

HOUSING STOCK AND WAITING TIMES IN THE DISTRICT UPDATE

Housing and Health Advisory Committee – 7 November 2023

Report of: Deput Chief Executive and Chief Officer People and Places

Status: For Noting

Key Decision: No

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

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Cole

Contact Officer: Alison Simmons, Extension 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee:

To receive and note the report

Reason for recommendation:

To provide Members with the further information requested relating to the social housing stock (Social and Affordable Rented) in the District and waiting times for applicants registered with the Council for social housing.

Introduction

1. This report provide an update on the social housing stock in the Sevenoaks District and waiting times for those applicants on the Council's Housing Register.
2. As a Local Housing Authority, Sevenoaks District Council has a statutory duty to publish a Housing Allocations Scheme for assessing and prioritising applications for social housing to determine who can join the housing register and the criteria to determine the priority banding of each application.
3. Sevenoaks District Council transferred its housing stock to West Kent Housing Association in 1989 and is no longer stock holding. Registered Providers such as West Kent Housing, Moat and Town and Country are the main providers who own, develop and manage social housing in the District (please see point 10 of this report for further information).
4. As a non-stockholding authority the Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Scheme enables the Council and its partners to work together to ensure we prioritise those in most need of affordable housing.
5. The Council is part of Kent Homechoice, which is a Choice Based Letting Scheme for all housing association and council homes in Kent. Kent Homechoice gives applicants more choice about where they want to live, subject to meeting the local Housing Register Allocations Scheme, which sets out a framework that describes how to register, the assessment process and property allocation process.

Housing Register

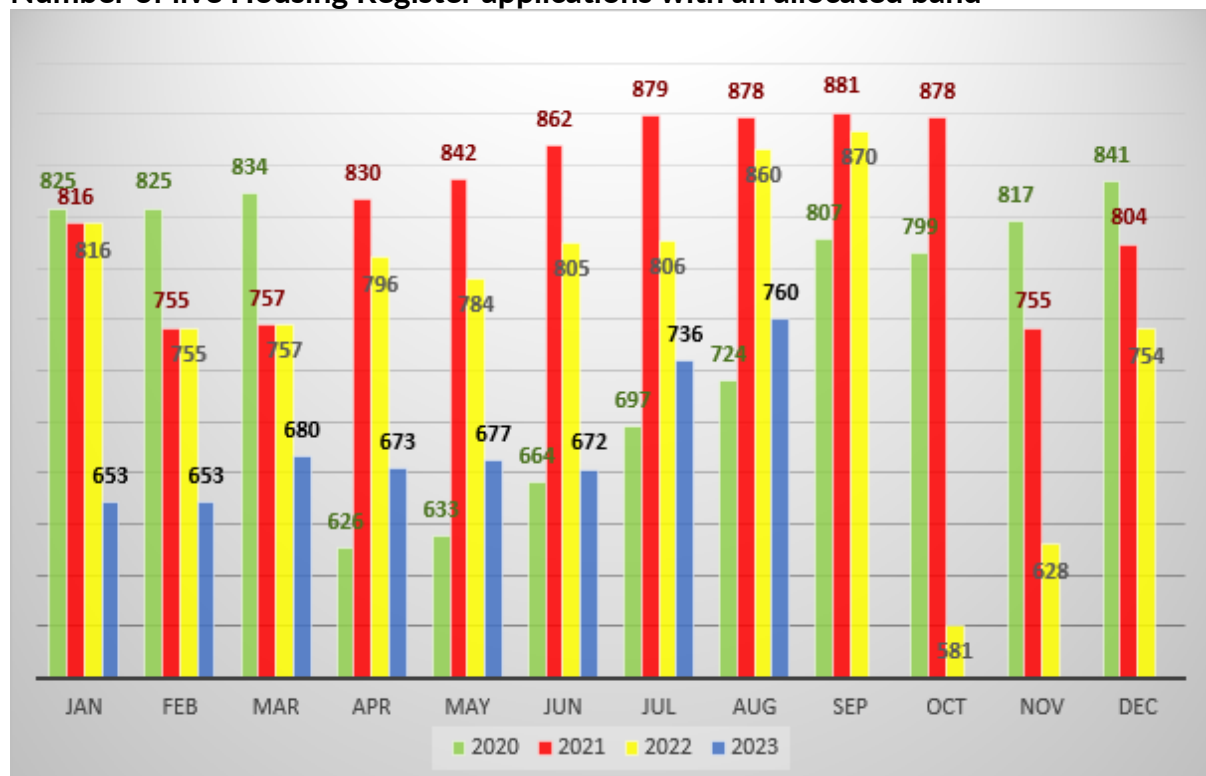
6. Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 requires Local Authorities to have a scheme (their 'allocation' scheme) for determining housing priorities and defining the procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation. As Sevenoaks District Council does not own any housing stock for social rent, the term allocation is defined as the nomination by the Council of a person to be a tenant of a Registered Provider commonly referred to as a Housing Association. The Council assesses all applications for social housing in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy, adopted in July 2022. The Policy sets out:

