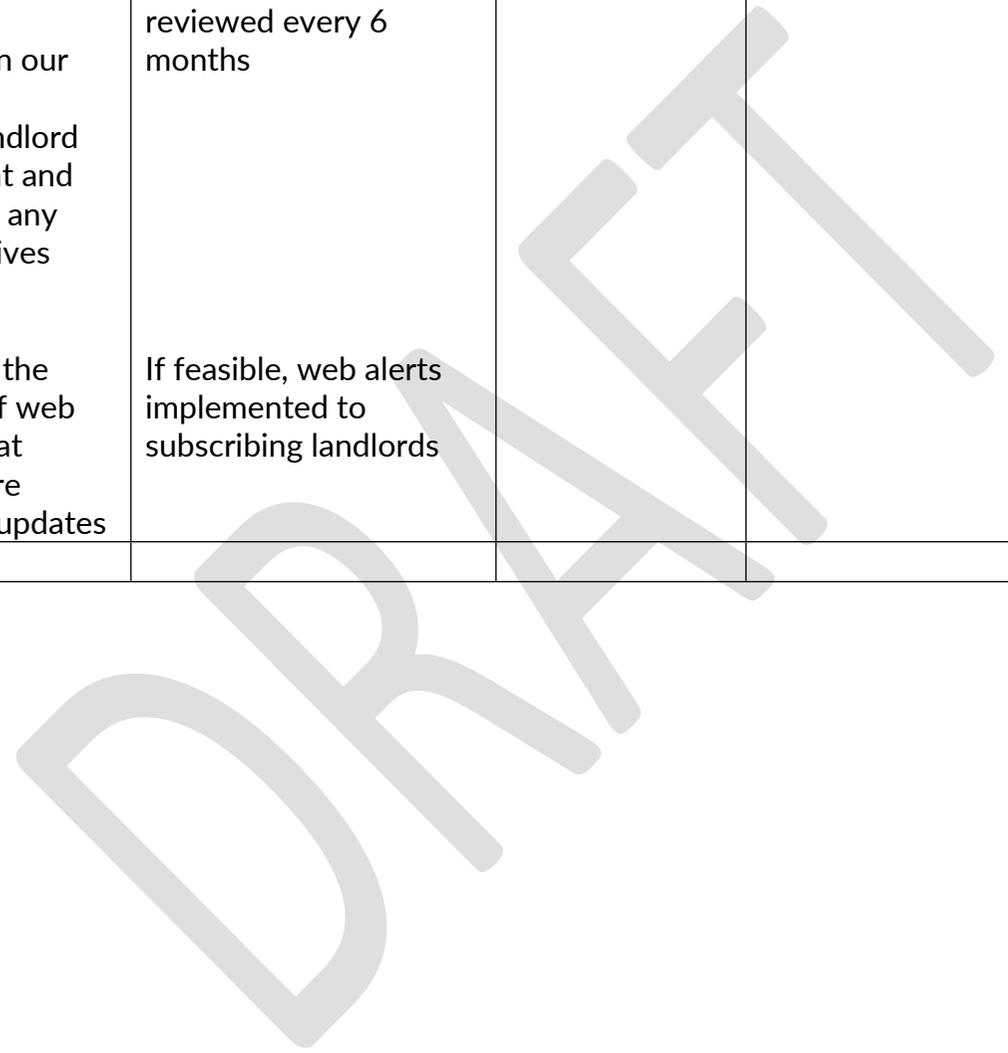
<p>Councils and community groups to undertake a programme of local housing needs surveys across the District and to facilitate the delivery of new rural exceptions housing where needs are identified</p>	<p>Assistance provided to facilitate delivery of new local needs housing</p>	<p>period, subject to planning approval</p>			
<p>Include provisions in the emerging Local Plan to deliver accessible and wheelchair adapted housing</p>	<p>Policies included in new Local Plan to ensure new homes meet the needs of older and disabled households</p>	<p>Policies included in Local Plan Reg 18 consultation and onwards</p>			
<p>Within the existing Registered Provider stock, seek to refurbish, extend, or</p>	<p>Work with West Kent Housing Association and other Registered Providers to facilitate the best use of the existing</p>	<p>Planning applications submitted for remodelling of stock</p>			

<p>repurpose existing dwellings to make better use of them</p>	<p>stock, including the remodelling of social housing schemes that are no longer fit for purpose</p>				
<p>Seek to introduce an enhanced rightsizing incentive scheme for social housing tenants</p>	<p>Subject to agreement with partner Registered Provider's and approval of the use of Section 106 affordable housing commuted sum funding, a rightsizing incentive scheme (including an officer to coordinate the scheme), developed and submitted for approval</p>	<p>Scheme approved by Cabinet</p>			
<p>Support owners of empty homes through the Council's membership of</p>	<p>Development of a new Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan</p>	<p>Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan approved, and empty homes brought back into use and</p>			

<p>Kent No Use Empty, to create a downward trend in the number of long term empty homes</p>		<p>provided as affordable housing wherever possible</p>			
<p>Create a coalition of temporary and move on accommodation landlords to provide sustainable, reliable, cost effective temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Work with Kent Housing Group to ascertain emergency accommodation charges from private providers across the County and seek consistency</p> <p>Review all emergency accommodation providers used by the Council and develop a preferred provider list</p>	<p>Consistency of charging for temporary accommodation across Kent</p> <p>List of preferred providers in place based on suitability/affordability</p>			
<p>Provide regular Landlord Forums to ensure</p>	<p>Provide regular Landlord Forum events for private sector landlords</p>	<p>Events held</p>			

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<p>relationships with local private rented sector landlords are strengthened and to maximise the potential for the placement of homeless households into long term housing solutions</p>	<p>Develop support pages for landlords on our website, to increase landlord engagement and to highlight any new incentives available</p> <p>Investigate the provision of web alerts so that landlords are notified of updates</p>	<p>Website updated and reviewed every 6 months</p> <p>If feasible, web alerts implemented to subscribing landlords</p>			
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MAKING BEST USE OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING STOCK - UNDER OCCUPATION INITIATIVE

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 22 November 2022

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

Status: For Decision

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 8 December 2022

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: The Housing Strategy 2022-2027 highlights the importance of making the best use of existing social housing. Approval is being sought to introduce an under occupation initiative which, is open to all Registered Provider partners with family sized housing stock located in the District. The proposed initiative can be funded from available S106 affordable housing monies for an initial 2 year period, from April 2023 to March 2025, subject to Portfolio Holder approval for the use of these funds

This report supports the Key Aim of: Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Kevin Maskell

Contact Officer: Sharon Donald, Housing Strategy Manager, Ext.7131

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee:

To consider the proposed under occupation initiative and make a recommendation to Cabinet; and

Recommendation to Cabinet:

That

- a) subject to comments from Housing and Health Advisory Committee, Members, approve the introduction of a new under occupation initiative
- b) The Housing Strategy Manager, be delegated authority, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Health, to finalise details of the initiative in collaboration with Registered Provider partners and to make any minor amendments.

Reason for recommendation: The implementation of an under occupation initiative with Registered Provider partners will ensure the best possible use is made of existing family sized social housing. This will help address the needs of the Housing Register and assist the Council in carrying out its statutory housing function.

Introduction and Background

- 1 In 2012, the Council adopted an Under Occupation Strategy. To deliver this Strategy, the post of an under occupation officer was created and additional funding was provided to the West Kent Housing Association under occupation cash incentive scheme, “Small is Beautiful.” These measures were joint funded with West Kent Housing Association, and open to West Kent Housing Association tenants only. The District Council used Section 106 affordable housing monies to fund its contribution.
- 2 Over the ensuing 5 year period, 119 under occupying tenants were helped to downsize. The freed up family sized homes were allocated to applicants from the Council’s Housing Register.
- 3 The post of under occupation officer came to an end in March 2019. However the Council has continued to contribute to the Small is Beautiful cash incentive scheme, which remains in operation until 31 March 2023. Within the Council’s group of Registered Provider partners, only West Kent Housing Association offers an under occupation incentive scheme to its tenants.
- 4 The Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the Older Persons’ Housing Study 2022 confirm the importance of making the best use of existing social housing. The Sevenoaks District Council Housing Register Allocations Policy 2022-2027 gives highest priority (Band A) to under occupying social housing tenants seeking to downsize. In addition, under occupying tenants who are of state retirement age, are eligible to bid for homes with 1 additional bedroom to their housing need. All freed up under occupied homes are offered to the Council for allocation via the Housing Register. This helps alleviate Housing Register pressures and assist the Council in moving homeless applicants out of costly nightly paid temporary accommodation.
- 5 An analysis (see table below) was carried in March 2022 to assess under occupation initiatives offered in other local authority areas. It can be seen the level of cash incentive currently offered under Small is Beautiful is in line with neighbouring authorities.

