

Select Committee Agenda



Stronger Communities Select Committee Tuesday, 12th July, 2022

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Stronger Communities Select Committee**, which will be held at:

Council Chamber - Civic Offices
on **Tuesday, 12th July, 2022**
at **7.00 pm** .

Georgina Blakemore
Chief Executive

**Democratic Services
Officer**

R Perrin
Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors J Lea (Chairman), J Lucas (Vice-Chairman), C Amos, R Balcombe, I Hadley, S Murray, C Nweke, D Plummer, R Pugsley, D Stocker, D Wixley and S Yerrell

SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE: 6.00PM

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1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman will read the following announcement:

“I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet (or filmed) and will be capable of repeated viewing (or another use by such third parties).

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2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To be announced at the meeting.

To report non-attendance before the meeting, please use the Members Portal webpage to report non-attendance at meetings <https://eppingforestdc-self.achieveservice.com/service/Member>Contact> to ensure your query is properly logged.

Alternatively, you can access the Members portal from the front page of the Council's website, at the bottom under 'Contact Us' <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/members-portal/>

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

5. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 5 - 78)

To agree the notes of the Select Committee held on 1 & 22 March 2022.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 79 - 84)

(Chairman/Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed the Terms of Reference and work programme for this Select Committee. Members are invited at each meeting to review both documents.

7. CO-OPTION OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE FOR 2022/23 (Pages 85 - 86)

To consider the co-option of Mr Wyn Marshall as a non-voting Co-opted member of the Stronger Communities Select Committee until the end of the 2022/23 municipal year.

8. CASH PAYING CUSTOMERS (Pages 87 - 102)

To consider a report on proposed alternative methods for cash paying customers at Debden Broadway Cash office.

9. TRANSFER OF SERVICES FROM BROADWAY HOUSING OFFICE (Pages 103 - 106)

To consider the attached report regarding the transfer of housing services from the Broadway Housing Office.

10. SHELTERED HOUSING REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME (Pages 107 - 110)

To note the successful refurbishment of Frank Bretton House and to consider the continuation of the sheltered housing refurbishment program.

11. CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF HOUSING - PAPER 1 (Pages 111 - 114)

To consider the report regarding the changing landscape for housing and property services.

12. REVIEW OF HOUSING STRATEGY 2022-2027 (Pages 115 - 122)

To consider the draft Overarching Housing Strategy attached. (Appendix 1 to follow).

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note that the next meeting of the Select Committee will be held at 7.00pm on 20 September 2022.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2022
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES
AT 7.00 - 8.10 PM**

Members Present:	J Lea (Chairman), R Balcombe (Vice-Chairman), J H Whitehouse, K Williamson and D Wixley
Co-opted Member:	W Marshall
Other members present:	J Philip and H Whitbread
Other members virtually:	H Brady, I Hadley, S Murray, D Plummer, S Rackham
Officers Present:	R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer), J Gould (Service Director (Community & Wellbeing)) and S Mitchell (PR Website Editor)
Officers present virtually:	A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer) and S Lewis (Customer Services Manager)

33. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

34. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

36. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

That the notes of the previous meeting held on 21 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

It was noted that a lead officer and list of Partnerships should be provided to the Committee, to ensure that the work programme for 2022/23 could be developed.

37. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

S Lewis updated the Committee on the following items set out in the work programme, which were attached to the agenda;

- Data insight led review of customer service outlets
- Civic & Community Hub

- Digital Inclusion

It was noted that a report with regards to Cash payment solutions and Broadway office a report would be presented in-conjunction with a housing report in the new municipal year.

The Committee noted the Terms of reference and the Work Programme.

38. ALLOCATION SCHEME REVIEW

The Community and Wellbeing Service Director, J Gould presented the revised Housing Allocations Scheme for 2022- 2027.

She advised the Committee that as a Local Housing Authority, Epping Forest District Council had a statutory duty to publish a Housing Allocations Scheme that would determine priorities and the procedure to be followed, when selecting a household to be offered a tenancy of Council owned accommodation or to be nominated for an offer of housing from another registered provider with stock in the District.

The Council was required to review the scheme at least once every five years and the current scheme was due for renewal by April 2022, along with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Tenancy Policy and the Overarching Housing Strategy.

A review of the policies commenced in May 2021 which included a co-ordinated 2-stage statutory consultation exercise.

There were 5 proposed major changes which could affect the relative priority of a large number of applicants or a significant alteration in the following areas;

- Medical priorities
- Under occupiers
- Homeless households
- Local lettings plans
- Serious unacceptable behaviour including rent arrears

In addition to the above, there were 11 minor changes recommended which either related to the major changes or were standalone proposals that may have not ordinarily warrant widescale public consultation but had been included for completeness, including;

- Priority Date
- Direct offers and auto-bidding for priority Band A
- Downsizers and the refusal of offers
- Domestic abuse
- Offer Policy
- Applications from staff or Members of the Council or their relatives
- Definition of Household
- Priority transfers and management transfers
- Priority Bands
- Data Protection and Sharing of Information
- Improving access to Social Housing for victims of Domestic Abuse

The Committee asked and made the following questions and remarks;

- Were two bed-homes mostly demanded?; and what were the possible reason for this? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that the demand for 2 bed homes had been quite high for a number of years and had been driven by the requirement for children sharing bedrooms and the housing benefits regulations.

The Annual Letting report 2021, demonstrated that the majority of EFDC lets were one and two bed properties and that the demand for two and three bedroom accommodation was fairly even.

- The inclusion of applications for staff or Members of the Council or their relatives to be included within the policy was noted.
- Would young people who had lived and studied in the District before leaving for other purposes such as education be affected by the 3.8.2 Residency criteria? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that there had been overwhelming support for the 7 year residency requirement. Although where people had no other local connection elsewhere and had a housing need where they were either homeless or threaten with homelessness they had protection under the homelessness legislation. The Housing Services Portfolio Holder advised that many students remained on the electoral register when at university and therefore would still be eligible to go onto the housing register. The Community and Wellbeing Service Director also confirmed that people who move away for university were classed as a temporary move rather than permanent move.
- Should Qualis employees also be included in the policy for the requirement to disclose their employee when applying to be place on the housing waiting list? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that she would look into this.
- Under 5.10.1 – Band A Emergency need – How many offers would be made? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that one offer would be made.
- Under 6.1 Right of review – Could a Ward Member or family member be present with the applicant? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that support services would normally be involved, and the applicant would have a multi-agency support group assisting them.
- What was meant by 8.6 Restrictive Labelling? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director that it allowed certain properties to be ring-fenced for particular group of people i.e. sheltered accommodation for 60 plus age group.
- What happens to a student status on the register, if they have to register for another council whilst away studying? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that it would depend on whether they were permanently living at the other property for 52 weeks of the year or were only there for term time.
- How long does a homeless family from another area have to be on the waiting list before they were dealt with by this authority? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that if a family was dealt with under the homelessness legislation as a prevention or relief of homelessness; and that family was threatened with homelessness or becomes homelessness within a 2 year period there was a recurring duty on the previous authority, after this period they could approach EFDC for assistance.

It was noted that people accessing housing via the homelessness legislation and the local connection criteria was different to the localism legislation within the Housing Act, which the Council was able to set via their own resident criteria.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee noted the 5 major changes and 11 minor changes to the current Allocations Scheme;
- (2) That the Committee recommended the publication of the proposed revised Housing Allocations Scheme for 2022 – 2027 (Appendix 1) to Cabinet for approval;
- (3) That the Committee noted the outcome and recommended the publication of the Stage 2 Public Consultation Report on the Allocations Scheme at Appendix 2B to Cabinet;
- (4) That the Allocations Scheme for 2022 -2027 would be reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of publication; and
- (5) That the Committee noted and praised the way Stakeholders and Members had been involved in the consultation and review of all the policies and strategies.

39. REVIEW OF THE HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS STRATEGY 2022-2027

The Community and Wellbeing Service Director, J Gould presented the revised Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2022-2027 and the evidence base that supported the strategy which included the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping review and the Public Consultation Outcome Report. The current strategy had been published in August 2018 and was due for renewal in April 2022.

A review of all four strategies and policies commenced in May 2021 and this draft strategy was being presented to Cabinet along with the draft Allocations Scheme and draft Tenancy Policy for the same 5-year period.

The Committee asked and made the following questions and remarks;

- Do rough sleepers in the District have the right to refuse help? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that was correct, although officers would go back to the person to try and engage with them.
- How did the Council deal with a person who refused assistance, although it was felt that they required it? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that a multi-agency approach would be taken to produce an action plan for that person. In addition to this, a NHS Mental Health Navigator had been co-located within the Homelessness Team to assist with people with mental health issues. It was noted that any legal powers that involved the Police, would be a last resort.
- Did the Council still benefit from the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit services? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that she would find out and inform the Councillor via email.
- What measures were used to calculate deprivation? The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that the deprivation information would have come from the deprivation indices, which would be referenced in the final document.

- It was mentioned that there were many boat moorings situated around the District.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee noted the five proposed priorities and associated themes within the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027 at Appendix 1;
- (2) That the Committee noted the findings and recommended the publication of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review (Appendix 2) to Cabinet for approval;
- (3) That the Committee noted the recommendation to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property to consider and approve the annual update of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan;
- (4) That the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2022-2027 would be reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of publication; and
- (5) That the Committee noted and praised the way Stakeholders and Members had been involved in the consultation and review of the all policies and strategies.

40. TENANCY POLICY REVIEW

The Community and Wellbeing Service Director, J Gould advised that as a stockholding Local Housing Authority, Epping Forest District Council had a statutory duty to publish both a Tenancy Strategy or framework. This set out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing within its district were to have regard to when formulating their tenancy policies, and a Tenancy Policy with regards to its own stock. The current Tenancy Policy was due for review by July 2022.

The draft Tenancy Policy had two proposed amendments to take account of legislative changes along with the draft Allocations Scheme and draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the same 5-year period.

The proposals for the overarching Housing Strategy were due to be presented to Committee in July 2022.

The Committee made the following comments;

- That although it was understood why flexible tenancies were put forward in the policy, it was felt that the advantages to secure tenancies would give tenants a certain degree of certainty and contribute to the community.
 - Could clarity be given on what discretion there was for tenancy succession, if a succession had already taken place. The Community and Wellbeing Service Director advised that she would look at the wording and advise members if there were any changes made.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee noted the reviewed Tenancy Policy;

- (2) That the two amendments to the terms of the current policy which reflected the Council's statutory obligations be recommended to Cabinet;
- (3) That the Tenancy Policy for the period 2022-2027 be recommended to Cabinet;
- (4) That the publication of the draft refreshed Tenancy Policy 2022 -2027 (Appendix 1) be recommended to Cabinet; and
- (5) That the Committee noted and praised the way Stakeholders and Members had been involved in the consultation and review of all the policies and strategies.

41. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting would be 22 March 2022.



HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Draft

2022- 2027

**If you would like this document in a more
accessible format, then please contact:**

The Housing Strategy Team
Housingstrategy@eppingforest.dc.gov.uk
Telephone 01992 564 214
or at the Civic Office
323 High Street
Epping
CM16 4BZ

DRAFT

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FORWARD

To be provided by Holly Whitbread

INTRODUCTION

Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness Strategy on at least a 5-yearly basis.

The purpose of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (the Strategy) is to set out the plans that Epping Forest District Council (the Council) has agreed with its partners to prevent and reduce homelessness in the district between 2022-2027.

The Strategy takes into account new legislation and guidance and is based on a review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the district and the open consultation with residents and organisations with an interest in homelessness and rough sleeping; both of which have been published alongside this document.

The National Context

Major changes have been introduced in recent years to the duties that Local Housing Authorities have towards families and single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into effect in 2018, and the associated Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018 (as amended) are considered to be the most significant changes to primary homelessness legislation and guidance since 1985.

