

HOUSING & HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Maskell (Chairman)

Cllr. Harrison (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Bonin, Dr. Canet, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, G. Darrington, Edwards-Winser, Esler, and Griffiths

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bulford and Clack

Cllr. P. Darrington was also present.

79. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Advisory Committee held on 22 November 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

80. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

81. Actions from Previous Meetings (if any)

The action was noted.

82. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder, and Chairman, presented an update on the services within their portfolio. A quarterly Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum was launched with partners to prevent and address homelessness. A multi-agency housing hub would be held every month, to support customers with their housing and related needs.

There had been a reduction in the number of residents in temporary or emergency accommodation, from 139 in March 2022 to 100 in December 2022. The Empty Homes Strategy action plan was approved by Cabinet in December 2022, and recruitment had commenced for an Empty Homes Energy Efficiency Officer. This would help residents facing fuel poverty and promote energy savings, and expand the amount of accommodation available.

The Healthy Walks scheme had restarted following the pandemic, and the number of Health Leaders had grown. The Council had achieved the Gold accreditation for the Kent and Medway Health in the Workplace Award. A Health in all workplaces

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policy was being developed to ensure health and wellbeing were prioritised across all Council services.

In response to questions, the Chief Officer for People & Places outlined the support provided to food banks. The Household Support Fund had provided funding to food banks. The HERO team would visit food banks and provide leaflets providing advice and links to support networks.

83. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)

There were none.

84. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Health Liaison Board meeting held 17 January 2023 be noted.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman, with the Committee's agreement, brought forward consideration of agenda item 8 (minute 85) to take place after agenda item 6 (Minute 84).

85. 2023-24 Sevenoaks District Health & Wellbeing Action Plan

The Health Team Leader and Health & Communities Manager presented the report, which set out the Health & Wellbeing Action Plan for 2023/24. This was built on the current Action Plan and feedback from partners and stakeholders regarding the scope and opportunities for collaborative work.

The Action Plan proposed a new population health approach to planning, with an emphasis on reducing health inequalities as well as improving overall health. The three main pillars for this were the wider determinants of health, health behaviours and lifestyle, and places and communities.

In response to questions, they explained that the plan would be updated quarterly, to ensure the actions were meeting needs. The information would also be shared with Town and Parish Councils. Possible guidance for councils and community groups would be examined at the quarterly partnership meetings.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Health & Wellbeing Action Plan for 2023-24 be approved.

86. Homelessness Review 2022 and draft Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2023-2028

The Head of Housing presented the report, which presented the findings of the Homeless review and outlined the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy for 2023-28. The strategy had identified the need to increase the number of affordable homes in the District to meet the needs of residents. It aimed to

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address this through prevention, intervention, and sustainable solutions, delivered alongside partnership organisations.

The consultation process gathered feedback from an online survey, consultation with Members, the new Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy forum, and partnership organisations. This process identified several key priorities, including the delivery of more social and affordable housing, promoting the housing options available, the information available to customers, and the importance of involving people with lived experience of homelessness in the strategy.

She outlined some of the steps taken to address these concerns. The Registered Provider Eligibility Criteria had been approved by Cabinet, which would help enable additional social and affordable housing. The Empty Homes Strategy would aim to bring more properties back into use. Face to face support was being provided at the Council Offices and the Swanley Hub, offering a wide range of support for homelessness and other issues, in conjunction with other Council teams and partners. The Landlord Incentive Scheme was being reviewed, and some successes had been had in working with landlords to transition people in temporary accommodation into 6 and 12-month tenancies. The Council was working with the Kent Housing Options Group to review temporary accommodation providers and ensure consistency and competitive rates.

The strategy would be monitored with the support of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy Forum on a quarterly basis to feed into the annual update to the Committee to ensure the services provided were meeting the changing needs of residents.

Members discussed the affordable housing need for the District. They were advised that the current Core Strategy identified a need of 423 affordable homes per year. The Housing Team was working closely with the Planning Team to promote the delivery of affordable housing in new developments.

Resolved: That

- a) The feedback received from the public consultation be noted; and
- b) It be recommended to Cabinet that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy be adopted.

87. Application Of Additional Designated Rural Area Status In Relation To Core Strategy Policy SP3

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the report, outlining the additional Designated Rural Area status designations successfully applied for via the Secretary of State, which came into force in December 2022. 17 Parishes were now fully designated as rural areas, and 10 were partially designated.

The Housing Strategy Manager explained that applying these new designations in relation to Core Strategy SP3 would apply the affordable housing obligation on the lower site threshold of 6 to 9 homes within these areas. This would maximise affordable housing contributions from smaller sites, which could then help deliver

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affordable housing in other areas across the District. This would not impact the rural exceptions housing programme.

Members were advised that affordable housing could be provided on Rural Exception Sites within these areas. These sites would have planning constraints and would be delivered for local residents in perpetuity.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that the additional Designated Rural Area status conferred by the Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (England) Order 2022, as set out in Appendix A, in relation to Core Strategy Policy SP3 (Provision of Affordable Housing), be approved.

88. Scope for Council's Energy Efficient advice

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the report, which outlined the pilot energy efficiency advice service as proposed by the Committee in November 2022. Further work would be undertaken to create a draft service plan for consideration, including resource and finance implications.

The Committee discussed the potential for a service where officers would visit residents, survey their properties with a thermal imaging camera, and provide advice regarding energy efficiency. This paid service would not detract from the free services provided to households that needed support. The Housing Team were examining methods of signposting energy efficiency frameworks to contractors.

Members discussed the report, with consideration towards the positive relationship between the service and the Council's Net Zero ambitions.

Resolved: That

- a) The details of the scoping report be noted; and
- b) That the continued examination of options and costs/potential income associated with providing an Energy Efficiency Advisory Service to residents be endorsed.

89. Home Straight Project Update

The Housing Strategy Manager presented the report, and updated the Committee on the Home Straight Service. The service was provided as part of the Town and Country Housing Association's Home Improvement and Support Team, and was funded through the Better Care Fund. The service had seen an increase in the number and complexity of cases it dealt with since the pandemic. A dedicated Home Straight Officer was appointed to better address these cases, and had 28 live cases.

The Home Straight Officer worked in partnership with internal and external teams to provide a holistic approach to addressing hoarding. A key element of this was help with life skills, to ensure that properties are maintained once cleaned.

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In response to questions, it was explained that referrals could be made by anyone, not just partnership organisations, and that they were tenure-blind. All referrals would be investigated. The Committee discussed the difficulties of changing behaviour. They considered the opportunities for expansion, identifying cases without waiting for referrals, against the limitations of resources.

Resolved: That

- a) The details of the report and the information regarding the Home Straight Service be noted; and
- b) That an update be presented to the Housing & Health Advisory Committee at a future meeting.

90. Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted, with the following additions:

14 June 2023:

- Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 1 update
- Energy Efficiency project update
- West Kent Housing update

12 September 2023:

- Homes for Ukraine scheme update
- Sevenoaks District Health and Wellbeing Action Plan quarterly update

21 November 2023:

- Sevenoaks District Health and Wellbeing Action Plan quarterly update
- Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund Year 1 update
- Housing Strategy - one year on

23 January 2024:

- Sevenoaks District Health and Wellbeing Action Plan quarterly update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.06 PM

CHAIRMAN