Organisation	£ per bedroom given up	£ other payment (removal costs, carpets, decorating, etc)
Sevenoaks District Council/ West Kent Housing Association - Small is Beautiful	500	1,000
Medway Council	500	500
Gravesham Borough Council	500	Removal costs paid if going to sheltered housing
Dartford Borough Council	500	>500
Tandridge District Council	Fixed grant of 2,000	500
Oxford City Council	1,000	1,500
London Borough of Lambeth	500	500

Westminster City Council	3,000 for over 65's	2,000
London Borough of Greenwich	350	All removals and disturbance costs covered
London Borough of Southwark	1,000	Unspecified allowance to help with utilities

- 6 The potential for releasing family sized social housing is excellent. As at April 2022, the main stock holding Registered Provider partners had the following 2 plus bedroom stock in the District:
- West Kent Housing Association = 3,764
 - Moat = 394
 - Orbit = 80
 - Places for People = 97
- 7 Following positive conversations with Registered Provider partners, we are seeking approval to implement an under occupation initiative which, will include all Registered Providers who are interested in participating. It is proposed the initiative would be in operation for an initial 2 year period.
- 8 Under occupation cash incentives work most effectively when they are offered with a “hand holding” service. A new post of Tenant Support Officer (under occupation) is therefore proposed under the initiative.
- 9 To comply with funding rules, the Tenant Support Officer would have to be employed by a Registered Provider partner (as was the case with the under occupation officer with West Kent Housing Association), but the Tenant Support Officer would be part of the Housing Accommodation Team and managed by the Team Leader.
- 10 The proposed initiative can be funded by Section 106 affordable housing monies. It represents an eligible project under the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2011.
- 11 If supported, we will work with the Registered Providers to finalise who will participate, how the initiative will operate, what the initiative should be called and the level of funding each Registered Provider is willing to contribute. It may be that a Registered Provider is willing to participate but is unwilling/unable to contribute funds. Our view is that Registered Providers should contribute funding, but that this should not be made a condition to participation. It is considered the benefit to the Council (and Housing Register applicants) of securing family sized social housing outweighs the cost to the Council funding the initiative, whether wholly or in part. The proposed initiative offers excellent value for money compared with the cost of delivering new build family sized social housing.
- 12 Subject to agreement with participating Registered Providers, it proposed the cash incentive should be maintained at the levels applying to the Small is Beautiful scheme, with the exception of an additional £500 payment to any tenant downsizing to 1 bedroom designated older persons’ housing.

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- 13 The Service Level Agreement applying to the Small is Beautiful scheme set a target of 20 under occupation moves each year. It is therefore not unreasonable to anticipate up to 40 under occupation moves could be achieved under the proposed initial 2 year programme.
- 14 Subject to approval, an under occupation initiative Service Level Agreement will be put in place with the participating Registered Providers for an initial 2 year period, from April 2023 to March 2025.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

None.

Key Implications

Financial

Estimates show the proposed initiative can be funded from available Section 106 affordable housing monies for an initial 2 year period. Subject to Cabinet approval, Portfolio Holder approval will be sought to secure Section 106 monies. Subject to positive outcomes from the initial 2 year period and further Section 106 affordable housing monies being available, the initiative could be extended beyond 31 March 2025.

Resource (non financial)

The Tenant Support Officer would undertake the additional work required.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None.

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.

Net Zero Implications

The decision recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

Implementing an under occupation initiative, which is open to all Registered Provider partners, will ensure the best possible use is made of family sized social housing. However, it should be noted that the delivery and success of the initiative is subject to being able to recruit a Tenant Support Officer (under occupation) via a Registered Provider for the two year delivery period.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People and Places

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PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 22 November 2022

Report of: Sarah Robson, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People and Places

Status: For information

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 8 December 2022

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2017 sets out how the Council will provide assistance to homeowners and private tenants to enable them to keep their homes in good repair and free of hazards and enable them to live as independently as possible. The Policy sets out the assistance available to disabled people to help them adapt, improve or repair their homes.

The levels of discretionary grant assistance contained within the Policy are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The last review was undertaken, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, in June 2022.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Kevin Maskell

Contact Officer: Sharon Donald, Housing Strategy Manager, Extension 7131

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee:

To note the updated levels of discretionary grant assistance available under the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy. That comments on recommendation (a) below are passed to Cabinet.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- a) To note the updated levels of discretionary grant assistance available under the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

Reason for recommendation:

The report is for information only.

Introduction and Background

1. Poor quality housing has an impact on the health of the occupants and on the quality of life in an area. Improving the condition of private sector properties contributes to the regeneration of the District and towards the target for increasing the number of decent homes occupied by vulnerable households in the private sector.
2. Raising standards in these properties contributes to safer, stronger and more sustainable communities, improving health and wellbeing and improving the environment, and by allowing people to remain living in their own homes reduces the financial pressure on the Council by reducing costs of long term care.
3. The current Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy was adopted at Full Council in November 2017. The Policy sets out the way in which grant assistance provided by the Better Care Fund, both mandatory and discretionary, is administered by the Private Sector Housing Team. The levels of discretionary grant assistance contained within the Policy are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The last review was undertaken, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, in June 2022.
4. From its introduction in 2013, the Better Care Fund has sought to create a local, single pooled budget to help the NHS and local government to work more closely together to place wellbeing as the focus of health, housing and care services for residents. The fundamental principles of the Better Care Fund are to:
 - Instigate and formulate links with health and third sector organisations to provide opportunities to improve the lives of vulnerable people, to give them control and place them at the centre of their own care and support, and in doing so, provide a better service and quality of life
 - Ensure households reside in properties that are free from Category 1 hazards
 - To provide not only financial assistance but help through a combination of education and encouragement and direct/indirect financial assistance
5. **Grant Assistance**

Grant assistance can be provided in the following ways:

- Mandatory Disabled Facility Grant (DFG)

In addition, the Council can offer discretionary grants as detailed below provided budgets allow, although mandatory DFG applications will take precedence over any discretionary applications:

- Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant (DDFG)
- Top Up Grants
- Relocation Funding
- Specific Situation Funding
- Accelerated Facility Grant (AFG)
- Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)
- Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)
- Housing Assistance Grant (HAG)

6. Interim Review of Discretionary Grants

The non-means tested discretionary Accelerated Facilities Grant was introduced in November 2017 with a limit of £6,500 per grant. This grant has helped many customers to obtain much needed adaptations. However, since the introduction of this grant facility we have seen substantial increases in overall costs associated with adaptations, particularly during the last 2 years. The increase in overall costs is linked to the increase in material costs due to a short supply of materials along with rising fuel costs and labour shortages. We are seeing a number of our customers with more complex needs, meaning that adaptations can be more costly.

Similarly, since the introduction of the Safe and Secure Grant, we have seen an increase in the number of referrals for hoarding and filthy and verminous cases requiring clearance and minor repairs. We found that the maximum limit of £1,000 was not always sufficient to carry out all the remedial work required to ensure our customers can remain safe and live independently in their own home.

A review of the levels of Accelerated Facilities Grants and Safe and Secure Grants was undertaken in January 2021 with the following increases agreed and approved by the Portfolio Holder, Housing and Health:

- Accelerated Facilities Grant - increased from £6,500 to £8,000
- Safe and Secure Grant - increased from £1,000 to £3,000

A further review of discretionary grants was undertaken in June 2022 and a further increase in the Accelerated Facilities Grant level from £8,000 to £10,000 was agreed and approved by the Portfolio Holder, Housing and Health.

7. As set out in the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 Action Plan, the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy will be subject to full review, including public consultation, in 2025. A new 5 year Policy will be developed and subject to approval at Full Council, adopted.

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Other options Considered and/or rejected

None.

Key Implications

Financial

The Better Care Fund is allocated from central government on an annual basis. The fund supports delivery of both mandatory and discretionary grants to eligible households. The budget is managed and monitored by the Private Sector Housing Team Leader.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Not applicable.

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.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

Sevenoaks District Council has had a Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy for many years detailing the types of assistance available. By increasing the grant levels in line with price rises in materials and labour, we can ensure that we are able to continue providing Sevenoaks District's residents access to assistance to repair, improve and adapt their properties to enable them to live safely and independently in their own homes. By investing in maintaining properties enables our residents in the private sector to remain living independently, and therefore negates the high cost of temporary accommodation and the pressure on social care budgets. This report has been submitted to refresh Members regarding the forms of assistance available.

Appendices

Appendix A - Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

Background Papers

None

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People and Places

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Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2022/25

Review date of July 2025

Context

There have been significant changes in the way housing assistance is funded and the priorities of both national government and Sevenoaks District Council, this new housing assistance policy reflects the current priorities and will also give sufficient flexibility to meet the challenges in the years to come.

Background since 2008

Since 2008 there have been two significant developments which directly influence this housing assistance policy.

Firstly, since 1969 there has been considerable funding directed to Councils for improvement grants enabling unfit or substandard domestic property's to be brought up to a reasonable standard. Unfortunately, since 2010 all such money from Central Government ceased, reducing the Councils ability to promote and fund such improvement works.

Secondly, in June 2013 Central Government introduced the Better Care Fund (BCF) to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care as it was recognised that "The effects of poor housing cost the NHS over £2 billion every year (around 2% of the annual budget in England). Improving homes delivers a return on investment quickly".