In August 2018, The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) published its national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

There continues to be a range of homelessness related legislative and regulatory directives, initiatives and funding opportunities to prevent and reduce homelessness. Most recently; the Prime Ministers 2019 pledge to end rough sleeping by 2024, the Coronavirus Act 2020 as amended which placed temporary restrictions on the residential possession processes, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which strengthens the support for victims of abuse, and the Levelling Up White Paper 2022 to spread opportunity more equally across the UK.

The Local Context

The district of Epping Forest (the District) is one of 12 district, borough and city local housing authorities in the County of Essex. It is classified statistically as urban with significant rural populations, covering an area of approximately 339 square kilometres. In 2018 the resident population was estimated to be 131,137 people.

EFDC is the ninth (out of 12) most densely populated district in Essex, well below the County average. It is divided into 24 town and parish councils which are mainly rural and sparsely populated in the north and east, and more densely populated in the south where it borders the London boroughs of Enfield Waltham Forest Redbridge and Havering.

The majority of residents live across four suburban settlements; in Loughton, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Buckhurst Hill.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks areas in relation to six indices; Income, employment, health, education, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the environment. In 2019 EFDC was ranked 200 out of 317 lower tier authorities in England (1 being the most deprived) and its ranking has improved gradually to its highest level since 2007. However this belies the contrast of mainly affluent geographical areas with several pockets of significant deprivation.

EFDC is split into 78 neighbourhoods known as 'Lower Super Output Areas' Whilst 17 neighbourhoods were ranked in the top 20% of the least deprived areas nationally, 5 neighbourhoods were ranked in the bottom 30% of most deprived areas of the Country of which one was ranked in the bottom 20%.

Housing Supply and Demand

The demand for affordable housing in the district far outweighs the supply across all tenure types. In 2017 there were estimated to be approximately 55,630 homes in the district. Around 85% in the private sector, about 70% being owner occupied and 15% are private rented.

Social housing accounts for approximately 14% of accommodation in the district. The Council is the largest social landlord with 6,384 general needs properties which equates to 11% of all properties and Housing Associations own just over 3%.

The Strategic Market Housing Assessment (or local plan) forecasts that 12,573 properties are required to meet demand across the district over the 12-year period 2011- 2033.

Urgent Housing Need

As at 31 March 2021 there were 1,555 people on the housing register who qualified for social housing. Of these 697 had an urgent need for rehousing.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 a total of 567 households approached the Council for assistance due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness. The Council provided information and advice to 186 households, accepted a duty to prevent or delay 123 households from becoming homeless and provided relief to 258 households who had lost their home (typically offered temporary and supporting them to find somewhere else). A main duty was accepted to provide settled accommodation for 96 households.

The Council has a development plan to build circa 195 homes for affordable housing between 2021/22 and 2025/26 to be allocated to people on the housing register including homeless households.

The Effects of Covid 19

The effects of and the response to the pandemic has changed many of the patterns of homelessness and rough sleeping in EFDC, as with the rest of the country. These include risks to public health, financial and social hardship, relationship breakdown and the supply of suitable housing for those most in need.

Links with other strategies and programmes

In order to achieve maximum impact, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 is being aligned with:

- The Social Recovery Map for Epping Forest District
- The Allocations Policy 2022-2027
- The Tenancy Policy 2022-2027
- The Overarching Housing Strategy 2022-2027
- Levelling Up Essex – An Essex White Paper 2022
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2028 (which is due to be refreshed in 2022)
- The Essex County Council Housing Strategy 2021-2025
- The Local Plan
- The More than Bricks and Mortar Estate Improvement Programme 2020

THE STRATEGY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 aims to achieve a whole systems partnership approach to preventing and relieving homelessness and to ending rough sleeping in Epping Forest District in line with the Council's corporate objectives and the levelling up agenda.

The Council's key corporate objectives are:

- People live longer, healthier and independent lives
- Adults and children are supported in times of need
- People and communities achieve their full potential
- Delivering effective core services that people want
- Improving the district housing offer

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Make a significant contribution to social and economic recovery and social mobility within Epping Forest District to redress the impact of the pandemic.
- Support the Community and Wellbeing commitment to build strong, resilient, cohesive and healthy communities.
- Extend this commitment to our staff by providing the opportunities and environment to develop their skills, achieve their aspirations and thrive as a strong and motivated workforce.
- Help households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the District to access the appropriate support to enable them to live well and achieve their aspirations in suitable good quality affordable housing.
- Strengthen the partnerships and shared services that already exist within the District and create opportunities for new initiatives, partnerships and volunteers to jointly own the strategy and be responsible for its delivery.

THE FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Identifying the priorities

This strategy is made up of five evidence-based priorities with associated themes and clear measurable outcomes that we aim to achieve over the next five years.

Priority 1 Working Together

Theme: Make every contact count

Priority 2 Preventing Homelessness

Theme : Early intervention

Priority 3 Building Resilience

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

Priority 4 Access to Suitable Accommodation and Support

Theme: More than bricks and mortar

Priority 5 Ending Rough Sleeping

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

We have identified these priorities, themes and intended outcomes through a review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district and additional research and analysis in collaboration with members of our community who have an interest in preventing and relieving homelessness.

Open Consultation

We undertook a 2-stage open consultation exercise between May and December 2021.

On-line consultation was combined with targeted events to enable residents, professional partners, other statutory services, staff and Members of the Council to express their ideas and views on what priorities should be included in the strategy.

The events included bitesize briefing sessions, detailed workshops, webinars, surveys and smaller meetings, underpinned by a review of local and national statistical data and lived experiences of homeless households.

We then went back to the same audience with the Councils proposals for the strategy for consideration and comment.

The findings of the review, and the outcome of the consultation form the evidence base for this strategy and have been published in two standalone documents.

For the full list of partnerships and organisations consulted see Appendix 2

The Action Plan

Together with our key strategic partnerships we have agreed in principle a draft action plan that will include year 1 SMART targets relating to each priority and named signatories. (subject to approval at Stronger Communities Select Committee and obtaining signatories final sign off).

We will collectively record the progress, review the outcomes, and update the targets on an annual basis for the duration of the strategy.

For the draft action plan see section 8

PRIORITY 1: WORKING TOGETHER

Theme: Make every contact count

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed and jointly owned with local partnerships who are taking collective responsibility for its delivery.

As well as the 12 partner organisations that are based at the Epping Community Hub there is the potential to strengthen collaborative working with over 150 statutory services, community groups, charities and social enterprises and countless individual volunteers to share skills, expertise and resources, make every customer contact count and maximise opportunities to secure funding and develop integrated services and improvements by working together.

Together we will:

Make Every Contact Count

The majority of residents who approach the Council for help because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness report one or more support needs. The most common issues are a history of mental health problems, physical ill health or disability, domestic abuse and substance misuse.

Making every contact count is an approach that uses the day to day interactions between organisations and people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We propose to extend this principle so that it becomes a whole systems approach to homelessness prevention that recognises the interdependencies between housing and the environment, income, vulnerability employment, education and crime in the wider determinants of health for our residents.

We will work with the Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a skilled workforce equipped with the knowledge and referral mechanisms to services to make every contact count in our interactions with residents so that we can offer the right support at the right time.

Review the Duty to Refer

Public authorities such as hospitals, job centres, children's services, the armed forces, prison services etc have a duty to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a housing authority.

This is a vital tool in the prevention and early resolution of homelessness. Although there has been a year on year increase in referrals since the duty was introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, more work can be done with agencies to facilitate appropriate timely referrals. We will review the duty to refer arrangements with statutory and non-statutory services with a view to increasing the number of appropriate early interventions.

Develop a support service with the NHS for people with substance misuse

The link between mental health, substance misuse and homelessness is indisputable both locally, nationally and globally. Not all people who become homeless struggle with their mental health or misuse drugs, alcohol or other substances, but substance misuse can be both a cause and result of homelessness.

To further complicate matters mental illness is often an underlying cause of substance misuse, and therefore homelessness as well. Around 10% of all households that approached EFDC for

help with homelessness reported having either drug or alcohol dependency needs. Public Health England statistics demonstrate that for people sleeping rough this is likely to increase to around 42% having alcohol misuse needs and 41% having drug misuse needs. Building on the success of the recently appointed Mental Health Navigator we will undertake a joint venture with NHS to fund and recruit a substance misuse navigator to work directly with affected homeless households help end the cycle of substance misuse, mental health and repeat homelessness.

Maximise opportunities for grant funding and shared resources

Our network of partners span an increasing range of statutory and non-statutory not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises, community interest groups and local businesses all of whom consistently demonstrate a passion and commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness.

Much of the innovative partnership work that we do, for example converting two single dwelling homes into housing with support to end the cycle of rough sleeping, community development projects at our temporary accommodation scheme, and the co-location of specialist clinicians to address the health and support needs of homeless households is made possible by successful multi-agency bidding for government and charitable trust grant funding as it becomes available, often at short notice, and we are keen to maximise access to these funds.

The majority of joint bids are made in collaboration with the Essex sector wide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Partnership, members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

Collectively we have a powerful voice and comprehensive portfolio of skills experience and resources, but also acknowledge that bid submissions can be labour intensive and require flexible co-operation when dealing with competing priorities. We will continue to build on our shared and individual strengths to secure grant funding and deliver initiatives that are conducive to all five priorities within this strategy.

Promote social and economic mobility

In 2020/21 32% of households who were eligible for help from the council due to homelessness or at risk of homelessness were registered unemployed, and one of the main causes of homelessness was loss of rented accommodation in the private rented sector which is largely unaffordable for many families. Despite being a relatively affluent district overall, there are several neighbourhoods that fall in the bottom 30% of the most deprived areas in the Country.

A local and national skills shortage is affecting all parts of the community including the construction industry to develop much needed affordable housing, and supply chain for essential consumables like food and materials.

Epping Forest District Council is one of a group of large not for profit organisations in Essex known as 'anchor organisations' that are working together to identify how our employment, procurement and workforce development practices can support local people.

A network of over 30 partners have began work on several employment initiatives including work coaches, and reverse job fairs. We are bidding for funding to help make these bespoke to address the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

PRIORITY 2 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Theme: Early intervention

Where possible, we believe that the best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The purpose of early intervention is to prevent homelessness in the long term - not just the 56 days leading up to a household potentially losing their home. We want to minimise the risks of the problems that lead to homelessness and take action to prevent future homelessness that reach far beyond the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Our early intervention will include:

Accessible community information and advice

The lived experiences of homelessness that Kiera, Ahmed and Somaiya and Tex shared in section 5 highlights that a whole systems approach to early intervention is wholly dependent on good communication and access to information.

Kiera, Ahmed and Somaiya and Tex all had very different reasons for finding themselves homeless and all described how they benefited from multi-agency support.

We will establish what more we can do so that people finding themselves in these situations know who to approach for help before the situation reaches crisis point. For example Tex knowing he could turn to the council before turning to the street, the range of people that are available for Kiera to talk to and provide emotional support, and Ahmed and Somaiya being aware of alternatives to temporary accommodation such as key worker housing or affordable home ownership.

We will continue to learn from lived experiences and talk to other agencies, both those who are co-located to find out where there are gaps in information and agree practical solutions to plug these gaps.

Identifying and removing barriers to digital inclusion

Digital inclusion or rather reducing digital exclusion is about making sure that residents have the capability to access the internet to do the things that benefit them from day to day including access to information, advice and services.

Digital exclusion is inextricably linked to wider inequalities in society and is more likely to be faced by homeless households, those on low income, people over 65 and people with disabilities. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, nationally only 51% of households earning between £6,000 and £10,000 had internet access compared to 99% of households with an income over £40,000.