- Who qualifies to be included on the register
- How to apply to get on the register
- How we determine an applicant's priority on the register
- How to bid for available properties
- How available properties are allocated
- How we keep the register up to date
- How applicants can seek a review of decisions made regarding the application assessment and allocation process

7. Councils are required to review their Housing Allocation Policy, usually every 4 years, to ensure it remains fit for purpose. With the implementation of the new Policy in November 2022 all applicants were re-assessed in accordance with the new Banding criteria, which is divided into 4 priority bands.

8. The table below details the number of live Housing Register applicants with an allocated band from January 2020 to August 2023:

Number of live Housing Register applications with an allocated band



9. Applications are assessed based on housing circumstances, suitability of their property and any long term medical problems, awarded a Band and the type of accommodation they are eligible to bid for.

The four priority bands are:

Band A – Urgent Need to Move

- Emergency medical conditions, welfare need or disability
- Statutory Overcrowding
- Release of Social Housing
- Imminent risk of serious harm, violence, or domestic abuse
- Demolition, Prohibition, Compulsory Purchase Order, or requirement to leave tied accommodation
- Homeless households who meet the additional qualifying criteria

Band B – High priority to move

- Homeless households meeting additional qualifying criteria
- Serious medical, welfare, or disability needs
- Young people
- Move on from supported housing

Band C – Medium priority to move

- Homeless applicants who do not meet additional qualifying criteria
- Overcrowding
- Medical, welfare or disability needs, including applications from care receivers/care givers
- Rough Sleepers

Band D – Low priority to move

- Non-priority and/or intentionally homeless households
- Rural exceptions housing and rural local needs housing
- Applicants aged 55 years and over
- Single “Local Essential Workers”

Social Housing Stock

10. Social housing stock within the District totals approximately 6,500 homes. These are owned and managed by the following Registered Providers (formerly known as Housing Associations):

- West Kent Housing Association
- Moat Housing Group
- Places for People
- Orbit
- Hyde
- Town and Country Housing
- Anchor Hanover










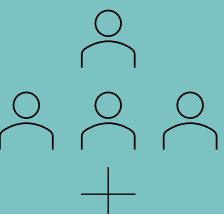




11. West Kent Housing Association hold the largest share of the social housing in the District, owning and managing a total stock of just over 5,500 homes. The table below details the split of social housing across all Registered Providers who own and manage homes within



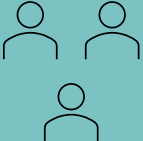



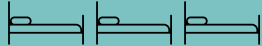
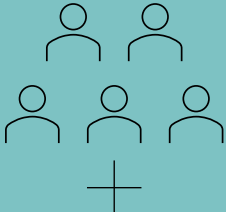


the District and provides a guide to the percentage of overall stock in terms of bedroom size:-

Registered Provider	General Needs (Social or Affordable Rent)	Sheltered (Social or Affordable Rent)
West Kent Housing Association	4,819	743
Moat	490	35
Total of Registered Providers with Limited Stock	470	45

12. The Council advertises and allocates social housing relets across the District through Kent HomeChoice. Applicants who are eligible to join the housing register can express a preference over the area and type of accommodation in which they would like to live.