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is one of the most ambitious programmes across the NHS and local government to date. It creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the NHS and local government to work more closely together around people, placing their wellbeing as the focus of health and care services. BCF also shifts resources into social care and community services for the benefit of the people, communities and health and care systems. Integral to the BCF is the inclusion within the overall budget of the annual Disabled Facility Grant allocation and the political decision to increase the DFG over several years.

Given the change in political and financial emphasis this policy must reflect this by maximising the partnership role the Council can play in particular with neighbouring local authorities but also with the NHS. Although Private Sector Housings core role, that of housing advice and financial assistance (depending on financial resources available), will not be overlooked.

Introduction

This document details the Councils Housing Assistance Policy and Conditions attached to such funding. This policy has been adopted under Article 4 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. The Order enables local authorities to develop a means of providing assistance to any resident so they can address local needs and priorities.

The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 states the processes by which grants are processed, so if any unusual scenarios are presented then this Act will be the primary source of information.

This Policy explains the only mandatory grant, the Disabled Facilities Grants, the funding for which is received from KCC via the BCF and administered in line with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. In addition discretionary assistance aligned to the requirements of the BCF will also be set out.

The policy will also explain the discretionary financial assistance available to residents which is principally aimed at enabling residents to reside safely in their own home.

This Policy recognises the limitation on the Councils own capital funds and the fact it is unlikely that substantial additional support from either the Council or Central Government will be forthcoming, so ensuring whenever possible financial assistance is recovered and recycled to assist further residents is essential.

Any queries relating to this policy or grant conditions should be referred to the Private Sector Housing Team Leader, Sevenoaks District Council, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HG.

Fundamental principles

This Policy reflects local housing conditions and its core objectives are:

- The requirement to instigate and formulate links with Health and third sector organisations to provide opportunities to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, giving them control, placing them at the centre of their own care and support, and, in doing so, providing them with a better service and better quality of life
- The need to ensure households reside in property's that are free from category one hazards
- The need to provide not only financial assistance but assistance through a combination of education, encouragement and direct/indirect financial assistance.

It is neither possible nor desirable for the Council to offer financial assistance to directly fund all private sector housing repairs or maintenance. It can only directly assist a small proportion of these through targeting the limited available resources at priority areas. When it does provide assistance this funding must be repayable thus allowing the recycling of such funding to other applicants.

Although the responsibility to maintain private property rests firmly with the owner, it is recognised that the private housing stock is a major public asset and can have an important effect on the occupier's health. Most assistance is offered as an investment in this local and national asset, for long-term public benefit and economic regeneration. An important reason for providing assistance is the improvement of our resident's health along with supporting the wider National Health Services by aiding rapid transfers from hospital and reducing delayed transfers of care commonly described as bed blocking.

The use of repayable grants is the way the Council provides assistance. Grants that are repaid will be recycled into further private sector housing renewal. The Council and Central Government considers this is an appropriate way forward given the pressure on resources and because, over time, it will allow more homeowners to be assisted with a limited amount of resource.

Money repaid to the Council will be reinvested in the private sector housing assistance capital programme.

No financial assistance will be paid towards the cost of repairing tenanted dwellings, or for works to provide means of escape in case of fire or basic amenities or in HMOs (houses in multiple occupation); these needs will be remedied firstly by education and funding from the landlord and if need be recourse to the appropriate enforcement action.

Grant assistance

Mandatory Assistance and Disabled Facility Grant

Such grants are available to owners or tenants over the age of 18 for providing essential adaptations enabling disabled people better freedom of movement into and round their homes and giving access to essential facilities. This is a statutory grant and administrative process is contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated guidance. The maximum amount of grant is £30,000 (The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008).

To be eligible for assistance an assessment must be undertaken by a suitably qualified Occupational Therapist who recommends adaptations because of person's disability and not for any other reason such as overcrowding. An assessment by the Council must also be satisfied that the works required are "necessary and appropriate" and "reasonable and practicable" bearing in mind the layout and condition of the property. The Council are also obliged to consult with the welfare authority which in our case is Kent County Council before formal approval is given.

Examples of common adaptations include:

- Providing ramps to allow a person to get in and out of their house
- Stair lifts and through floor lifts including a five year warranty
- Level access showers for people who cannot use a conventional bath

Test of resources for owner occupiers and tenants

For each application a test of resources will be undertaken following the requirements of the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 and in the Housing Renewal Grants (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2008.

Calculations are based upon the regulations governing entitlement to housing benefit and council tax support. The income and capital of each relevant person (the disabled occupant and their spouse or partner) is taken into account in the assessment of financial resources.

In the case of families with a disabled child or young person there is no means test and 100% grant is awarded up to the maximum limit.

Where all relevant persons are in receipt of a pass ported benefit then a 100% grant is awarded.

Waiting List

At present and nor is it envisaged there will be a need to prioritise DFG enquires, but should demand for these grants significantly increase or there be a legislative change there may be times when an applicant will unfortunately be placed on a waiting list

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and be assisted in chronological order, although as part of any such waiting list a set of priorities including clinical need will be used to determine if priority should be given.

General Consent repayment conditions

Repayment conditions are applicable to every DFG over £5,000 under The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008. Certain exemptions are applicable regarding repayment but the maximum amount of repayment the Council can require is £10,000. Appendix A provides specific details.

Better Care Fund (BCF) sourced discretionary funding

Discretionary funding supported through the Better Care Fund (DFG allocation)

Historically, the way in which DFG funding could be used was rather prescriptive. However, since the introduction of the BCF a wider more integrated view is being promoted. In a recent letter from the Department of Health they stating that the DFG funding will continue to be included within the BCF to “encourage areas to think strategically about the use of home aids/adaptations, use of technologies to support people in their own homes, and to take a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.”

Mandatory DFG applications will of course take precedence over discretionary funding, however if budgets allow discretionary funding will be used for grants and other initiatives and innovations. All such expenditure must be based on the requirement of the BCF and will achieve at least one or more of the core principles:

- a) Reducing or eliminating hospital admissions.
- b) Allowing a speedier discharge from hospital.
- c) Considering the long term needs of individuals and reductions in associated treatment and social care costs.
- d) Undertaken works, adaptations or provision of equipment that is not provided by any other service.

Collaborative working

Funds will be used from the BCF to fund initiatives linked to the four core principles. Examples of such innovative work would include the Health and Housing Co-ordinator at Tunbridge Wells and Darenth Valley Hospital and a similar role assisting GPs. Funding will be made available to undertake minor works to facilitate hospital discharge or prevent admissions.

Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant (DDFG)

This funding will be made available only as funds via the BCF allow. Mandatory DFG's will take precedent over discretionary funding.

Discretionary funding will be for these specific areas

- Funding adaptations over the £30,000 maximum
- Relocation funding
- Specific situation funding
- Accelerated Facilities Grant (AFG)
- Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)
- Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)

DDFG is principally available to applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for mandatory DFG and who require additional funding in order to pay for the

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adaptations or to move to another property more suited to adaptation (or already adapted). A principle aim of this DDFG is to replace the 'top up' grants administered by KCC.

A more suitable property does not necessarily need to be within the Sevenoaks District.

Assistance may be refused in cases where an applicant is found to have an outstanding debt to the council of any kind. This does not have to be in relation to the same property that the current application for assistance is for. In particular, an applicant with council tax arrears may only apply for assistance once the outstanding debt has been repaid or an appropriate payment method has been arranged and adhered to.

Appendix B and D details the repayment conditions associated with all Discretionary Disabled Facility Grant

Funding adaptations over grant maximum (such grants are commonly referred to as 'Top Up Grants')

For adaptations, over the £30,000 maximum, repayable top up assistance is solely for the necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practical adaptations, if applicants wish to have adaptations over and above this level or a higher specification of fixtures and fittings this will not be covered by this assistance. If schemes become excessive in nature and it is the belief of the Council this is unnecessary then no discretionary funding in such a situation would be made available, an example of this would be if a ground floor extension was reasonable by a two storey extension was being proposed in such a situation discretionary funding would not be made available. DDFG discretionary funding will not be able to be used for the purposes of an 'offset grant'. An offset grant is one where SDC agree a scheme but instead the applicant wishes to undertake a different more extensive/expensive solution.

Owner occupiers are eligible for top up assistance, although tenants will be considered on an individual basis as factors such as impact upon rentability, length of tenancy and agreement of landlord are important.

Maximum amount of top up assistance for all owner and tenant applications will be £30,000 or 50% of the equity existing at the time of application, whichever is the lesser.

Currently registered social landlord tenants are able to apply for a mandatory DFG and can receive up to £30,000, given it would be considered good practice for a responsible social landlord to respond to the needs of its disabled tenants, discretionary assistance above the mandatory maximum will be limited to £15,000. Discretionary funding will only be available if a RSL match funds the discretionary assistance given by the Council. If adaptations exceed £60,000 (mandatory £30,000 plus discretionary from SDC match funded by RSL) then no further funding will be made available from the Council.

All applicants for top up assistance will be subject to the means test used for mandatory DFGs, those on a pass ported benefit and where the adaptations are for a child and one of the parents is in receipt of such a benefit will not go through the means testing process.