This strategy is being aligned with the Council's Digital Strategy 2022-2025 to reinforce wider practical measures to improve access to online services for vulnerable and disadvantaged residents. Central to this will be staff responsible for providing customer facing services in the Community hub and providing outreach support.

Community responders at Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) will offer home visits or telephone support to anyone who is struggling with digital access and can provide free SIM cards with 6 months unlimited calls and texts and 20GB of data to qualifying vulnerable residents via their partner organisation WECAN.

VAEF and the Housing and Wellbeing Service will be looking at other ways of offering digital support to access housing related services.

Landlord incentives to provide settled accommodation

Private rented accommodation accounts for about 15% of all properties in the District, and over recent years has become increasingly unaffordable for residents on low incomes. Prior to the pandemic loss of private rented tenancy was the main reason for being threatened with homelessness.

The Council still depends on private sector landlords who provide decent affordable accommodation both to prevent people from becoming unnecessarily homeless and to assist the Council to discharge its main housing duty to provide settled accommodation to those who have lost their home.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 provided protection to social and private tenants through a variety of restrictions between March 2020 and October 2021 to delay when landlords could evict tenants.

Now these restrictions have been lifted and the backlog of bailiff eviction warrants reduces the Council is anticipating an increase in homelessness, which is likely to be compounded by concerned landlords pre-empting the proposed abolition of s.21 no fault evictions.

The Housing Needs service employs a skilled negotiator to liaise with private sector landlords on a case by case basis to reconsider allowing tenants to stay who they'd asked to leave, or to charge an affordable rent and provide a tenancy for a minimum of 12 months to a household in need. This flexible bespoke approach is proving to be a very successful way of using limited homelessness prevention grant funding to provide help where its needed to maximum effect.

Maximise support and accommodation options for people leaving institutions

The Council has protocols in place so that people leaving institutions including hospital, care, prison, and the armed forces do so in a planned way and have the necessary support plans and housing options arrangements in place to enable them to adjust and thrive.

Our profiling information shows that too many people leaving institutions still find themselves homeless and vulnerable to exploitation, addiction poverty and mental and physical health problems either straight away, after a period of hidden homelessness such as sofa surfing, or struggling to sustain a tenancy.

Over the period of the strategy we will work with the Essex Housing Officers Group and the Essex Homeless Officers Housing Group and the relevant agencies to review the effectiveness of our protocols.

Raise awareness of homelessness

The donations and support that individual volunteers, local community groups and businesses give to our temporary accommodation scheme at Christmas and throughout the year is a reflection of the social capital that exists within the district.

Part of our strategy is to harness that social capital and raise awareness of homelessness, the causes, impact and lived experiences from a wide range of residents. We want to work with CHES to go into schools and colleges and talk with the students about homelessness from their perspective to really think about how it can be avoided.

PRIORITY 3 BUILDING RESILIENCE

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

The guiding principles of Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community feature in all of the housing related services we provide, and our plans for economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

We embrace our duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take appropriate steps for improving the health of the people in the District. Our review of homelessness informs, and is informed by, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment; and our homelessness strategy is intended to achieve complete synergy with the current Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Levelling Up Essex White Paper.

We believe that building resilience within the community and amongst staff and partner organisations is central to diminishing the human cost of homelessness. We are keen to learn from peers in clinical and third sector services.

Our approach to building resilience will include:

Developing our workforce

The housing profession can be as physically and emotionally challenging as it is rewarding. We want to develop a resilient motivated and empowered workforce that is well equipped to meet the demands of the constantly changing environment, that recognises and understands vulnerability and the complexities of trauma that many of our customers have experienced, and has an awareness of neurodiversity including the associated strengths and weaknesses.

We will consult our Human Resources team and experienced partnership organisations to provide staff with suitable training to develop their skills and improve their communication with people who may be affected by trauma or neurodiversity.

Launch the 'Say Something' campaign

We have a moral and legal obligation to say something if we come across a potential safeguarding issue. This may be easier to do when something is obviously not right, for example if physical abuse is disclosed during an interview. However sometimes things just don't feel 'right', and sensitive curious questioning can help staff to establish whether there is cause for concern and the appropriate response.

The Domestic Abuse Act has highlighted the need for refresher training on data protection and when personal information can and should be shared without consent if a lawful basis can be identified for example if an individual's safety is at risk.

The 'Say Something' campaign is not just speaking up about other people. Staff will be encouraged to let their managers know what their career aspirations are during 1-2-1s and a safe space to say when they are struggling with their own mental health, workloads etc.

Promoting opportunities to engage in Health and wellbeing initiatives

Part of both the homelessness prevention duty and the homelessness relief duty includes agreeing a personal housing plan with the applicant which sets out what the Council will do and what the household will do to address their housing needs. With the agreement and support of members of the Health and Wellbeing Board housing staff will receive training on how to offer to connect applicants to community

groups and non-clinical statutory services for practical and emotional support with community health initiatives (e.g. weight management, stop smoking, diabetes reversal).

A whole systems approach to assisting residents with mental health needs

Funding has been secured to appoint a clinical practitioner from the NHS to work as a specialist Mental Health Navigator across Epping Forest Braintree and Uttlesford to help homeless households to link with mental health services to prevent rough sleeping. The shared learning from this service includes a greater awareness of the link between mental health and homelessness including staff training and delivering trauma informed services.

Meaningful participation and volunteering

Many homeless applicants in temporary accommodation mention feelings of loneliness and isolation, across all age groups and all personal circumstances. Kiera expressed this clearly when sharing her lived experience of temporary accommodation in section 5.

The Temporary Accommodation Team will research what befriending and buddying services already exist in the County and seek advice on the merits of signposting to one or more

PRIORITY 4 ACCESS TO SUITABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT

Theme - More than bricks and mortar

The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the role of the home as a place of safety and the need to access to the right statutory services and community support when and where it's needed.

Suitable housing conditions and knowing who to talk to can save lives, prevent disease, increase quality of life, reduce poverty, protect the public purse and help alleviate climate change.

Our focus on access to suitable housing will include:

Making the best use of all available housing

We will continually review our practices and supply and demand across all tenure types to ensure we are making the most effective use of all available accommodation including temporary accommodation, private rented sector and home ownership in the context of both financial and human resources, and based on the needs of the applicant.

Although there is a wide range of temporary accommodation available we will always consider council owned stock in the first instance, and only ever place people in Bed and Breakfast as a last resort and as an emergency if there is nothing else suitable and immediately available. We will review average waiting times on an annual basis and incentivise downsizing to maximise the availability of stock that is in shortest supply.

The right support at the right time

The majority of homeless applicants reported having one or more support needs at the point of application or in the past. This may range from clinical intervention for illness or disability, social support from children or vulnerable adults to financial support from DWP. In many cases the individual's level of need and ability to cope fluctuates or varies as their circumstances change.

In order to have maximum impact for the maximum number of applicants in need and promote independence services must be responsive enough to provide the right support at the right time. The principles of the right support at the right time will be imbedded into the review of the protocols and move on arrangements for supported housing.

Support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse

The number of applicants who lost their last settled home because of domestic abuse has increased year on year from 12 in 2018/19 to 51 in 2020/21, a trend that is being reflected nationally. The Domestic Abuse Act 2022 brought with it an allocation of New Burdens Funding the Council will use to employ a Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Officer who will join the Community Safety Unit to provide a service to victims of domestic abuse across the District.

We will pursue Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK, and build in processes that help guide staff to adequately address the needs of survivors and hold abusers to account.

Synergy with the National Disability Strategy

18% of applicants seeking help with homelessness or the threat of homelessness informed the council of physical ill health or disability.

We will incorporate the housing related elements of the national disability strategy into this strategy. We will review our policies on the use of Disabled Facilities Grants, provide the appropriate supported housing for people with specific needs and ensure that measures are in place to ensure disabled people can be fully involved in consultation and share their stories as part of the lived experience activities.

Our Aging Population

Epping Forest has an aging population and it is estimated that by 2033 there will be an increase of circa 22% in the 65+ household population and circa 24% in the 75+ household population.

Very few people over the age of 65 present as homeless or at risk of homeless and there is an oversupply of sheltered housing for rent although conversely there is an undersupply of 'retirement homes' in the private sector.

Our staff will continue to receive training on what it means to create dementia friendly communities and we are considering the feasibility of including sheltered housing schemes in our regeneration plans. We are also proposing to offer better incentives and more options for older people to downsize to accommodation that meets their assessed needs and their personal preferences where it is reasonable to do so.

The needs of Gypsies and Travellers

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 two households who identified themselves as Gypsies or Travellers approached the Housing Needs service for assistance due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness and one person approached to flee domestic abuse.

The Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) supports Gypsies and Travellers to access services and accommodation related issues including 12 local authority sites across the County.

We shall continue to develop a co-ordinated approach with the ECTU for the services we provide for gypsies and travellers with particular focus on support for women who experience domestic abuse, and the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

PRIORITY 5 ENDING ROUGH SLEEPING

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

Historically relatively few people have been known to be sleeping rough in the district on any given night. However; one person sleeping rough is one too many. Our approach to ending rough sleeping will be proportionate and focus on prevention intervention and recovery.

Prevention – Stopping people from sleeping rough for the first time

Intervention – Support to those currently sleeping rough to move off the streets

Recovery – Support to those who have slept rough to ensure they don't return to the streets

We know that rough sleepers are largely transient travelling from district to district across the County. We are part of **the Essex Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group** and are able to pool resources, share expertise and pursue joint funding bids.

Our commitment to achieving the Government's target of ending rough sleeping will be underpinned by a holistic approach to improving the life chances of individuals with a history of sleeping rough or who are at risk of sleeping rough.

Our plans to end rough sleeping will include:

Collaborative working with our neighbours

We are keen to continue to build on the success of membership of the sector wide Essex Homelessness Officers Group and the Greater Essex Rough Sleeper Strategy Group to secure RSI funding and taking a co-ordinated approach to working with potential rough sleepers who are often transient.

By pooling resources and expertise we are able to see the proportionate benefits of joint initiatives like the Horizons scheme where intensive support is provided to a small cohort of individuals impacted by significant multiple disadvantage (homelessness, offending and substance misuse).

Learning from lived experiences

We will expand the learning from lived experiences to understand the stories of those rough sleepers who have returned to the streets on more than one occasion with those who avoided doing so and will look at whether people who are happy to share their stories may also be interested in participating in future reverse job fairs that may be developed across the County.

Expanding the outreach service to include supporting former rough sleepers

We are keen to follow up on the success of the everyone in programme which accommodated 23 people and granted settled tenancies to 12 people who had been previously sleeping rough. We are arranging to collaborate with Peabody Outreach Team to develop an enhanced outreach service for former rough sleepers to provide longer term support if and when its needed that compliments the work of the mental health navigator and the planned substance misuse navigator.

Understanding the impact of hidden homelessness e.g sofa surfing and sleeping in cars

We recognise from the increase in numbers of people who became street homeless during the pandemic that hidden homelessness is still an issue - and we are working with the Community Safety Unit to ensure that anyone who is found to be sleeping in a car is referred to the Housing Needs service in the first instance - so that all residents without a settled home can access the appropriate information and advice on the options that are available to them. We will also develop a publicity programme about sofa surfing and the early intervention measures for single homeless people to avoid having to rely on friends and associates to put them up for a few nights here and there.

CASE STUDIES – LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERIENCES

Lived Experiences of Homelessness

During the consultation a variety of residents said they were happy to give in depth accounts of their experiences of becoming homeless in Epping Forest to help us to gain insight into the causes and help that's available from their perspective.

We asked the following questions and considered the feedback when formulating the strategy;

- What were the main reasons you became homeless?
- What have you found to be most challenging and have you overcome these challenges?
- How do you think your homelessness could have been prevented or avoided?
- What organisations or services have been particularly helpful?
- What do you think could help you to keep somewhere settled to live?

