

Item 4 – Referral from Scrutiny Committee

The attached report was considered by Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2023. The relevant minute extract is below.

Scrutiny Committee (9 January 2024, Minute 31 – Final report of the Homelessness in-depth Scrutiny Working Group)

The Chairman of the working group, introduced the report and thanked Officers and the working group. He highlighted some key elements of the report, which included high temporary accommodation net costs, impact of out of district placements, key performance indicators and customer satisfaction.

The Committee discussed the recommendations within the report.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that

- a) a KPI for all applicants being offered a homelessness assessment within 10 working days of an application, when an applicant has submitted all the required documentation for the assessment to be completed, be implemented;
- b) review whether the current staffing levels of the housing advice and support team are suitable to deliver good support to applicants and to be confident of meeting Recommendation A;
- c) consider extending the Corporate Satisfaction Survey, where possible, for applicants who contact the Council about housing matters;
- d) When monitoring the Personal Housing Plans with the applicant, SDC must ensure that the applicant understands the homeless process and SDC should seek feedback to ensure the process is as smooth as possible and to identify continuous improvements to the service;
- e) the SDC HERO service, housing advice and homelessness website pages, be reviewed to ensure that advice and guidance is readily available and details the way people can make an application and contact the Council for urgent assistance;
- f) an annual review of the incentives that Sevenoaks Landlords Hub can offer (dependent on funding availability, landlord incentives are funded by the Homelessness Prevention Grant) to increase the number of private sector landlords working with the Council, be undertaken;
- g) as part of the Housing Allocations Policy review consider the viability of placing customers in permanent accommodation an hour away from their support networks, and whether this could be reduced to 45 or even just 30 minutes;

- h) ensure all staff through the Council's DAHA Accreditation process receives domestic abuse awareness training in order to further support individuals seeking council support from domestic abuse;
- i) a note be sent out to all Councillors of SDC by the Housing Team identifying how Councillors can make enquiries or escalate housing issues for review by the Housing Team, subject to the applicant's written consent; and
- j) all avenues to ensure the increased delivery of affordable housing within the District and include a KPI to show progress in reducing the numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation outside of the District, be explored.