Any funding provided via this route for owner occupiers or tenants application is repayable on disposal or transfer of the property to which it relates. A charge will be placed with Land Registry and local land charges. No charge can be placed upon a property owned by a RSL.

The applicant will not normally be eligible for top up assistance where a relocation grant has previously been provided by the Council as any new property would be more appropriate for the disabled person's needs.

Relocation funding

Maximum amount of assistance associated with all relocation assistance applications, will be £10,000 and no repayment requirement.

Relocation funding is available when a proposed adaptation via the mandatory route has been assessed and determined by the Council and Occupational Therapist as not being reasonable and practicable because of either cost and/or extent of works involved. Funding will assist customers in providing financial assistance to cover the costs of moving to another property which can be outside of the District.

To assist moving to another property grant assistance can be obtained for:

- estate agents fees (limited to 1.5% of the property value)
- solicitors fees
- valuation fees
- Stamp Duty (limited to the amount for a property valued at 15% higher than the property being sold)
- mortgage arrangement fees
- removal costs

The applicant is responsible for obtaining from an OT a report advising that the new property is suitable to fully meet or have the potential to meet the needs of the disabled person are family and agreement from Sevenoaks District Council as to the condition of the proposed property (property is fit for human habitation)

Specific situation funding

Maximum grant of £50,000 with a repayment requirement once the property is sold or transferred.

Discretionary assistance will be considered in specific and unusual situations which prevent a disabled person from receiving a much needed adaption.

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For those owner occupiers and private sector tenants who for very specific reasons are ineligible for a mandatory DFG. As a result of not being able to fund essential adaptations additional social care costs, hospital admissions and poor family environment will result. Circumstances that are applicable may include long term prognosis, limited or no income and living off diminishing amount of savings or for applicants who need additional facilities at a second property which is not their sole or main residence.

To be eligible to make a discretionary application one must have to been assessed by an Occupational Therapist as requiring the adaptations; adaptations are necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practical, unable to make a mandatory application, have sufficient equity in the property and accept, including landlord a charge being placed upon the property.

In order to determine upon eligibility and if such assistance is reasonable for private sector tenants of an application, a summary of the case shall be produced by the Team Leader – Private Sector Housing and submitted to the Property Services Manager and Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing and only if both parties agree will discretionary assistance be considered.

A maximum amount of £50,000 will be available or 50% of the equity existing at the time of application, whichever is the lesser. However, any application must demonstrate value for money, no other option is available (i.e. relocation) and once completed there is no expectation of a successive mandatory DFG application being made.

This grant will have regard to the means testing criteria undertaken via the mandatory DFG process and have the same eligible criteria as a mandatory DFG.

Specific operational guidance is included within Appendix D

Accelerated Facility Grant (AFG)

Maximum grant of £10,000 (increased from £8,000 as per Portfolio Agreement on 14 June 2022) with repayment being considered between £5,000 and £10,000.

AFG assistance will provide a quicker more streamlined service.

AFGs will be considered for those adaptations costing under £10,000 and recommended by an Occupational Therapist. Applicants must be owner-occupiers, private sector tenant or RSL tenants, be registered or registerable disabled. No means test will be applicable for this grant.

Such a grant is appropriate in situations for low cost or urgently needed disabled aids and adaptations (for instance, a straight stair lift or level access shower) that, if not carried out, could directly affect the occupant's health, safety and welfare, or the health, safety and welfare of the disabled person's carer. AFG is not for property repair or its maintenance, it is solely for adaptations.

The grant will only require one estimate and be limited to a maximum of £10,000. Any grant liable to exceed this amount will be required to apply for a mandatory DFG. A charge shall be applied to such grants between £5,000 and £10,000 and will be those stated by The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008. See Appendix B for conditions appropriate for an AFG.

Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)

The HSG has a maximum of £3,000. No requirement for repayment shall be applied to such grants.

This grant is solely to provide support to any customer being discharged from hospital. Due to the many housing related issues which prevent a timely hospital discharge a specific list of works cannot be given, however all works associated with the grant must be essential to enable the customer to once again reside in their own home. Examples of works that would be expected to be supported by a HDG include deep cleaning, decluttering, minor adaptations, boiler repairs/replacement, minor repairs, moving furniture.

Purchasing of furniture such as single beds will be able to be funded by a HDG, if this is preventing hospital discharge. Provision of furniture and other similar household goods will be available including for residents of registered social landlords.

Applicants for a HDG must be in hospital at the time of referral and awaiting discharge. Owner occupiers and private sector tenants are available to make an application for this grant and applicants are not required to go through the means testing process. An application form will need to be completed along with confirmation of ownership/tenancy and work is required to allow hospital discharge to occur.

Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)

The maximum grant will be £3,000 (increased from £1,000 as per Portfolio Agreement on 11 January 2021), available to owners and private sector tenants with no repayment criteria being applicable.

The Safe and Secure Grant is designed to reduce admissions to hospital and promote independence. Repairs to the house and its environs will be minor in nature and could include:

- repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps
- safety and security repairs
- providing additional property modifications to promote independence for customers with a specific disability, diagnosed condition (or written evidence supporting a condition) with a Dementia to ensure they reside in their own home as long as possible.

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With the new links being forged it is envisaged that many organisations can refer applicants in the Council for assessment, these organisations would include Community care agencies, charities and family carers.

This type of non-means tested grant will be available to those who are over 60 or with a specific ill health diagnosis (or written confirmation of systems by a medical professional or disability. This grant is primarily aimed at those individuals and carers living with Alzheimer's and Dementia.

Discretionary assistance

Housing Assistance Grant (HAG)

Maximum £10,000 is available to an owner occupier and repayable upon sale or transfer. Appendix C details the repayment conditions associated with a HAG.

In principle, the Council takes the view responsibility for all repair and maintenance of a property rests with the owner. Discretionary financial assistance will normally only be available where it can be demonstrated that other funding options have been explored and eliminated, or where the use of discretionary funding assists the Council in meeting its strategic objectives.

Subject to funds being available financial assistance to qualifying residential premises will be provided as a discretionary Housing Assistance grant. Once the budget has been committed no further offers will be made. In such circumstances, the Council may draw up a waiting list of people wanting assistance, which will be administered using a points system.

The Council will consider applications for a means tested, repayable HAG where it can be demonstrated that reasonable steps have been taken to fund the works through alternative means, for example through conventional loans, equity release or similar schemes. The Council accepts that commercial products may not always be appropriate and will seek to target limited funds to those in the greatest need.

For each application a test of resources will be undertaken following the requirements of the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 and in the Housing Renewal Grants (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2008.

Assistance may be refused in cases where an applicant is found to have an outstanding debt to the council of any kind. This does not have to be in relation to the same property that the current application for assistance is for. In particular, an applicant with council tax arrears may only apply for assistance once the outstanding debt has been repaid or an appropriate payment method has been arranged and adhered to.

For these reasons, it cannot be assumed any HAG funding will be available.

Enquiries will be prioritised to take into account the applicant's circumstances, financial need, the nature and urgency of the work. Applicants must understand the grant system in not an emergency service so anything requiring urgent action will need to be undertaken by the resident.

Applications for discretionary assistance will only be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where essential works are required to remedy Category 1 hazards (as assessed using the Housing Health and safety Rating System (HHSRS) or

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- Multiple Category 2 hazards (Band D) that pose a risk to health of the vulnerable group.

Applications for discretionary assistance will not be considered in the following circumstances:

- for non-essential repairs or for works which are considered desirable rather than essential (including kitchen and bathroom refurbishments to replace dated but otherwise serviceable fittings)
- for repairs to porches, conservatories, sheds, outbuildings, garden fences, boundary walls etc.
- for cosmetic repairs, redecoration and cleaning works
- for the replacement of windows and doors on grounds of energy efficiency unless considered by the Council to be in serious disrepair and beyond economical repair
- for completing DIY projects
- the funding of works which would normally be covered by a household insurance policy. Discretionary funding is not intended to be an alternative to insurance cover
- Instances where a disabled persons home is unsuitable for adaption to meet their specific needs.

Pre-qualifying criteria

The Council will specify a period of time during which the applicant must have lived in the dwelling as his/her only or main residence prior to the date of the HAG application for assistance and reserves the right to specify different periods for different purposes. A period of three years will apply to all HAG discretionary applications. In exceptional circumstances (i.e. when a life changing event has occurred requiring significant adaptations), the Council may consider exercising its discretion in relation to this requirement if there are particular strategic reasons to do so.

It is not the Council's intention to make discretionary financial assistance available to those who have recently purchased a property and have decided not to commission a full structural survey or Homebuyer's Report since this would have provided the opportunity to re-negotiate the purchase price to reflect any defects identified by the surveyor.

General guidance on the operation of the Housing Assistance policy

Buildings Not Attracting Grant Assistance

The following dwellings will not qualify for grant assistance:

- Properties, which are not of a permanent nature or where the conditions are such it is not cost effective to undertake significant repairs
- Dwellings, sheds, outhouses and extensions such as conservatories that do not have planning permission or building regulations approval
- Non-residential buildings
- Improving conditions within the private rented sector as this is the responsibility of the landlord

Eligibility Criteria

Eligible applicants are freeholders and long leaseholders with at least 10 years interest left in the property. A tenant (with the landlords' permission) can apply for most grants although a HAG is unavailable. The property must be the main or only residence of the applicant or a member of their family who the works are for and have the intention of residing there. A property must be within geographical area of Sevenoaks District Council.