We are very grateful to the residents who shared their stories so openly and honestly. With their permission we have published the accounts of three different households whose names we have changed to protect their privacy.

Lived Experience 1

Keira

Kiera became homeless as a young adult. She was living with her mum and younger siblings until Children's Social Care intervened. Kiera was too old to go into foster care and was suffering mental ill health so she was referred to the Council's Housing services who provided temporary accommodation.

Kiera said that her homelessness was caused by complex family issues so she doesn't think it could have been avoided. She said the help she received from the winter clothes fund, food from the foodbank and donations to the temporary accommodation have kept her going and she has managed to stay in full time education.

Kiera still struggles with her mental health and is currently dealing with this on her own. She said she is worried about how she will manage when she moves out of temporary accommodation and into a settled home. Kiera said she finds being homeless with no family support very lonely and she is anxious that this will increase if she moves to an area she doesn't know.

Kiera would like to find an organisation that could help her to find someone to talk to. She suggested more activities for single people in temporary accommodation to connect and make friendships and perhaps motivational monthly challenges like cooking or exercises.

Lived experience 2

Ahmed and Somaiya

Ahmed and Somaiya have two children and have always lived in private rented accommodation. Their landlord decided to sell the house and gave them notice to leave. Despite both being in employment Ahmed and Somaiya could not find somewhere affordable to rent that was within travelling distance of work and school.

Ahmed and Somaiya said the biggest challenge was trying to find somewhere else to live with such short notice, because rents had increased so much and they didn't have enough time to find higher paid jobs

and get the money together in time. They went to the Citizens Advice Bureau who they found were very helpful and are now in Council owned temporary accommodation.

Ahmed and Somaiya would still like to live in private rented accommodation that was affordable but worry that most landlords only offer 1-year tenancies so they could find themselves in the same position within 12 months which is no good for their children.

Lived experience 3

Tex

Tex is an older male who had been living in accommodation tied to his low paid job, until the company went into liquidation without warning. Tex found himself homeless and with no money and began sleeping rough. He said his health quickly deteriorated and his overwhelming memories were of being cold and fearing that he wouldn't survive.

Tex had been sleeping in a variety of parks and open spaces for about three weeks when a minister from the Church approached him and offered practical and emotional support to get back on his feet.

The minister made a referral to the Council's outreach team who provided Tex with temporary accommodation and arranged for Peabody Housing Association to give housing related support - including access to benefits and help to move into the temporary accommodation.

Tex has now left the temporary accommodation and has moved into a settled home with support. He said that the temporary accommodation made him feel secure and everyone had been really nice and supportive.

We will continue to listen to and learn from the lived experiences of our residents as part of our strategy to work together to prevent and tackle homelessness.

ACHIEVING THE INTENDED OUTCOMES

Monitoring arrangements and accountability:

- The plan will be updated every quarter.
- Lead organisations and officers will be identified for each task on the delivery plan.
- The lead organisation for each action will be responsible for informing partners of any issues or risks between quarterly progress update with a view to resolving.

PARTNERS SIGNED UP TO THE STRATEGY

The following key strategic partnerships have signed up to this strategy (in principle subject to reviewing the final draft and detailed delivery plan)

- *CHESS Homelessness
- *EFDC Community Safety Partnership
- *EFD Cultural Forum
- *EFD Health and Wellbeing Board
- *EFD Tenant and Leaseholders Panel
- Epping Community Hub (individual members to be listed pending confirmation)
- *Epping Team Ministry
- *Essex County Council Adult Social Care
- *Essex County Council Children's Services
- *Essex County Council Disability and Autism Team
- *Essex County Council Housing Growth Lead
- *Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- *Peabody Outreach Support

APPENDIX 1 - DELIVERY PLAN – 2022/23**PRIORITY 1 – WORKING TOGETHER – Make every contact count**

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Launch Make Every Contact Count campaign			<u>Lead</u>		
	Review the Duty to Refer (DTR) working arrangements and incorporate the principles of the proposed Duty to Collaborate if introduced			<u>Lead</u>		
	Joint venture between Housing Needs and Health Services to fund and recruit a Substance Misuse Navigator			<u>Lead</u>		
	Maximise opportunities for grant funding			<u>Lead</u>		
	Promote social and economic mobility by bridging the gap between skills shortage and employment and training			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 2 – PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS- Early intervention

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Information and Advice: Review the levelling up, wellbeing and homelessness prevention and housing advice that is available at all touchpoints			<u>Lead</u>		
	Ensure the needs of people most at risk of homelessness are fully catered for as part of the Corporate Digital Strategy			<u>Lead</u>		
	Landlord incentives to maximise access to affordable private sector rented accommodation			<u>Lead</u>		
	Maximise accommodation options for those leaving institutions to reduce hidden homelessness and the need to sleep rough			<u>Lead</u>		
	Raise awareness of Homelessness: Schools and Colleges and Museum programme			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 3 – BUILDING RESILIENCE

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Develop a resilient motivated and empowered workforce skilled in curious questioning and respectful of neurodiversity and vulnerability			<u>Lead</u>		
	Launch the Say Something campaign			<u>Lead</u>		
	Promote opportunities to engage in health and wellbeing initiatives			<u>Lead</u>		
	Develop a whole systems approach to assisting clients with mental health needs			<u>Lead</u>		
	Reduce the stigma of homelessness and rough sleeping through initiatives that are informed by people with lived experiences			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 4 – ACCESS TO SUITABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Make the most effective use of temporary accommodation in the context of both financial and human resource			<u>Lead</u>		
	Secure Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation			<u>Lead</u>		
	Incorporate the Housing related aspects of the National Disability inclusion programme in to the service			<u>Lead</u>		
	Ensure the right support is provided at the right time and in the right place			<u>Lead</u>		
	Develop pathway to homelessness prevention, domestic abuse and health services for Gypsies and Travellers			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 5 – END ROUGH SLEEPING

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Continue to maximise the successful shared outcomes from working with our neighbours across the County			<u>Lead</u>		
	Learn from the lived experiences of homelessness of the widest range of residents			<u>Lead</u>		
	End the cycle of homelessness by working with partners to expand the outreach service to include former rough sleepers			<u>Lead</u>		
	Understand the scale and impact of hidden homelessness across the district			<u>Lead</u>		

Version Control Log

Version	Date	Details of changes included in update	Author

Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices, High Street,
Epping,
Essex CM16 4BZ

Telephone: 01992 564000
Email: rehousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

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Draft REVIEW OF
HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING
IN THE DISTRICT OF EPPING FOREST
2021-2022

If you would like this document
in a more accessible format,
then please contact:

The Housing Strategy Team
Housingstrategy@eppingforest.dc.gov.uk

Telephone 01992 564 214

or at the Civic Office

323 High Street

Epping

CM16 4BZ

DRAFT

Introduction

This review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the District of Epping Forest (the District) was carried out between May and December 2021 to inform the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2022-2027.

The review seeks to:

- Assess the comparative levels of homelessness or risk of homelessness between 2018/19 and 2020/21
- Establish the direction of travel to anticipate likely future levels of homelessness
- Identify what is being done and by whom, and the resources available to prevent and tackle homelessness
- Form part of the evidence base for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027

Summary

In 2020/21 a total of 567 households approached (or were referred to) the Council for assistance to prevent or resolve homelessness.

Of these, 186 households were provided with information and advice, 123 households received assistance to prevent or delay them from becoming homeless and 258 households who were homeless at the point of contact were provided with temporary relief (generally in temporary accommodation) and help to find somewhere to live. The Council assessed whether it owed a main housing duty to 143 households and accepted a main duty to make an offer of settled accommodation for 96 households.

The majority of approaches were made by households that had been living with family or friends who were no longer willing or able to accommodate them, or households that had been asked to leave private rented accommodation.

The pandemic had a notable impact on the profile of households seeking help from the Council. Fewer households were asked leave private rented accommodation and more households told to move out by family and friends. Homelessness due to domestic abuse and non-violent relationship breakdown also increased as did the number of households placed in temporary accommodation, although the use of Bed and Breakfast reduced to emergencies only.

Many more people were found to be sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough than pre-pandemic (where typically very few if any were identified on a given night), and 23 people were identified provided with accommodation and support as part of the Everyone In campaign.

The council has been particularly effective at preventing homelessness and supporting families and single people in temporary accommodation to build resilience and providing activities to improve the wider determinants of long-term health and wellbeing across all sections of the community.

Evidence base

Statistics

The evidence base for the review draws statistical information from a variety of local and national sources including periodic submissions to Department of Levelling Up Homes and Community ((DLUHC) formerly Ministry for Housing and Local Government (MHCLG)), independent data gathered by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), cross cutting multi-agency needs assessments such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), statutory planning documents like the Local Plan, and routine financial and performance management information.

Wherever possible the most up to date and consistently defined data has been used to identify trends and patterns and make projections. However, allowances should be made for variations depending on the source and data definitions at the point of collection.

(e.g. the latest Local Authority Profiling information relate to 2020/21 whereas the Census data typically used for control purposes was gathered in 2011)

Consultation

The statistical evidence has been combined with qualitative information gathered through surveys, meetings, personal accounts, lived experiences and comprehensive formal and informal consultation events with partner organisations, statutory agencies, residents, and community groups. The outcome of the consultation has been published alongside this review.

Research

The qualitative and quantitative data has been supported by research of social policy publications and peer comparisons.

Analysis

The information has been analysed by a multi-skilled team of in-house professionals including officers responsible for delivering the service in conjunction with strategists and those responsible for governance and budgets. The review and associated documents have been scrutinised by the Housing Growth Lead at Essex County Council acting in the capacity of an external critical friend.

Findings of the review

Achievements and positive outcomes

The following positive outcomes have been achieved since April 2020

Accommodation solutions

- 23 people sleeping rough were accommodated as part of the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative.
- 12 people sleeping rough were granted tenancies of settled accommodation.
- 2 people sleeping rough were reunited with their families.
- A 6-bed property was purchased and converted into a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to provide affordable accommodation for former rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough.

- A Council house was converted into a 4-bed HMO and leased to CHESS (the Council's commissioned rough sleeper service) to provide supported housing pathway for rough sleepers (or those at risk) with multiple and complex needs.
- There was a 73% reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation which is now only used in emergencies if nothing else is available.

Funding solutions

- The Essex RSI partnership successfully bid for Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) year 4 funding in 2021-2022.
- Additional RSI funding was secured to appoint a mental health specialist to work within the homelessness team in 2021/2022.

Practical solutions

- During the first lockdown, 200 cooked meals per week provided by 3Food4All were distributed to Norway House temporary accommodation scheme (Norway House) and three local sheltered housing schemes.
- Over 100 toilet rolls were donated to residents.
- Activity packs and craft kits were donated to children living in temporary accommodation.
- Norway House continued to receive 2-3 food donations per week of fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, dried foods and canned goods from local businesses and members of the community.
- Christmas food hampers distributed to 76 households in need.
- Upper Clacton Rugby Club provided a Christmas present for every child living in Norway House.

Inclusion solutions

- All residents at Norway House received weekly welfare calls since being introduced in March 2020.
- Fully inclusive Community Culture and Wellbeing projects, activities and courses were provided for households in temporary accommodation including:
 - Garden Project
 - Arts Projects
 - Cooking and nutrition courses
 - Enrichment after school clubs
 - Trauma awareness training for staff

The Homelessness Reduction Act and the Council's duties

The HR Act increased the duties placed on the Council and other statutory bodies primarily to intervene at an earlier stage, to prevent and relieve homelessness, in addition to the established main housing duty to provide somewhere settled to live for those who qualify.

The Council is also now obliged to provide tailored support to those without a priority need, typically single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and applicants who are classed as intentionally homeless. However; those seeking assistance are required to actively co-operate with an agreed personal housing plan. There are 12 duties in total and associated measures.