13. The table below shows the average waiting times for social housing in the District according to the size of accommodation an applicant requires:

Household Composition	Size of accommodation eligible for	Average Waiting Time across the 4 Bands
 1 person	Sheltered accommodation	 10 months
 1 person	Bedsit/studio flat 1 bedroom flat, house, or bungalow	 15 months
 Single person with 1 child	Two bedroom flat, house, or bungalow	 19 months
 Single Person with 2 Children	Two or three bedroom flat, house, or bungalow (depending on the age/sex of children)	 Or 19 months
		 26 months
 Single Person with 3 or more Children	Three or four bedroom house (depending on the age/sex of children)	 Or 26 months
		 48 months
 Couple	One bedroom flat, house, or bungalow	 15 months

 2 adults or couple with verified need for separate bedrooms	Two bedroom flat, house, or bungalow		19 months
 Family with 1 child	Two bedroom flat, house, or bungalow		19 months
 Family with 2 children	Two or three bedroom flat, house, or bungalow (depending on the age/sex of children)	 Or 	19 months 26 months
 Family with 3 or more children	Three or four bedroom house (depending on the age/sex of children)	 Or 	26 months 48 onths

14. There are exceptions to this guide, depending on individual circumstances, which will be assessed by the Council.
15. There are no restrictions on the number of properties that applicants can bid for and can place bids on any property that meets their household's needs as and when they are advertised.
16. Please note bungalows will usually only be allocated to households where the applicant, or a member of their household has been assessed as needing single level living accommodation.

Social Housing Relets

17. The turnover of the social housing stock is dependent on the overall quantity of stock in the District and the number of vacancies arising. The reduced turnover in the existing social housing stock restricts our ability to help those on the Housing Register.
18. The table below shows the number of applicants on the Housing Register and the reduction in the number of social housing lets over a period of 10 years:

Year	Number on Housing Register	Number of Social Housing Vacancies
2013	2,018	275

2014	557	372
2015	720	326
2016	634	268
2017	790	296
2018	735	325
2019	630	349
2020	634	241
2021	837	238
2022	757	211

New Affordable Housing Delivery

19. The Council's Housing Strategy establishes our vision for housing in the Sevenoaks District to increase the number and range of affordable homes to meet the housing needs of our communities and the development of partnerships with registered providers, local landowners and private developers to enable the delivery of housing and maximise the delivery of new affordable housing.

20. The table below provides details of new build affordable housing delivery across the District by Registered Providers, including acquisitions by Quercus Housing during the last 5 years:-

Year	Number of Affordable Homes Delivered
2017-2018	49
2018-2019	71
2019-2020	206
2020-2021	22
2021-2022	16
2022-2023	26

21. The Council will continue to work to increase the number and range of affordable homes to meet the housing needs of our communities by:

- Ensuring that the emerging Local Plan contains policies that optimise the delivery of a range of affordable homes through the planning system
- Review Council owned land for disposal and development of housing, including affordable housing
- Continue the acquisition of homes for affordable housing through Quercus Housing
- Continue to develop strategic development partnerships with Registered Providers

Other options Considered and/or rejected

None.

Key Implications

Financial

The temporary accommodation budget is adversely impacted all the while an applicant is staying in nightly paid temporary accommodation awaiting a permanent offer of social housing. Applicants residing in temporary accommodation provided by our Registered Provider partners is cost-neutral to the Council.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

To ensure the most effective churn of vacant social housing whilst also meeting our statutory obligations under the homelessness legislation, an applicant receives one offer only, as set out in the Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Policy 2022-2027. Should a homeless applicant challenge the suitability of the social housing offered, their stay in temporary accommodation will be extended whilst the challenge is under review.

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.

Conclusion

The turnover of the social housing stock is dependent on the overall quantity of stock in the District and the number of vacancies arising. Waiting times are dependent on the number of vacancies arising and the number of applicants on the Housing Register who are eligible to bid for vacant properties.

The Council's Housing Service will continue to work with Registered Providers to ensure they are making the best use of the existing social housing stock and work with private sector landlords to provide suitable rehousing opportunities in the private rented stock, all contribute to easing pressure on the social housing stock and waiting times.

It is important that our Housing Register customers are kept informed of average wait times so that expectations are appropriately managed.

Appendices

Background Papers

[Sevenoaks District Housing Register Allocations Policy 2022-2027](#)

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – People and Places