A person who lives in the dwelling under a right of exclusive occupation for a period of more than 5 years or for life will be able to apply assistance.

Qualifying House Boat:

Means a boat or similar structure designed or adapted for use as a place of permanent habitation which:

- a. has its only or main mooring within the area of a single local housing authority.
- b. is moored in pursuance of a right to that mooring.
- c. is a dwelling for the purposes of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (council tax).

And includes any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenances belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

Qualifying Park Home:

Means a caravan within the meaning of Part 1 of the Caravan Sites and control of development Act 1960 (disregarding the amendment made by section 13(2) of the caravan sites act 1968) which-

- a. is stationed on land forming part of a protected site within the meaning of the Mobile Homes Act 1983.

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- b. is occupied under an agreement to which the Act applies or under a gratuitous licence.
- c. is a dwelling for the purposes of Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (council tax).
- d. and includes any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenances belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

All funding is provided subject to funding being available. The Council reserves the right to refuse an application and when necessary have a waiting list.

Form of Application

Application for assistance must be on the forms prescribed and provided by the Council and must include:

All Grants

- Applications must be in writing and include full particulars of the proposed works including, where relevant, plans and specifications of the works for which assistance is being sought
- For grants over £8,000 at least two itemised estimates from independent building contractors unless otherwise directed by the Council
- For grants under £8,000 at least one itemised estimate from an independent building contractor unless otherwise directed by the Council
- If works undertaken by Maintenance operatives employed by Sevenoaks District Council costs will be calculated on an hourly rate basis plus the cost of any materials
- Particulars of any professional fees or other charges which relate to the preparation of the scheme, the supervision of the works or the administration of the contract
- Proof concerning the ownership or tenancy of the dwelling
- written consent from all owners of the dwelling to the carrying out of the proposed works
- Written confirmation from applicants agreeing to the relevant conditions
- Where required by the Council, the consent of the mortgagees;
- Certificate required in the case of an owners/occupiers application or certificate for a tenants application accompanied by an owners certificate from the landlord
- Signed agreement to repay the grant under certain circumstances as stated by the Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008 (England) or
- Undertaking that it is an applicant's intention that the dwelling will be occupied by the applicant as their only or main residence for a period of 5 years from completion of the works and to repay any financial assistance in circumstances
- Financial information regarding any outstanding debts or charges placed against the property

Certificate of Future Occupation

Owner's application:

The owner must sign an owner-occupation certificate which certifies that they have, or propose to acquire, a qualifying owner's interest in the property and that they intend that they or a member of their family (in the case of Disabled Facilities Grants this must be the disabled person) will live in the property as their, or that family member's only or main residence for 5 years.

Tenant's application:

- a. The tenant must sign a tenant's certificate which certifies that their intention is that they or a member of their family will live in the property as their, or the member's, only or main residence for 5 years.
- b. This certificate must be accompanied by a certificate of intended letting from the landlord.

Occupier's application

An occupier must sign an occupier's certificate indicating they have acquired and occupy a qualifying houseboat or park home.

Amount of Assistance

The council will specify the maximum amount for assistance. These amounts are inclusive of all costs including Value Added Tax and fees.

Eligible Works

Eligible works will be only those identified as such by an officer of the Council's Private sector housing Team with reference to the Council's Policy. Any relevant fees will also be included. Any works, which would be eligible for assistance but can be paid for via an insurance claim or third party claim, will not attract grant assistance. In exceptional cases assistance may be given on condition it is repaid out of the proceeds of any future claim.

Works outside the curtilage of the property will not normally be eligible for assistance unless they relate to the provision of essential services such as water, gas or electricity.

Restriction on grants for works already begun (Section 29 HG, C&R Act 1996)

An application for assistance will not be approved where the relevant works have been completed before the assistance is approved.

Where an application has been received and works have started before the

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assistance has been approved, only those items yet to be carried out will be considered as part of the application. The only exception to this restriction will be where the Council are satisfied there were good reasons for doing so and prior agreement of the Council was obtained.

Fees & Other Ancillary Costs

Other charges that can be included within a grant application, where applicable, will include:

- Confirmation of the owner's interest, when required by the Council
- Specialist surveys, design/preparation of drawings, plans & schedules
- Assistance in completing forms
- Applications for planning permission and building regulation approval;
- Obtaining estimates
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and re-connection of electricity, gas, water or drainage
- Utilities where this is necessary for the grant-aided works
- The services and charges of an occupational therapist

Notification of Approval of Assistance (Section 34 HG, C&R Act 1996)

The Council will notify an applicant in writing whether the application for assistance is approved or refused. The notification will be provided as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of a completed application but no longer than 6 months from the date of the receipt of the completed application.

A grant approval will only be approved if the applicant has agreed to the applicable conditions i.e. repayment.

The approval will specify the amount of assistance, the amount that is ineligible, the applicant's contribution if any towards the eligible costs, expiry date of the assistance and applicable conditions. Assistance is not transferable to another person on the sale of the property. Expiry date will be 12 months for DFGs, top up assistance and specific situation funding, for others 6 months expiry date shall be stated.

In the case of refusal, the Council will give a written reason for refusal.

The applicant will be able to appeal against the decision made on their grant application and the process for doing this is set out under appeal procedure.

Re-determining an Approval and Unforeseen Works (Section 34 HG, C&R Act 1996)

If after an application has been approved the Council are satisfied that owing to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant.

- a. The eligible works cannot be, or could not have been carried out for approval amount.

- b. The amount of the costs which have been or are to be incurred has decreased/increased.
- c. The eligible works cannot be, or could not have been, carried out without carrying out additional works which could not have been reasonably foreseen at the time the application was made.

The Council may re-determine the estimated expense and the amount of grant. At no time will any re-determination exceed the grant maximum.

Additional works identified once works have been commenced must be seen and agreed prior to them being carried out. An instruction will be given authorising any unforeseen works.

Extension of time (Section 37 HG, C&R Act 1996)

An offer of assistance will expire after 6 or 12 months depending upon the type of grant, by which time all works must have been completed. If an extension of time is required an application must be made to the Council, an extension will only be given if delays have occurred outside of the control of the applicant and in which case an extension of no more than 3 months will be given. A second extension will not be considered. If there is no evidence of the applicant arranging for the works to be completed during the 6 months at the end of this time the grant will be closed and any costs incurred in the application process will not be reimbursed by the Council.

Supervision of Works

Applicants are advised to use a suitably qualified person to supervise and arrange the works. This can be, the Home Improvement Agency or any other approved surveyor to assist with their applications.

Relevant fees to the Improvement Agency or other approved managing agent will be included as eligible works, currently 12.5% of eligible costs.

If no specific contract in place, the building contract will be between the applicant and the chosen contractor and will not include the Council. An officer from the Council's Private sector housing Team will check the works to ensure they are carried out according to the specification of work and in accordance with good building practice. However, the Council and its officers are **not** liable for any poor workmanship and do not provide any guarantee. Any faults with the works will be a matter between the applicant and their contractor.

Where eligible works are not of an acceptable standard, the Council will withhold monies.

Conditions of Payment (Section 37 HG, C&R Act 1996)

Assistance will only be paid if:

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- a. The work is completed within the time stated in the approval or such further period the council may allow. This must be confirmed in writing. This period is normally 12 months from approval, although this can be shorter especially when works need to be completed in a short period of time.
- b. The work is carried out in accordance with the conditions of approval.
- c. The work is carried out by one of the contractors whose estimate accompanied the application. The Council will normally assess the assistance on the lowest estimate.
- d. The applicant completes a request for payment form or verbally confirms acceptance and satisfaction of the completed works and that the builders are not members of the applicant's family.
- e. The Council is provided with an acceptable invoice or receipt for payment for the works or fees. The invoice must include full details of the builder/surveyor employed including VAT registration details. The applicant or a member of his family cannot submit an invoice.
- f. The Council has been notified in advance that the works have begun.
- g. That the works have been completed to a satisfactory standard and in accordance with the grant offer and estimates.
- h. Any copies of specified guarantees and test certificates are submitted. Trades having a competent person regime must either use a competent person or make a building regulations application.
- i. Payments are either made to the applicant or preferably direct to the contractor or agents. In the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant, payment of the grant can be delayed by up to six months where existing budgets have already been committed.

Interim Payments (Section 35, HG, C&R Act 1996)

Interim payments will normally be paid, but these are at the discretion of the Council. The applicant's contribution (if any) will be taken into account in any payment. Normally the applicant will have to pay any contribution they may have towards the cost of the work first, before any grant payments are made.

Payments will only be paid for work satisfactory completed and not for materials not yet used or installed. Eligible works must be carried out to the satisfaction of the council and an acceptable invoice supplied.