Comparative data 2018/19-2020/21

The measures are designed to identify the reasons why people become homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, the numbers and characteristics of the people who approach the Council for help, and the Council's activity in regards to preventing, relieving and securing housing where it has a duty to do so.

A cautionary note

The Government staggered the introduction of the HR Act in recognition of the burden that it would place on local housing authorities. Therefore conclusions drawn from the early data should be made with caution as the figures do not include legacy cases (applications received prior to the new duties) and may not account for retrospective adjustments (following data consolidation exercises).

Number of assessments and duties owed

Households assessed under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and duty owed

Households assessed and duty owed	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of households assessed	335	378	389

Reason for prevention or relief duty decision

Total households assessed as owed a duty	331	99%	376	99%	381	98%
Prevention duty owed - (Threatened with homelessness)	189	56%	216	57%	123	32%
Relief duty owed - (Homeless)	142	42%	160	42%	258	66%
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days - no duty owed	4	1%	2	1%	8	2%

Overall, the number of households presenting to the Council and receiving a homelessness assessment has increased over the last three years from 335 in 2018/19 to 389 in 2020/21.

There was a reduction in the number of households threatened with homelessness and owed a 56-day homelessness prevention duty which went from 189 in 2018/19 to 123 in 2020/21. This was largely attributed to the Coronavirus Act 2020 as amended which provided protection to social and private tenants between March 2020 and October 2021 by delaying when landlords could evict tenants.

However, the number of households presenting to the councils as homeless, increased from

160 in 2019/20 to 258 in 2020/21, primarily due to being asked to leave by friends or family, domestic abuse and non-violent relationship breakdown

Reason for risk of loss of last settled home – Prevention duty

Risk of loss of last settled home – Prevention duty	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	58 31%	77 36%	49 40%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	91 48%	79 37%	31 25%
Domestic abuse	7 4%	2 1%	8 7%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	3 2%	13 6%	13 11%
End of social rented tenancy	3 2%	6 3%	0 -
Eviction from supported housing	3 2%	3 1%	2 2%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	2 1%	1 0.5%	3 2%
Other violence or harassment	0 -	1 0.5%	3 2%
Left institution with no accommodation available	0 -	2 1%	0 -
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0 -	0 -	0 -
Other reasons / not known ⁶	22 12%	32 15%	14 11%

The main reason for the loss of the last settled home for people at risk of homelessness has changed over the past three years. In 2018/19 the main reason was the end of a private rented tenancy (48%) followed by family or friends no longer willing to accommodate (31%).

By 2020/21 the trend had reversed with the main reason being friends or family no longer willing to accommodate (40%) then end of private rented tenancy (25%). The largest increase was due to non-violent relationship breakdown which rose from 2% to 4%.

Ending the prevention duty

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total households where prevention duty ended^{1,2}	151	223	108

Reason for households' prevention duty ending:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	76 50%	95 43%	57 53%
Homeless (including intentionally homeless)	50 33%	76 34%	18 17%
Contact lost	7 5%	13 6%	9 8%
56 days elapsed and no further action	11 7%	25 11%	10 9%
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	4 3%	10 4%	13 12%
No longer eligible	1 1%	4 2%	1 1%
Refused suitable accommodation offer	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Refused to cooperate	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Not known ⁶	0 -	0 -	0 -

The Council was able to end its prevention duty in around half of all cases by successfully working with applicants for 56 days to stop them from becoming homeless (either by

negotiating to remain in their current home or finding alternative accommodation). Between 33% -34% of those receiving prevention support became homeless between 2018/19 and 2020/21. This reduced to 17% in 2020/21. This can be attributed in part to the success of the Councils interventions and the interim measures that the government introduced to prevent evictions during the peak of the pandemic.

Relief duty

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	40 28%	52 33%	102 40%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	19 13%	15 9%	16 6%
Domestic abuse	12 8%	27 17%	51 20%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	15 11%	19 12%	31 12%
End of social rented tenancy	10 7%	4 3%	5 2%
Eviction from supported housing	0 -	0 -	0 -
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	1 1%	2 1%	7 3%
Other violence or harassment	5 4%	4 3%	11 4%
Left institution with no accommodation available	4 3%	4 3%	2 1%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0 -	0 -	0 -
Other reasons / not known ⁶	36 25%	33 21%	33 13%

The majority of households to whom the Council owed a relief duty were already homeless when they first approached the Council. The main reason for homelessness being family or friends no longer willing to accommodate. The nom which increased between 2018/10 and 2020/21 from 28% to 40% and in real terms more than doubled from 40 households to 102 households.

The number of households becoming homeless due to domestic abuse significantly increased during the same period from 8% to 20 % and in real terms from 12 households to 51 households.

The percentage of social rented tenancies that were ended reduced from 7% to 2% during the period.

Household type of households owed a prevention duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Single parent with dependent children - Male	2 1%	8 4%	3 2%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	67 35%	72 33%	42 34%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	4 2%	0 -	0 -
Single adult - Male	31 16%	46 21%	28 23%
Single adult - Female	40 21%	49 23%	36 29%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	0 -	0 -	0 -

Couple with dependent children	25	13%	19	9%	9	7%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	12	6%	15	7%	3	2%
Three or more adults with dependent children	6	3%	6	3%	0	-
Three or more adults without dependent children	2	1%	1	0.5%	2	2%
Not known ⁸	0	-	0	-	0	-

Female single parents with dependent children consistently formed the largest cohort of households to whom the council owed a prevention duty, followed by single adult females and single adult males. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of single adults qualifying for assistance compared to other cohorts.

Household type owed a relief duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Single parent with dependent children - Male	5 4%	3 2%	10 4%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	39 27%	24 15%	49 19%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	0 -	0 -	1 0.4%
Single adult - Male	43 30%	78 49%	118 46%
Single adult - Female	33 23%	38 24%	65 25%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Couple with dependent children	12 8%	12 8%	4 2%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	8 6%	5 3%	9 3%
Three or more adults with dependent children	0 0%	0 -	2 1%
Three or more adults without dependent children	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	0 -

Single males formed the largest cohort of households requiring a relief duty, accounting for just under half of all applicants in 2019/20 (49%) and reducing slightly in percentage terms in 2020/21 (46%) – but increasing in real terms from 78 to 118 during the period.

Support needs

Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
History of mental health problems	95 29%	81 22%	104 27%
Physical ill health and disability	58 18%	49 13%	67 18%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	40 12%	29 8%	52 14%
Offending history	25 8%	20 5%	20 5%
History of repeat homelessness	23 7%	12 3%	16 4%
Drug dependency needs	13 4%	18 5%	16 4%
History of rough sleeping	10 3%	9 2%	18 5%
Alcohol dependency needs	10 3%	22 6%	19 5%
Learning disability	20 6%	13 3%	10 3%
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	13 4%	10 3%	19 5%

Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Access to education, employment or training	10 3%	4 1%	4 1%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	3 1%	13 3%	17 4%
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	3 1%	6 2%	8 2%
Old age	4 1%	1 0.3%	6 2%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	4 1%	2 1%	3 1%
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	2 1%	4 1%	6 2%
Young person aged 16-17 years	2 1%	3 1%	6 2%
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	9 3%	5 1%	2 1%
Former asylum seeker	2 1%	3 1%	2 1%
Served in HM Forces	1 0.3%	3 1%	2 1%

More than half of applicants had one or more support needs. The most commonly reported being a history of mental health problems which remained fairly constant at between 29% - 27%, followed by physical ill health or disability of around 18% and between 12-14% at risk of or having experienced domestic abuse.

There was a notable increase in the number of people who reported being at risk of or having experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse) and a slight increase in the number of applicants reporting sexual abuse/exploitation, both of which may correlate with the increase in single homeless males and females over the same period.

The percentage of people with learning disabilities who became homeless or threatened with homelessness reduced from 6% to 3% .This may have been due to the reduction in evictions and a reluctance to exclude vulnerable people from the family home during the pandemic.

Temporary Accommodation

Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Norway House Council owned hostel	36	30	33
Hemnall House self-contained block with floating support	4	8	7
Council owned self- contained general needs housing	29	51	50
Brook Haven and Women's refuge	3	3	2
Nightly purchased self-contained private sector units	N/A	5	14
Zinc Arts Charity temporary accommodation	1	4	12
Other registered providers	1	3	4
Bed and Breakfast	25	11	1
Total	99	115	123

The Council has access to a range of temporary accommodation units at its disposal including council owned a general needs hostel, pods and chalets with shared facilities and on-site housing support staff at Norway House, a block of self- contained flats at Hemnall House with out-reach support, and self-contained houses and flats pepper-potted across the Council stock.

This is supplemented where necessary with women's refuge spaces nightly purchased self-contained private sector housing, nominations to Zinc Arts Charity accommodation and as a last resort emergency bed and breakfast (which has all but been phased out).

Main housing duty decisions

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of main duty decisions made	84	146	143
Main duty decision	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Homeless + priority need + unintentionally homeless (accepted*)	60 71%	99 68%	96 67%
Homeless + priority need + intentionally homeless	7 8%	8 6%	7 5%
Homeless + no priority need	10 12%	36 25%	31 22%
Not homeless	7 8%	3 2%	9 6%

The number of main duty decisions that were recorded for 2018/19 presents a false low as it only included cases assessed under the HR Act, excluding legacy cases.

The number of main duty assessments and acceptances have remained stable over the last two years. In 2019/20 146 decisions were made and a main duty was accepted for 99 households or 68% and in 2020/21 143 decisions were made and 67% were accepted.

Priority need of households owed a main duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Household includes dependent children	47 78%	58 59%	28 29%
Mental health problems	2 3%	15 15%	13 13%
Physical disability / ill health	6 10%	16 16%	20 21%
Household includes a pregnant woman	0 -	2 2%	4 4%
Domestic abuse	0 -	2 2%	4 4%
Young applicant	0 -	1 1%	7 7%
Old age	1 2%	0 -	1 1%
Homeless because of emergency	0 -	0 -	3 3%
Other	3 5%	3 3%	11 12%
Vulnerable with children	1 2%	2 2%	5 5%

The most common priority need for being owed a main housing duty remains being a household with young children. However the ratio has reduced significantly from 78% of all cases in 2018/19 to 29% in 2020/21.

Referrals from other agencies

Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of assessments following Duty to Refer		12	32

Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	No data*	0 -	2 4%
Youth Secure Estate	No data*	0 -	0 -
National Probation Service	No data*	2 12%	3 6%
Community Rehabilitation Company	No data*	0 -	3 6%
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres or in-patient care	No data*	3 18%	4 8%
Mental Health in-patient care	No data*	0 -	4 8%
Jobcentre Plus	No data*	3 18%	5 10%
Adult Social Services	No data*	1 6%	2 4%
Children's Social Services	No data*	1 6%	6 12%
Nil Recourse Team	No data*	0 -	0 -
Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces	No data*	0 -	0 -
Other / not known	No data*	2 12%	6 12%
Households referred by an agency (not subject to the Duty to Refer)	No data*	5 29%	15 29%
Households referred by another local authority	No data*	0 -	2 4%

There is no data for 2018/19 as the duty to refer was not introduced until 2019/20

There has been an increase in referrals as agencies have become familiar with the process. Further work is required to increase the referrals that are made via this route to make every contact count.

Profile of households who have experienced homelessness

Employment status

Employment status of main applicants owed a duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Registered unemployed	73 22%	66 18%	121 32%
Not working due to long-term illness / disability	74 22%	94 25%	66 17%
Full-time work	45 14%	57 15%	38 10%
Part-time work	47 14%	57 15%	46 12%
Not seeking work / at home	54 16%	48 13%	48 13%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	8 2%	11 3%	22 6%
Retired	6 2%	10 3%	12 3%
Student / training	5 2%	12 3%	2 1%
Other	19 6%	21 6%	19 5%
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	7 2%

In 2018/19 22% of accepted applicants were registered as unemployed and an equal number were not working due to long term illness or disability. By 2020/21 this had changed to 32% registered unemployed and 17% not working due to long term illness or disability.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
White	262 79%	315 84%	307 81%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	35 11%	34 9%	26 7%
Asian / Asian British	13 4%	4 1%	11 3%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	13 4%	8 2%	13 3%
Other ethnic groups	7 2%	5 1%	6 2%
Not known ⁸	0 0%	10 3%	18 5%

The data on the above table has been reproduced and published by DLUHC from more detailed ethnicity classifications that the Council routinely gathers.

The vast majority of households described their ethnicity as white at between 79% and 84%. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British saw a marked decrease from 11% in 2018/19 to 7% in 2020/21 and the 'Not known' cohort increased from 0% to 5% over the same period.

Age

Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
16-17	3 1%	7 2%	3 1%
18-24	62 19%	58 15%	86 23%
25-34	108 33%	122 32%	117 31%
35-44	69 21%	75 20%	73 19%
45-54	60 18%	65 17%	53 14%
55-64	19 6%	37 10%	37 10%
65-74	8 2%	11 3%	10 3%
75+	2 1%	1 0.3%	2 1%
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	0 -

The majority of households fall within the 25-34 age group over the three year period and remaining fairly constant, decreasing slightly from 33% in 2018/19 to 31% in 2020/21.

The most significant variation is in the percentage aged between 18-24 which has increased from 19% to 23% and aged between 55-64 which has increased from 6% to 10% over the same period.

Sexual identification

Sexual identification of main applicants owed a duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Heterosexual	No data*	No data*	326 86%
Homosexual (Gay/Lesbian)	No data*	No data*	5 1%
Other	No data*	No data*	8 2%

Prefer not to say	No data*	No data*	42	11%
Not known	No data*	No data*	0	0%

The sexual identification of the main applicants was not captured in this format until 2020/21 when 86% identified as heterosexual, 1% as homosexual 2% as other and 11% preferred not to say.

People sleeping rough

Compared to neighbouring London Boroughs and several of the other Local Authority Areas in Essex, there are typically very few if any people known to be sleeping rough in the District on any given night.

The data is gathered from a variety of sources. One night a year a snapshot is taken of the whole area where volunteers count the number of people they find bedded down in the open. This is combined with the numbers of people who are found to be sleeping rough by Chess the Councils commissioned outreach service or approach the service for assistance.

When the MET office forecasts the temperature dropping to zero or below (or 'feels like' zero or below) the Council triggers the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and offers immediate temporary accommodation to everyone sleeping rough until the temperature rises above zero once more.

Emergency Covid Accommodation (1 ST wave)	Temporary Accommodation (s188/s193)	Temporarily staying with friends	NSAP, Project Protect etc.	Move-on Accommodation
	2	4	0	20

Gypsies, travellers and boat moorings

Homelessness

Year	Amount	Outcomes
2018/2019	1	Homelessness prevented
2019/2020	0	N/A
2020/2021	1	Case closed - no contact

In 2018/19 one household that approached the Councils Housing Needs service for help with homelessness prevention identified as a member of the Gypsy and Traveller community and another household presented in 2020/21.

Domestic Abuse

Year	Amount	Outcomes
2018/2019	0	N/A
2019/2020	0	N/A
2020/2021	1	Lost contact

One household from the Gypsy and Traveller community approached the Councils Housing Needs service fleeing domestic abuse in 2020/21

Source - Management Information

Factors affecting future levels of homelessness in the district

Top 10 most deprived neighbourhoods in Epping Forest

The table below lists the 10 most deprived neighbourhoods in EFDC in 2019 and the wards where they are located.

	LSOA Name	Ward Name	Rank	Decile
10 Most Deprived Areas	Epping Forest 013A	Loughton Alderton	5,221	2
	Epping Forest 007E	Waltham Abbey Paternoster	6,610	3
	Epping Forest 009A	Waltham Abbey High Beach	8,666	3
	Epping Forest 003C	Passingford	9,468	3
	Epping Forest 007A	Waltham Abbey North East	9,594	3
	Epping Forest 017A	Grange Hill	9,597	3
	Epping Forest 011C	Loughton Broadway	10,408	4
	Epping Forest 009B	Waltham Abbey North East	10,509	4
	Epping Forest 011B	Loughton Broadway	10,606	4
	Epping Forest 011A	Loughton Broadway	11,012	4

Social and economic mobility

In 2019 Loughton Alderton was ranked in the most deprived 20% of areas in England, with a population of 1647 people.

Between 2015 and 2019 Waltham Abbey Paternoster moved up from being ranked in the bottom 20% of the most deprived areas of England to the bottom 30%.

Between 2015 and 2019 a total of 48 neighbourhoods increased in their rank and 30 decreased their rank.

The neighbourhood which saw the most improvement between 2007 and 2019 was in the ward of Lower Sheering.

Population growth

The age distribution of the estimated population of 131,137 in 2018 was 0-15 (18.9%) 16-64 (61.4%) older people 65+ (19.6%).

All age categories

EFDC household population for all age categories was projected to increase to approximately 131,695 people in 2021 then by 3.9% to 136,762 people by 2033 and by 4.9% to 138,197 people by 2037.

Older people

It is estimated that by 2033 there will be an increase of circa. 22% in the 65+ household population and circa.24% increase in the 75+ household population.

By 2037 it is estimated that there will be an increase of c.29% in the projected 65+ household population and a circa.34% increase in the projected 75+ household population

Source: Assessment of need for housing and accommodation for older people in Epping Forest District to 2033 Housing LIN December 2021

Housing supply for older people

EFDC has a relative undersupply of housing for older people for sale/shared ownership, compared to its comparator authorities, and to the all-England average. However, it has an oversupply of housing for older people to rent.

EFDC has a relative undersupply of housing with care compared to both its comparator authorities and to the all-England average and a substantially higher prevalence of residential care beds. Conversely it has a relative undersupply of nursing care beds compared to comparator authorities, but a higher prevalence compared to the all -England average.

Older people and disability

There are approximately 11,000 people 65+ in Epping Forest District with a long-term disability or health problem who experience limitations in terms of their day-to day activities.

Dementia

There are approximately 1,052 people 65+ with dementia in Epping Forest District, projected to rise to 1,639 by 2033 and 1,879 by 2037.

Source: Assessment of need for housing and accommodation for older people in Epping Forest District to 2033 Housing LIN December 2021

Council housebuilding scheme

The Council is undertaking an ambitious housebuilding programme and plans to develop circa 195 homes for affordable housing between 2021/22 and 2025/26.

More than Bricks and Mortar estate regeneration schemes

Major regeneration schemes are currently underway at Limes Farm in Chigwell and Nine Fields in Waltham Abbey.

Garden Towns

Harlow and Gilston is a designated Garden Town with sites in EFDC, Harlow and East Herts. The intention is to develop around 3,900 new homes in EFDC between 2020 and 2033.

- 2,100 in Water Lane (to the south west of Harlow)
- 1,050 in Latton Priory (to the south of Harlow)
- 750 in East Harlow (the site will provide 3,350 new homes in total. The remaining 2,600 will be delivered on land within Harlow district)

For further information please contact the Housing Strategy Team
Housingstrategy@Eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Communities and Wellbeing

21 February 2022

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Tenancy Policy

2022-2027

Tenancy Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The effective date of this Tenancy Policy is xxx
- 1.2 Under the Localism Act 2011 and the Homes England's Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, Registered Providers (predominantly, but not exclusively, housing associations and local authorities) must publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies, preventing unnecessary evictions and tackling tenancy fraud and set out:
- The types of tenancies granted
 - Circumstances where a tenancy of a particular type will be granted, and the length of the term
 - Circumstances where a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term of less than 5 years will be granted
 - Circumstances where another tenancy will be granted on expiry on the same or another property
 - How applicants/tenants can appeal against the length or type of tenancy or the decision not to grant a further tenancy
 - Taking account of the needs of vulnerable people
 - Provision of housing advice and assistance if another tenancy is not granted at the end of the term; and
 - Discretionary succession rights
- 1.3 This Tenancy Policy, in conjunction with the Tenants' Handbook and the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme, meets with the requirements of:
- The Localism Act 2011
 - The Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England on the Allocation of Accommodation June 2012 (as amended)
 - The Right to Move 2015; and
 - Section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which came into force on 1 November 2021 places new obligations on social landlords to ensure that, where they are offering a new tenancy to existing lifetime social tenants as a result of domestic abuse, such tenancies are granted on a lifetime basis.

2. Tenancy Strategy

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy, which must set out the matters to which Registered Providers are to have regard in formulating their tenancy policies relating to:
- The types of tenancies they grant
 - The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular type
 - Where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the lengths of those terms and
 - The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy

2.2 The West Essex Housing Forum, comprising the three local authorities in West Essex, being Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils has adopted one joint West Essex Tenancy Strategy.

2.3 All Registered Providers with housing stock in West Essex are required by the Localism Act 2011 to have regard to the West Essex Tenancy Strategy when formulating and implementing their own Tenancy Policies. The Tenancy Strategy was produced to give guidance to Registered Providers on the 3 councils' expectations of how their Tenancy Policies should be framed. The Council has had regard to the West Essex Tenancy Strategy when formulating this Tenancy Policy.

3. The Types of Tenancies Granted

Introductory Tenancy Scheme

3.1 The Council operates an Introductory Tenancy Scheme whereby all new potentially Secure Tenants (sometimes referred to as lifetime tenants) and Flexible Tenants (fixed-term tenants) are on trial for a period of 12 months in order that the Council can satisfy itself that the introductory tenant can sustain a tenancy and meet with the conditions of the Council's Standard Tenancy Agreement. Should any conditions be breached, the Council will be able to seek possession of the property through the County Court with the judge having to grant possession, provided all of the procedures have been followed correctly.

In circumstances where the Council has concerns about an introductory tenant, but not serious enough to apply to the County Court for possession, the introductory period can be extended by a further 6 months. If the trial period is successfully completed, Introductory Tenancies automatically become either Secure Tenancies or Flexible (fixed term) Tenancies.

Introductory, Potentially Secure, Periodic (Lifetime) Tenants

3.2 Introductory, potentially Secure Tenancies will be granted to appropriate home seekers in accordance with this Tenancy Policy. The legislation governing Secure Tenancies is found in Part IV of the Housing Act 1985. The rights of a Secure Tenant are set out in the Act and are commonly referred to as the Tenants Charter. A Secure Tenancy can only be ended by way of a Possession Order granted by the County Court.

Existing Secure Tenants Who Transfer or Mutual Exchange

Transfers

3.3 Under the Localism Act 2011, all tenants who signed up to their tenancy prior to 1 April 2012 will be given a tenancy with no less security where they choose to move to another social rented home. This means that such tenant's security of tenure is protected if they transfer to another social rented home. Such protection only applies on one occasion.

Although such tenants will retain their secure tenancy status, there will be a reduction in tenancy rights. This is due to their new tenancy being a tenancy granted after the commencement of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 on 1 April 2012 which,

although secure, will have reduced succession rights for family members. This does not apply where tenants choose to move to accommodation let on Affordable Rent terms.

In addition to the statutory requirement above, the Council will generally grant its existing Post-Act Secure Tenants who are under-occupying their current accommodation and are transferring to a property with less bedrooms (where both properties are owned by the Council), a Secure Tenancy on their new smaller accommodation. As with pre 1 April 2012 tenancies, such protection will only apply on one occasion.

Mutual Exchanges

- 3.4 Where any tenant enters into a mutual exchange, in law, this is done by way of an assignment of the tenancy. However, it is important to note that if one of the exchange partners is a Flexible (fixed term) Tenant then, in law, the tenancy of each party will end and an appropriate new tenancy will be granted on the new property. The Council offers HomeSwapper, an internet-based mutual exchange service, free of charge to assist qualifying tenants who want to enter into a mutual exchange. Any tenant who does not have access to the internet will be provided with support on request.