Grant and repayment Conditions

Introduction:

Are explained in more detail in grant specific appendices as conditions vary between mandatory and discretionary assistance, however it is the Councils belief that a charge either with land registry or with local land charge are appropriate in most situations.

Before imposing any such repayment or other conditions or taking steps to enforce it, the Council shall have regard to the ability of the applicant to make that repayment or

contribution. It would therefore be possible that assistance be provided without the repayment condition i.e restrictions on additional charges or no equity within the property.

Repayment upon Breach of Conditions (Sections 40-43 HG, C&R Act 1996):

In the case of a breach of grant conditions applicable to a specific grant the monies becomes repayable to the Council.

In the case where an applicant ceases to be the owner, or it appears to the Council that the applicant was not at the time of the application being approved entitled to the grant, no payment shall be made and the grant cancelled. In the case where interim payments have been paid, no further payments will be made and the Council will decide whether recovery of any or all previous payments is necessary.

Successive Assistance

There is no restriction upon applicants receiving a second for mandatory disabled facility grants or AFG.

It is not envisaged that successive Specific Situation Grants, relocation funding nor top up funding would be available.

For the HDG and SSG a maximum of 2 grants in a three-year period will be allowed and only for different works (i.e. because of a worsening of a medical condition).

For the HDG successive grants are appropriate, however if we return to a property and once again undertaking similar works (i.e. cleaning property) then a charge for repayment will be considered.

Given it is the view of the Council that it is for the homeowner to maintain a property the council will not generally consider giving assistance on more than one occasion in relation to a specific property.

For HAG discretionary assistance a condition will be placed upon the customer to keep the property free from Category 1 hazards, in a good state of repair for 5 years and the level of maintenance carried out will be taken into account when considering any new application.

Appeal Procedure

Representations can be made in the following cases:

- In the event of disagreement with a decision
- In the case that one of the conditions of one of the aforementioned grants should be waived or changed
- That there is an exceptional case for providing assistance which is not within the Councils existing policy
- There has been some error or excessive delay in the processing of a grant

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In such cases, the person should write in the first instance to:

Private Sector Housing - Team Leader
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG
psh@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Appendix A

Repayment Conditions – Disabled Facility Grant

Disposal of the dwelling: The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant)
General Consent 2008:

Where a grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000, the Council may demand repayment of such part of the grant that exceeds £5,000 (but may not demand an amount in excess of £10,000) if:

- The recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date; and
 - The Council, having considered:
 - i. the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he required to repay all or any of the grant.
 - ii. whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment.
 - iii. whether the disposal is made for reason connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises.
 - iv. whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity.
- is satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment.

Notes:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force.
4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

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Definitions:

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:
 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7: General Guidance on the operation of the housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG, C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Appendix B

REPAYMENT CONDITIONS – DISABLED FACILITY GRANT

Funding adaptations over £30,000 (top up assistance):

All approvals shall have the condition for repayment upon the sale or transfer of the property. Upon completion a charge will be registered with local land charges or Land registry.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7: General Guidance on the operation of the Housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG, C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Notes:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force.
4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

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Definitions:

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:
 - a. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - b. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - c. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Relocation Funding

No repayment conditions are applicable.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG, C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Specific situation funding

Repayment:

All approvals shall have the condition for repayment upon the sale or transfer of the property. Upon completion a charge will be registered with local land charges or Land registry.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7 General Guidance on the operation of the Housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG, C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Notes:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force
4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

Definitions:

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:
 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Accelerated Facility Grant

Where a grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000, the council may demand repayment of such part of the grant that exceeds £5,000 (but may not demand an amount in excess of £10,000) if:

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- The recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date; and
- the Council, having considered:
 - (i) the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he required to repay all or any of the grant;
 - (ii) whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment;
 - (iii) whether the disposal is made for reason connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
 - (iv) whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity,is satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require the repayment.

Notes:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force,
4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

Definitions:

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:
 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7 General Guidance on the operation of the Housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG, C&R Act 1996

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to the eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Appendix C

Housing Assistance Grant Repayment

All approvals shall have the condition for repayment upon the sale or transfer of the property. Upon completion a charge will be registered with local land charges or Land registry.

Other situations that arise during the post approval construction phase will be decided upon with reference to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and they are explained in detail in Section 7 General Guidance on the operation of the housing assistance policy.

Insurance and compensation claims:

The Housing Renewal Main Grants (recovery of compensation) General Consent 1996 and Section 51 HG,C&R Act 1996.

Where the proposed works are subject to an insurance claim or a claim against a third party we may consider an application for grant assistance. The applicant shall take reasonable steps to pursue insurance claims or legal claims relating to then eligible works and shall repay the grant, if the claim is successful.

In the event of failure to make repayment when a claim is successful the Council will demand repayment of the appropriate amount together with interest.

As claims can be protracted there is no time limit attached to this provision. In determining the amount to recover, the terms of settlement received by the applicant will be fully considered.

The Council may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount.

Notes:

1. Repayment will not be required immediately where a joint owner(s) dies and the dwelling is reregistered solely in the name(s) of the surviving proprietor(s) but the condition will continue to apply.
2. If an applicant gives some other person the right to require the dwelling to be disposed of, he will be held to have made a relevant disposal to that person.
3. A voluntary repayment of the amount of grant may be made at any time in full by the owner for the time being or by a mortgagee entitled to exercise a power of sale whereupon all grant conditions shall cease to be in force
4. On repayment of the sum demanded following a relevant disposal the conditions shall cease to be in force.

Definitions:

1. 'Certified Date' means the date certified by the Local Authority as the date on which the execution of the eligible works is completed to their satisfaction.
2. 'Date of Approval' means the date on which the application for grant is formally approved.
3. Disposal, whether of the whole or part of the premises is a 'relevant disposal' if it is:
 - i. sale of the freehold or an assignment of the lease or
 - ii. the grant of a lease (other than a mortgage term) for a term of more than 21 years otherwise than at a rack rent or
 - iii. any other form of sale, assignment, transfer or disposal.

Appendix D DFG Specific Operation Guidance

Change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant:

If a grant has been approved but, before the certified date of completion:

- a. the works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, or
- b. the disabled occupant ceases to occupy the property or it ceases to be the intention that they should occupy it, or
- c. the disabled occupant dies,

the Council may decide:

- a. not to pay the grant or not to pay any further instalments, or
- b. that part or all of the works should be completed and paid, or
- c. the application should be re-determined.

The Council may demand repayment of any instalment plus interest from the date it was paid until repayment.

Carrying out and completion of works:

In approving an application for a grant the Council will require as a condition of payment of the grant that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with such specifications as they determine.

The eligible works must be carried out within 12 months from the date of approval of the application. The Council in extenuating circumstances may extend this period.

The eligible works must be completed to the satisfaction of the council and acceptable invoices, demands or receipts for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or charges must be provided. An invoice, demand or receipt is not acceptable if given by the applicant or a member of his family. Unless the Council directs otherwise, the eligible works must be carried out by the contractor whose estimate accompanied the application.

Repayment where applicant not entitled to grant Section 43 HG, C&R Act 1996

Where an application for a grant is approved but it subsequently appears to the Council that the applicant was not entitled to that grant the Council will not pay the grant or any further instalments.

The Council will demand repayment of the grant plus interest from the date it was paid until repayment.

Applicant ceases to be entitled before payment of the grant 40 HG, C&R Act 1996

This section applies where an application for a grant is approved but before the certified date the applicant ceases to be a person entitled to a grant. In the case of a joint application this section does not apply unless all the applicants cease to be so entitled.

Where this section applies:

- a. no grant shall be paid or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid, and
- b. the authority may demand that any instalment of the grant which has been paid be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine.

For the purposes of this section an applicant ceases to be a person entitled to a grant:

- a. in the case of an owner's application
 - i. if he ceases to have a qualifying owner's interest, or
 - ii. if he ceases to have the intention specified in the owner's certificate which accompanied the application
- b. in the case of a tenant's application
 - i. if he ceases to be a qualifying tenant of the dwelling, or
 - ii. if the application was accompanied by an owner's certificate and the landlord ceases to have the intention specified in the certificate.

If the case falls within section 41 (change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant), the authority shall act under that section.

Change of circumstances affecting disabled occupant Section 41 HG, C&R Act 1996

This applies where an application for a grant has been approved and before the certified date:

- a. the works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, or
- b. the disabled occupant ceases to occupy the dwelling qualifying houseboat, qualifying park home or flat concerned or it ceases to be the intention that he should occupy it, or
- c. the disabled occupant dies.

Where the application related to more than one disabled occupant, this section applies if any of paragraphs (a) to (c) applies in relation to any of them.

- 1 This section applies whether or not the disabled occupant (or any of them) is the applicant (or one of them).
- 2 Where this section applies the local housing authority may take such action as appears to them appropriate and may decide:
 - a. that no grant shall be paid or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid,

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- b. that the relevant works or some of them should be completed and the grant or an appropriate proportion of it paid, or
 - c. that the application should be re determined in the light of the new circumstances.
- 3 In making their decision the authority shall have regard to all the circumstances of the case.
- 4 If the authority decide that no grant shall be paid or that no further instalments shall be paid, they may demand that any instalment of the grant which has been paid be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine.

EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2023-2028

Housing & Health Advisory Committee - 22 November 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Approval

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 8 December 2022
- Full Council - 21 February 2023

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Kevin Maskell

Contact Officer: Sharon Donald, Housing Strategy Manager, Ext. 7131

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee:

That comments on recommendation (a) are passed to Cabinet.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

That recommendation (a) is recommended to Council.

Recommendation to Council:

- a) That, subject to any amendments by Cabinet, the Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2028 be adopted.

Reason for recommendation: To put in place an Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan 2023 - 2028, to enable the District Council to direct activity to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

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Introduction and Background

- 1 The Housing Strategy 2022-2027 contains 4 key themes of focus for the District Council's housing service over the next 5 years. These include, Theme 2: Promoting quality and optimising range and suitability of new and existing homes, which has an objective of, fewer empty homes.
- 2 A proposed year 1 action within the Housing Strategy is the delivery of a five year Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan, to direct activity to bring empty homes back into use.
- 3 The table below details the current numbers of Long Term Empty properties in the District:-

Long Term Empty (6 months to 2 years)	Long Term Empty (2 years +)	Long Term Empty (Exemption Class F - Unoccupied, person deceased)
205	75	287

- 4 A key benefit of the Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan will be to help regenerate empty homes and provide much needed homes for rent in the district, which will be let to applicant's on the Council's Housing Register as a private rented sector offer or those currently placed in temporary accommodation.
- 5 Officers have obtained Portfolio Holder approval to use s106 affordable housing funds to support a fixed term (2 years, 0.5 FTE) Empty Homes Officer post. The officer will be expected to liaise with Kent County Council's No Use Empty funding scheme, to support bringing long-term empty homes back into use, which can play a key part in regeneration, not only providing homes, but also new sources of income and a sense of community.
- 6 The District Council is unable to use S106 affordable housing funds to employ staff direct. We are exploring with a range of partners, the possibility of hosting the post. Notwithstanding this, the Empty Homes Officer would work full-time within the Private Sector Housing Team and be directly managed by the Team Leader.
- 7 Returning empty homes to occupation ensures the best use is made of the existing housing stock. Co-incidentally, it can provide homes that tend to be more affordable to those on low to median incomes. Using S106 affordable housing funds in the way described in this report, falls within the permitted uses set out in the Affordable Housing SPD 2011, i.e. initiatives to make better use of the existing stock.

Other options Considered

Option 1 - continue with no adopted strategy and action plan.

Option 2 - formally adopt the Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan. This is the preferred option as it is considered to be the most proactive and pragmatic approach to bringing empty homes back into use and to provide a clear framework for officers and clarity for the residents and homeowners of Sevenoaks District.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Resource (non financial)

Staff resource will be required to assist in the delivery of the Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan over a 2 year period, which is detailed under point 4 of this report. Beyond this period, replacement funds will be sought. Without additional resources, our empty homes function will continue to be, by necessity, extremely limited and will not therefore deliver the aspirations set out in the Housing Strategy 2022-2027.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Whilst there is no requirement to hold an Empty Homes Strategy, the Council does retain strategic housing responsibilities and this document helps towards continued delivery of its statutory duties. The Council's powers and duties in relation to enforcement are contained within various statutes including the Housing Act 1985, the Housing Act 2004, the Law of Property Act 1925 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. In cases where enforcement action is required, advice and input from Legal Services is always sought. Risk to decreased income from the Council Tax premium charge. If this results from a home being brought back into use, this will reduce the amount of long-term empty homes used to calculate the reduction in the New Homes Bonus paid.

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.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

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Conclusions

As the strategic housing authority for the district, Sevenoaks District Council has confirmed its commitment to addressing long-term empty homes in the district as part of its recently refreshed Housing Strategy. The adoption of an Empty Homes Strategy will provide clarity to residents and ensure Sevenoaks District Council has a clear framework of the aims, options, and enforcement powers to deal with the issue of empty homes within the District and bring empty homes back into use.

Appendices

Appendix A - draft Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2028

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places

Sevenoaks District Council

Empty Homes Strategy 2023-2028

Introduction

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to bringing long term empty homes back into use. The Empty Homes Strategy has been developed to help achieve this. The success of this Strategy will make a continued contribution to the prosperity of the District and an increase in the supply of homes across the District which will help reduce homelessness, increase availability and provide a good standard of accommodation that residents can enjoy.

Why a Strategy is needed

Empty Homes are a wasted resource in terms of housing available for people to live in and they can have a negative impact on their surrounding communities including:

- Attracting unwanted attention including vandalism, fly tipping and anti-social behavior
- Causing damage to and reducing values of neighbouring homes
- Being an eyesore, having overgrown gardens and encouraging pests
- Requiring extra resources from Council Services and the Police
- Adding to the pressure for new housing provision

The Council is committed to tackling the blight of empty homes and to assist owners in returning their home back in to use through a coordinated and sustainable approach which will deliver clear economic and social benefits

The Council will seek to tackle the problem of other empty properties such as those classified as being for commercial or business use on a case by case basis

Focus of the Strategy and reasons why homes become and remain empty

Many homes are left empty in the short-term during the process of sale, rent or refurbishment. This strategy focuses on those homes which have been left empty for over 6 months and/or are causing problems to the local neighbourhood.

Some of the reasons that homes are left empty include:

- Residents moving into residential care
- Change of ownership
- Death of owner and estate in Probate
- Mental Health problems
- Lack of funding available

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- Owners unaware of options available to them
- Emotional attachment following bereavement
- Major refurbishment required
- Restrictive covenants
- Owners waiting for an upturn in the market
- Perceived problems with renting

Objectives of the Strategy

The overall objectives are to:

- Engage and encourage owners and landlords to bring empty homes back into use
- To stop empty homes attracting crime, anti-social behavior, vandalism, fly-tipping
- Devise and explore new and innovative solutions to reduce the impact of empty homes on local communities and bring them back into use
- Develop a coordinated approach to help identify and tackle empty homes

Who benefits from bringing Empty Homes back into use

Homeowners

- Increased capital value
- Reduction in costs of insurance, repairs and maintenance
- Reduced risk of squatters and vandalism

Community

- Reduction in negative impact on neighbourhood house prices
- Prevents anti-social behaviour including vandalism, arson, burglary, fly-tipping and drug miss use
- Regeneration of an area

Council

- Increased housing supply
- Reduced costs/resources in dealing with complaints about empty Homes
- Increased income from Council Tax
- Reduction in homelessness
- Reduced need for development

Implementing the Strategy

The Council will:

1. Assemble, maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data

This will be updated regularly to enable us to monitor the current state of the problem and the effectiveness of the strategy

2. Provide advice and assistance and promote the One Council approach

There are a number of enforcement tools available to officers of the Council to deal with empty homes. Officers from the Council's Private Sector Housing Team will work with other Council teams from Legal, Council Tax, Environmental Health, Planning, Building Control and Community Safety to enable different forms of enforcement and coordinate enforcement activities to maximize the effects and minimize the cost to Council taxpayers

Owners of empty homes will be contacted to clarify their intentions. If the owner does not wish to retain the home, advice and assistance can be provided. If an owner wishes to retain the home, Council officers will discuss options and provide advice and assistance wherever practicable.

Information is available through the Council's website (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk) and through officers of the Sevenoaks District Council.

3. Prioritise empty homes for enforcement action

Where practical support has not resulted in the improvement of a home and it being brought back into use, the Council has a range of legal options to exercise.

Details of those options are set out in Appendix 1.

4. Participate in coordination across Kent

Empty homes cause problems nationwide but local solutions can be shared to the benefit of all Kent councils. The Council is a member of the Kent Housing Group which brings together housing officers with different specialisms from across Kent, to work together and disseminate information and good practice.

The Council will promote and seek extra funding available from public sources, for example the Kent No Use Empty initiative to support the Council's efforts to bring empty Homes back into use as dwellings.

On a case by case basis, the Council will consider the provision of an interest free loan to enable owners to refurbish and then sell or let their home. Loans are facilitated through the Kent No Use Empty (KNUE) initiative and are repayable after a term of 3 years for a rental home and 2 years if the owners wish to sell the home, or upon the sale of the home or a breach of loan condition.

Further information is available through the Council's website (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk) and through officers of the Sevenoaks District Council

5. Raise awareness of the Empty Home issue

It is important to ensure the public, elected Members, Council staff and customers know how and where to report empty homes, and to understand the scope of

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remedial actions available to the Council. Provision of up to date information on the Council's website, information sharing at events, for example the Landlords Forum, and annual reporting to Members at the Housing and Health Advisory Committee, will be utilised to this end.

6. Empty Homes Premium

The Council will make use of the powers conferred by the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and the Rating (Home in Common Occupation) and Council Tax Act 2018 to levy a premium rate of Council Tax as an incentive to owners of long term empty homes to bring these back into occupation by sale, letting or renovation.