New Tenancies as a result of Domestic Abuse

- 3.5 Lifetime tenants who suffer domestic abuse will retain lifetime security if they are granted a new tenancy by a local authority for reasons connected with the abuse.

This protection applies to victims who have a lifetime tenancy, or victims who have had a lifetime tenancy in the past and have fled their social home to escape domestic abuse.

The protection also applies to victims of domestic abuse who have a joint lifetime tenancy and who wish to continue living in their home after the perpetrator has left.

The provisions apply to lifetime tenants of local authorities and private registered providers of social housing.

Advice on transfers, mutual Exchanges and new tenancies as a result of domestic abuse

- 3.6 The law on transfers and mutual exchanges is complicated. Any tenants who are considering either a transfer or a mutual exchange should seek advice from their Housing Officer.

Introductory, Potentially Secure, Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies

- 3.7 The Localism Act 2011 provides for a new type of fixed-term tenancy to Council tenants – the Flexible Tenancy. Flexible Tenancies (or Fixed-Term Tenancies) are tenancies that are offered for a specified period of time, as opposed to traditional lifetime tenancies. A Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy is a form of secure tenancy, and generally, tenants with a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy have the same rights as other secure tenants (as set out in the Tenants Charter under the Housing Act 1985).
- 3.8 The Localism Act 2011 amends the Housing Act 1996 to allow Introductory Tenancies to become Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies at the end of the introductory

period, if local authorities wish to provide Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies. All Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies granted in accordance with this Tenancy Policy will have an introductory period of 12 months added to the beginning of the fixed term, which may be extended by a further 6 months where there are minor breaches of tenancy conditions. A written notice will be served before the Introductory Tenancy is granted making clear the arrangements for the transition from Introductory to Flexible status providing no possession proceedings have been commenced, setting out the length of the fixed term and other expressed terms of the tenancy. Tenants have the right to request a review of an extension to the introductory period (review procedure - paragraph 3.14).

Assessment Criteria – Decision on re-granting a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy

3.9 At the commencement of each Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy, the tenant will be informed of the assessment criteria that will be applied to determine, at the end of the flexible term, if a further tenancy will be granted. At least 6 months prior to the ending of the fixed term, the Council will provide Notice in writing to the tenant stating that it either proposes to grant a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure – on the same or another property) on the expiry of the existing fixed term, or that it intends to end the tenancy. Prior to serving the Notice, the Tenant will be assessed against the assessment criteria. The general presumption will be that a further tenancy is granted. However, a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure) will generally not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Where the tenant (or a member of their household) who, during the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term, has been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. Such behaviour is behaviour that would give sufficient grounds to issue possession proceedings if they were a Secure or Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant and includes rent arrears (including housing benefit and court cost arrears), and other breaches of tenancy conditions.
- Where the tenant is under-occupying the accommodation (when taking into account people required to live with the tenant, for example family members and not lodgers), then a further Flexible or Secure Tenancy (as appropriate) will be offered on a suitable smaller property, provided all of the other requirements of the assessment criteria are met.
- Where the tenant is statutorily overcrowded in the accommodation a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy will be granted on a larger property, subject to availability and provided all of the other requirements of the assessment criteria are met.
- Where the property has been extensively adapted and there is no one in occupation who is in need of these adaptations, and there is an applicant on the Housing Register who is in need of the adapted accommodation, then a further Flexible or Secure Tenancy (as appropriate) of an alternative suitable property will be offered, provided all of the other requirements of the assessment criteria are met.
- Where, from the effective date of this Policy, in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme (in force on the date when the 6 months' Notice is served), the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant, in the opinion of the Council, has sufficient income and/or assets to enable them to meet their housing need themselves.

- 3.10 At the end of the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term, where the tenant meets one or more aspects of the above assessment criteria but there are special circumstances including, where:
- the tenant is an active Foster Carer;
 - the Council's Medical Advisor confirms that the tenant, or member of their household, has a terminal illness or a long-term disability;
 - the tenant is a care leaver who is still in need of support; and/or
 - there are dependent vulnerable children.
- 3.11 In such special circumstances, a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term of 10 years may be granted. This is in order for the special circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed at a later date.
- 3.12 The Council recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances not covered by this Tenancy Policy. In such instances, the Housing and Property Service Director will have delegated authority (subject to the provisions made under Paragraph 7.2 of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme), to make decisions as considered appropriate.

Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies (Review Procedures)

- 3.13 All Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy reviews will be undertaken in accordance with The Flexible Tenancies (Review Procedures) Regulations 2012 as follows:

Start of the fixed term

- 3.14 There is no right to a review of the type of tenancy offered. There is only one ground for a review at the commencement of the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy, being that the length of the tenancy offered is inconsistent with the Council's published Tenancy Policy. In these circumstances, the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant (the applicant) must make an application for a review in writing including:
- The applicant's name and address;
 - A statement of the reasons why, in the applicant's opinion, the length of the tenancy does not accord with the Tenancy Policy as to the length of the term of the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy it grants;
 - A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, require the review to be conducted by way of an oral hearing; and
 - A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, agree to receive communications relating to a review by email and, if so, the email address to which such communications should be sent.

End of the fixed term – decision not to grant a further tenancy

- 3.15 If a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy is not granted, a written Notice informing the tenant will be served at least 6 months before the expiry of the tenancy term. The Notice will set out the reasons for the decision and, at the same time, notify the

tenant of their right to request a review and the time within which a request may be made. An application for a review must be made in writing and include:

- The applicant's name and address;
- A description of the original decision in respect of which the review is sought, including the date on which the decision was made;
- A statement of the grounds on which the review is sought;
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, require the review to be conducted by way of an oral hearing; and
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, agree to receive communications relating to a review by email and, if so, the email address to which such communications should be sent.

3.16 Following receipt of the application, if the review is to be undertaken without an oral hearing, the Council will:

- Send a written Notice to the applicant stating that the applicant may make written representations in support of the application (which will be taken into account by the person undertaking the review) not less than 5 days after the day on which the Notice is received by the applicant.

3.17 Following receipt of the application, if the review is to be undertaken by way of an oral hearing, the Council will, in addition to sending the Notice referred to in paragraph 3.16 above:

- Notify the applicant of the day on which, and the time and place at which, it is proposed that the oral hearing is to take place, which will not be earlier than five days after the day on which Notice is received by the applicant.

Procedure at the hearing

3.18 The hearing will be conducted by an officer senior to the officer who made the original decision and who was not involved in the original decision. The tenant will be given every opportunity to make written or oral representations and be able to call persons to give evidence on any matter relevant to the decision to be made on review and put questions to any person who gives evidence at the hearing. The applicant will be able to be accompanied or represented by another person (appointed by the applicant) who will have the same rights and obligations as the applicant for the purposes of the conduct of the hearing.

3.19 If the applicant fails to attend the hearing, the person conducting it will either proceed with the hearing or re-arrange the hearing if it is considered appropriate. If the hearing is adjourned for more than one day, the person conducting the hearing will specify the date on which it will be resumed by sending a Notice in writing to the applicant.

3.20 The decision on review will be made by the person conducting the review who will notify the applicant in writing of the decision.

3.21 If, generally, there is no engagement from the tenant in the review process then the Council (if considered appropriate) will commence possession proceedings.

Ending the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy

- 3.22 The Council, when it considers appropriate, during or at the end of the tenancy will apply for a Court Order to end any Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy during the fixed term if any of the grounds for possession (being the same grounds available for a Secure Tenancy) can be proven following any breaches of tenancy conditions.
- 3.23 If, in accordance with this Tenancy Policy, a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy is not granted, and the tenant has either requested a review and it is dismissed, or decided not to seek a review, the Council will seek possession of the property. The tenant will then be given no less than 2 months' Notice in writing stating that the Council requires possession of the property, prior to starting an ordinary claim for possession in the County Court.
- 3.24 If the tenant refuses to vacate when the Notice period expires, possession proceedings will be taken. A Court can only refuse possession if the correct procedures have not been followed or if the decision was wrong in law.
- 3.25 A Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant may give 4 weeks' Notice in writing to end the Flexible Tenancy at any time during the fixed term; this may only be accepted by the Council provided there are no arrears outstanding and any other breaches of tenancies are remedied.

Advice and Assistance if a further tenancy is not granted

- 3.26 Where a further tenancy is not granted, the Council will provide advice and assistance to the tenant at least 56 days prior to the ending of the fixed term to help the tenant find alternative housing.

This advice and assistance will be provided by the Council's Homelessness Team and will include:

- Assistance with securing privately rented accommodation;
 - Assessing eligibility for a rental loan, damage deposit guarantee, a discretionary housing payment to assist with securing accommodation in the private rented sector, or any other forms of assistance available at the time;
 - Advice on securing owner-occupied accommodation; and
 - Advice on joining the Council's Housing Register.
- 3.27 Tenants should contact the Council to arrange a housing advice interview. The Council has a Service Agreement with the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau in the District, who tenants can contact and be provided with a range of independent advice and support.

Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies and the Right to Buy

- 3.28 The Right to Buy extends to Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies, subject to the same qualifying criteria for Secure Tenancies.

4. Demoted Tenancies

Secure Tenancies

4.1 If the Council has concerns about the way in which a Secure Tenant has been conducting their tenancy, but the concerns are such that seeking possession is not felt appropriate, it may proceed to Court and seek a Tenancy Demotion Order. If the tenancy is demoted, the tenant will hold a lesser form of tenancy with reduced security of tenure for a period of 12 months. During this period, Demoted Tenants do not have the same rights as secure tenants, for example they do not have:

- The right to exchange;
- The right of succession;
- The right to take in lodgers; or
- The right to buy which is suspended until the tenancy is no longer demoted.

4.2 If the tenant continues to breach their tenancy conditions, then the Council can proceed to Court for possession when the Judge will have no alternative, providing the correct procedures have been followed, other than to grant the Council possession.

Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies

4.3 In the case of Flexible (fixed-term) Tenants, if the 12 month demotion period is successfully completed, then the Council will serve the Demoted Tenant with a Notice stating that the tenancy is to be restored from a Demoted Tenancy to a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy and specifying the length of the fixed term and other express terms of the tenancy.

5. Joint Introductory Potentially Secure and Flexible Tenancies

5.1 A Secure or Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy can be held by one person or by up to four joint tenants all of whom must be qualifying persons. However many tenants there are, there is still only one tenancy and the rights and duties relating to the tenancy apply jointly and severally to all joint tenants.

5.2 When a joint tenant dies, the remaining tenant/s will continue to hold the tenancy by survivorship. The names of any joint tenants cannot be removed from the tenancy unless by an Order of the Court. If one joint tenant surrenders the tenancy, then the tenancy comes to an end.

5.3 Introductory potentially secure joint tenancies will be offered to:

- (a) married couples or civil partners, provided that both home seekers are named on the application form, unless both parties request the tenancy to be granted in a sole name;
- (b) unmarried couples, or those living as civil partners who can demonstrate a relationship similar to marriage or a civil partnership, providing that both request it and the partner of the lead home seeker is registered on the application form; and

- (c) home seekers and their live-in carers, where the live-in carer has occupied the property as their only or principal home for over 12 months and the Council considers it to be justified.

- 5.4 When an existing tenant applies to change their sole tenancy to a joint tenancy, this will be subject to any new joint applicant meeting with the Local Eligibility Criteria of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme apart from the housing need element.

In all other circumstances, sole tenancies will be offered to the lead applicant.

6. Non-secure Tenancies

- 6.1 Non-secure tenants have less security of tenure than Secure, Introductory and Flexible (fixed-term) Tenants and normally apply where short-term temporary accommodation is provided.