From 1 April 2021, there is no discount available for residential homes that are unoccupied and unfurnished. Council tax will be charged at the full rate. If a residential home remains unoccupied and unfurnished for two years, a premium will be charged as follows:

- If the home is still unoccupied and unfurnished after two years, 200% Council Tax will be charged
- If the home is still unoccupied and unfurnished after five years, 300% Council Tax will be charged
- If the home is still unoccupied and unfurnished after ten years, 400% Council Tax will be charged

Certain exemptions apply, as set out on the Council's [website](#)

Monitor and Review

In order to deliver the Empty Homes Strategy successfully, the Council will utilise all available resources across its own services and its external partners.

The Council will keep records of the number of empty Homes returned to use and the period of time they remained empty. The Strategy will be applied for five years. The accompanying Action Plan (see Appendix 2) will be reviewed and updated annually.

Contact Information

Telephone: Private Sector Housing Team 01732 227000

Email: empty.homes@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Legal Powers and Requirements

Dangerous or dilapidated buildings or structures

Building Act 1984, Sections 77 and 78

Require the owner to make the property safe (section 77) or enable the Local Authority to take emergency action to make the building safe (section 78) (may include demolition of whole or part, see also section 80)

Unsecured properties posing a risk of unauthorised entry

Building Act 1984, Section 78

Allows the Local Authority to fence off the property (where there is a risk of trespass, vandalism, arson or similar)

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, Section 29

Requires the owner to take steps to secure a property or allow the Local Authority to board it up in an emergency

Unightly land & property affecting the amenity of an area

Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215

Require the owner to remedy the condition of land causing harm to the amenity of the neighbourhood because of the state of the gardens or the external appearance of a property

Public Health Act 1961, Section 34

Require the owner to remove waste from the property

Building Act 1984, Section 79

Require the owner to take steps to address a ruinous or dilapidated property adversely affecting the amenity of an area

Vermin (where present or likely to be attracted)

Public Health Act 1961, Section 34

Require the owner to remove waste so that vermin are not attracted to the site

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, Section 4

To require an owner to take steps to keep land free from rats and mice
Blocked or defective drainage or private sewers

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, Section 35

Require the owner to address obstructed private sewers

Building Act 1984, Section 59

Require the owner to address blocked or defective drainage

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Public Health Act 1961, Section 17

Require the owner to address defective drainage or private sewers

Statutory Nuisance (repair, dampness, refuse)

Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sections 79, 80

Require the owner to take steps to abate the nuisance or carry out works where a premises is in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance (eg causing dampness to a neighbouring property)

Building Act 1984, Section 76 (accelerated Statutory Nuisance procedure)

Council's notice of intention to remedy where a premises is prejudicial to health or a nuisance, and where there would be unreasonable delay if section 80 Environmental Protection Act 1990 were used

Breach of Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standards

Housing Act 2004, sections 11, 12

If Officers assess that there are Category 1 breaches of the housing health and safety rating system then Compliance Notices may be served for rectification of these breaches

Where all else fails: Enforcement Orders for Empty Properties

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Under the Housing Act 1995, Section 17 the local authority has the power to compulsorily acquire land and property under certain circumstances, in order to satisfy local housing need

Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)

This power introduced in the Housing Act 2004 is pursued through a Residential Property Tribunal (RPT) which must be satisfied that there is no reasonable prospect of the dwelling being returned to use in a reasonable timescale without an EDMO. If approved the Local Authority takes management control, initially for one year under an interim EDMO and then for seven years under a final EDMO

Empty Homes Action Plan 2023-2028

Aim 1: Assemble, maintain and improve the accuracy of Empty Homes data					
Monitor	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
1.1	Maintain an empty homes database containing information provided by Council Tax (quarterly) and ongoing monitoring of actions and communications	Council Tax database on empty home provided twice per year	H	Empty Homes Officer	
1.2	Surveys distributed to empty home owners to establish the reasons for being empty and to inform strategic direction	Annual Surveys regarding long-term empty homes on a quarterly basis Targeted Surveys sent regarding high priority homes Survey of owners completed and analysed to establish reasons	H	Empty Homes Officer	

		or barriers to re-occupation			
Aim 2: Provide advice, assistance and promote the One Council approach					
Monitor	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
2.1	Letters issued to empty home owners with links to relevant assistance and support	A letter issued annually as a minimum	H	Empty Homes Officer	
2.2	Make full use of the Council's social media platforms to promote and share information about the assistance available	Full information for the owners/landlords on options for addressing empty homes on the Council's website	H	Empty Homes Officer/Communications	
2.3	To inform home owners of the options available	<p>Referrals regarding selling or leasing homes</p> <p>Circulate lists of relevant homes to interested parties</p> <p>Issue letters to enable home owners to pay</p>	H	Empty Homes Officer	

		reduced VAT on renovation work			
2.4	To promote the availability of the No Use Empty scheme to empty home owners and property developers	Occupation of empty homes as a result of regeneration financial assistance	H	Empty Homes Officer	
2.5	Continue to support cross service information sharing and monitoring of empty homes. This is supported by the established Empty Homes Working Group who meet periodically to review progress and to agree solutions to issues encountered	Regular Empty Homes Working Group Meetings. Information and action on identified empty homes shared between teams	H	Housing Strategy Manager/Private Sector Housing Team Leader/ Empty Homes Officer	
2.6	To review the external visual appearance of long-term problem empty homes and refer for relevant enforcement action if required	Regular Empty Homes Working Group Meetings. Information and action on identified empty homes shared between teams	H	Housing Strategy Manager/Private Sector Housing Team Leader/ Empty Homes Officer	

2.7	To develop the availability of an inhouse agency service for carrying out works in default	Work in default arranged and supervised by the Council	H	Housing Strategy Manager/Private Sector Housing Team Leader/Property Compliance and Maintenance Manager	
2.8	Develop a 'matching service' in partnership with Registered Providers and empty home owners with a view to lease or purchase of empty homes for social housing	Completion of lease or purchase of empty homes	M	Housing Strategy Manager	
2.9	Collaboration with neighbouring local authorities to share expertise and resources for Compulsory Purchase Order action	Periodic meetings with neighbouring local authorities	M	Housing Strategy Manager/Planning Enforcement/Legal Services	
Aim 3: Prioritise Empty Homes for enforcement action					
Sub Ref	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
3.1	In response to investigations undertaken by the	Successful use of s215 notices, or the warning of	M	Private Sector Housing Team Leader/Planning	

	Empty Homes Officer/Private Sector Housing Team (as well as public complaints), issue Section 215 Notices when the external condition of a property has a negative effect on the amenity of the area	imminent issue of s215 notices to bring about improvements to the external condition of empty homes		Enforcement/Environmental Health/Community Safety	
3.2	Investigate the use of and agreed procedure for Enforced Sale for empty homes	Review additional resources required and consider options moving forward	M	Housing Strategy Manager/Council Tax and Recovery Manager/Legal Services	
3.3	Investigate the use of and agreed procedure for Compulsory Purchase Orders and Empty Dwelling Management Orders	Review additional resources required and consider options moving forward	M	Housing Strategy Manager/Council Tax and Recovery Manager/Legal Services	
Aim 4: Participate in coordination across Kent					
Sub Ref	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
4.1	Participate in Kent Housing Group and	New best practice	H	Head of Housing/Housing Strategy Manager/Private	

	relevant subgroups to learn from and share best practice	initiatives considered and implemented		Sector Housing Team Leader/Empty Homes Officer	
Aim 5: Raise awareness of the Empty Homes issue					
Sub Ref	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
5.1	To promote the Action Plan within the Council to other teams, service areas and elected members	Presentation to relevant teams and service areas on the Empty Homes Acton Plan, information section available on Council's intranet	H	Housing Strategy Manager/ Private Sector Housing Team Leader/Empty Homes Officer/Communications	
5.2	To promote the Action Plan within the community via social media and other communications	Circulate information with links to the Action Plan and assistance available Present information in Landlord Forums and other relevant groups	H	Housing Strategy Manager/ Private Sector Housing Team Leader/Empty Homes Officer/Communications	
5.3	To monitor and evaluate the action plan	Annual review of action plan reported to Housing and	H	Housing Strategy Manager	

		Health Advisory Committee			
Aim 6: Empty Homes Premium					
Sub Ref	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	High, Medium or Low Priority	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
6.1	Ensure the empty homes premium is applied in all applicable instances and relevant data shared with the Empty Homes Officer	Collection of the premium maximised	H	Council Tax and Recovery Manager	
6.2	To present a business case for utilising monies received from the empty homes premium to fund the Empty Homes Officer post for a 3 year period, 2024 to 2027	Business case accepted and Empty Homes Officer post funded	H	Head of Housing	

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Housing and Health Advisory Committee Work Plan 2022/23 (as at 10/11/22)

22 November 2022

- Making Best Use of the Social Housing Stock - Under Occupation Initiative
- Budget 2023/24: Review Of Service Dashboards And Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAS)
- Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy
- Homelessness Review 2022 And Draft Homelessness And Rough Sleepers Strategy 2023-2028
- Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan
- Mental Health Update
- Health And Wellbeing Action Team Half-Year Report
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7 February 2023

- Homelessness Review 2022 and draft Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2023-2028
- S157 Designations
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June 2023

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