7. Circumstances where a tenancy of a particular type will be granted and the length of the term

Introductory, Potentially Secure Periodic (Lifetime) Tenancies

- 7.1 The Council will grant Introductory potentially Secure Tenancies to home seekers allocated permanent accommodation in sheltered housing or grouped dwelling schemes.
- 5.4 In addition to the above, the Council will generally grant its existing Post-Act Secure Tenants who are under-occupying their current accommodation and are transferring to a property with less bedrooms (where both properties are owned by the Council), a Secure Tenancy on their new smaller accommodation. As with pre 1 April 2012 tenancies, such protection will only apply on one occasion.

Introductory Potentially Secure Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies

- 7.3 Introductory potentially Secure Flexible Tenancies (fixed-term tenancies) will be granted to all home seekers who sign-up to a tenancy of any property. The fixed term for the Flexible Tenancy will generally be 9 years subject to paragraphs 7.1, 7.2 and 7.6.
- 7.4 An introductory tenancy term of 12 months (or 18 months where the term is extended due to minor breaches of tenancy conditions) will be added to the 9-year Flexible Tenancy making a total fixed term of 10 years. The Flexible Tenancy term will be for 8 ½ years where introductory tenancies are for 18 months. At the commencement of the Introductory Period, the Council will serve a Notice on the tenant stating that a Flexible Tenancy will be granted at the end of the introductory period and what the length of the fixed term will be, provided the terms of the Introductory Tenancy are not breached.
- 7.5 Flexible (fixed-term) Tenants will be granted, through their Tenancy Agreement, both the Right to Improve and the Right to Compensation for Improvements. The financial incentives under the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme for council tenants to transfer to smaller accommodation will apply to Flexible Tenants during the fixed term, but only within the first 7 years of the fixed term (inclusive of the Introductory Tenancy period).

8. Non-secure Tenancies

- 8.1 Non-secure tenancies may be granted when a tenant is moved to alternative accommodation whilst major works are undertaken or in extremely rare circumstances in order for the Council to provide temporary housing under its homelessness duties. The Council shall grant tenants who have been moved into alternative accommodation during any redevelopment or other works a tenancy with no less security of tenure on their return to settled accommodation.

9. Contractual Succession Rights – Family Members

Pre-April 2012 Tenancies

- 9.1 All of the Council's secure tenants who signed up to their tenancy prior to 1 April 2012 enjoy many rights under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV (Tenants Charter). One of these is the right of succession to a tenancy which takes place upon the death of the tenant. Any successor tenant who is either a spouse or a Civil Partner is able to remain at the accommodation regardless of any under-occupation. Under the legislation, in the case of succession by a family member who meets all of the rules, if the accommodation afforded by the dwelling-house is more extensive than is reasonably required by the tenant, then the Council can serve a Notice of Seeking Possession more than 6 months but less than 12 months after becoming aware of the tenant's death. The Notice requires the tenant to vacate and move to smaller accommodation unless the Council's under-occupation policy applies.

Post April 2012 Tenancies

- 9.2 Under the Localism Act 2011, for all tenancies (including Flexible Tenancies) commencing after 1 April 2012, the right to succeed was repealed for family members. However, from 1 April 2012, all of the Council's secure tenants have been granted additional contractual succession rights within their Tenancy Agreement, in addition to those set out in the Localism Act. If at the time of the tenant's death, the dwelling-house is occupied by a family member (as defined by Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985) and not occupied by a spouse or a civil partner of the tenant as their only or principal home, the following additional rights will apply through the terms of the Tenancy Agreement:
- Provided there is no under-occupation, a family member will be allowed to succeed to the tenancy provided they meet all of the succession rules set out under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV and has been residing at the property as their only or principal home for over 3 years
 - Where the property is under-occupied by a family member, if the family member meets all of the succession rules set out under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV and has been residing at the property as their only or principal home for over 3 years, they will be made one offer of suitable alternative accommodation. If the successor tenant refuses to move, then the Council will take court action to seek possession under Ground 16 of the Housing Act 1985
 - Where the property is under-occupied by a family member who has resided at the property for less than 3 years then they be required to vacate. If the occupier refuses to vacate, then the Council will take court action to seek possession

10. Tenancy Management

10.1 The Council offers a range of support to tenants in order to assist them in sustaining their tenancy and preventing evictions, including:

- Undertaking in-depth sign up interviews with all new tenants to ensure the tenant understands the terms and conditions of their tenancy
- Housing Officers undertaking new tenant visits within 12 weeks of the commencement of the tenancy to offer advice and support and to clarify the conditions of tenancy
- Recognising that early identification and intervention in response to unpaid rent can prevent long term difficulties for the tenant, including the use of standard letters, regular rent statements, home visits, office interviews and pre-court visits
- Housing Officers undertaking visits to all tenants who have been identified as being affected by the social sector size limits of the Welfare Reforms to discuss their options and to offer advice and support
- Working in partnership with the floating support provider Peabody, who provide support to vulnerable tenants
- Housing Management working closely with the Council's Homelessness Team
- Safeguarding policies including staff training and reporting procedures;
- Undertaking in-depth special needs assessments whereby an officer visits a prospective tenant of sheltered accommodation to ensure the property will meet their needs
- All tenants receiving the Council's tenant newsletter 'Housing News' which includes articles on tenancy issues
- Offering mediation services to assist in resolving neighbour disputes
- Liaising regularly with the Council's Safer Communities Team and Environment and Neighbourhood Team in order to design out anti-social behaviour, working in partnership to seek methods to avoid neighbour conflict and attend network meetings with partner agencies to resolve cases
- Meeting regularly with representatives from the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau in the District to give them an opportunity to raise any concerns and to update them on major issues and policy changes; and
- Meeting regularly with senior staff in the Council's Benefits Team to raise any concerns and to update on policy changes.

11. Tackling Social Housing Fraud

11.1 The Council employs a Corporate Fraud Team as part of the Government's national initiative to tackle social housing fraud, which in the main includes:

- The unlawful sub-letting of Council properties
- The detection of Right to Buy fraud
- The detection of fraudulent housing register applications
- The detection of fraudulent grant applications
- The investigation of all joint tenancy applications
- The investigation of all applications for succession to a tenancy; and
- The investigation of all mutual exchange requests

11.2 As social housing is a very valuable asset, the Council considers it is important to ensure that properties are let fairly and are occupied by legitimate tenants. For this reason, all applications listed above are subject to anti-fraud vetting.

11.3 During the tenancy, the tenant must inform the Council if they own a residential property or have another residential lease or tenancy.

12. Taking account of the needs of tenants with care and support needs

12.1 When a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy comes to an end, in accordance with the assessment criteria, if the Council's Medical Advisor confirms that the tenant or a member of their household:

- has a terminal illness or a long-term disability;
- is a care leaver who is still in need of support; and/or
- there are dependent vulnerable children.

12.2 A further Flexible Tenancy for a fixed term of 10 years will be granted. This is in order for the exceptional circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed.

12.3 The Council has granted all new tenants whose tenancy commences after 1 April 2012, additional contractual succession rights to family members above those set out in the Localism Act 2011. This will ensure that family members in the district will continue to be housed by the Council provided that they meet the requirements of the Policy.

12.4 The Council's Introductory Tenancy Scheme has been successful in reducing anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance and continues to allow the Council to ensure that unsuitable tenants do not cause difficulties to tenants with care and support needs.

12.5 The Council has a comprehensive Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy review process which will take into account the needs of any tenants with care and support needs prior to any decision not to grant a further tenancy. In addition, the circumstances of tenants with care and support needs will be taken into account with any Introductory Tenancy review decisions.

- 12.6 A range of support is offered to tenants which are set out under the Tenancy Management section of this Tenancy Policy.

13. Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to fulfilling its public sector duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to :

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

To this effect an Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and published alongside the publication of the Tenancy Policy 2022-2027

- 13.3 As an aid to ensuring that home seekers are not discriminated against on the grounds of their protected characteristics, the Council will monitor the protected characteristics of home seekers on the Housing Register and home seekers allocated housing.
- 13.4 The practices and procedures of the Housing and Property Service will be monitored by the appropriate Service Manager to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly.

14. Consultation on the Tenancy Policy

- 14.1 The Council sent a copy of a draft version of this Tenancy Policy to all of the following interested parties giving them a reasonable opportunity to comment:
- Every private Registered Provider of social housing;
 - Local Councils;
 - The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel; and
 - Partner Agencies with an interest in the management of the Council's housing stock.

15. Publishing the Tenancy Policy

- 15.1 The final version of this Policy was sent to all those consulted above. It is also published on the Council's website at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

16. Reviewing the Tenancy Policy

- 16.1 This Policy will be reviewed after 5 years of commencement. The review will be

undertaken by the Council's Stronger Communities Select Committee in consultation with the interested parties outlined in paragraph 14.1 above. It will then be agreed by the Council's Cabinet.

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17. Types of Tenancy - Overview

Tenancy type	Who can be offered	Property type	Length of tenancy
Introductory Tenancy	Those who are not already a Secure (Lifetime) tenant with the Council or another Registered Provider. Applies to Flexible and Secure Tenancies.	All properties	12 months (or 18 months where the term is extended due to minor breaches of tenancy conditions).
Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy Pre 1 st April 2012	Those who were either Council or Registered Providers' Lifetime tenants before 1st April 2012.	All properties	No limit on the length of tenancy.
Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy Post 1 st April 2012	Those who have successfully completed an Introductory Tenancy in sheltered housing or grouped dwelling schemes. Under-occupiers who transfer to another council property with less bedrooms.	Sheltered housing or grouped dwelling schemes All properties	No limit on the length of tenancy.
Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy New Tenancy for victims of domestic abuse	Lifetime tenants who suffer domestic abuse will retain lifetime security if they are granted a new tenancy by a local authority for reasons connected with the abuse. This protection applies to victims who have a lifetime tenancy, or victims who have had a lifetime tenancy in the past and have fled their social home to escape domestic abuse. The protection also applies to victims of domestic abuse who have a joint lifetime tenancy and who wish to continue living in their home after the perpetrator has left. The provisions apply to lifetime tenants of local	All properties	No limit to the length of tenancy.

	authorities and private registered providers of social housing.		
Secure Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy	Those who are not already a pre 1st April 2012 Secure (Lifetime) tenant with the Council or another Registered Provider.	All properties	9 years plus introductory term of 12 months, making a total fixed-term of 10 years.

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Tenancy Policy 2022- 2027

Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ

Email: housingstrategy@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

Draft 15 February 2022

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Stronger Communities Select **Date:** Tuesday, 22 March 2022
Committee

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 8.51 pm

Members Present: Councillors J Lea (Chairman), R Balcombe (Vice-Chairman), H Brady, I Hadley, S Rackham, K Williamson and D Wixley

Members Present (Virtually): Councillors S Murray, C Nweke and J H Whitehouse

Other Councillors (Virtual): Councillors N Avey, R Brookes, J Philip, M Sartin and D Sunger

Apologies: D Plummer

Officers Present: R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer) and R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

Officers Present (Virtually): A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), R Pavey (Service Director (Customer Services)), M Thompson (Service Manager (Technical)) and C Wiggins (Directorate Specialist – Technical Services)

42. Webcasting Introduction

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

43. Substitute Members

The Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

44. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

45. Terms of Reference & Work Programme

The Committee noted that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would be reviewing the Committee's work programme for 2022/23 with the lead officer, N Dawe. This would be presented to the Committee for discussed at the first meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that a request to scrutinise the Epping Foodbank should be included on the Committees work programme for 2022/23.

46. Presentation from the District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood

The Interim District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood, Chief Inspector Paul Ballard advised that he had been seconded to this position for approximately 5/6 months, in place of Chief Inspector Ant Alcock who had been seconded to the Major Investigation Team.

The Chief Inspector advised that over the last 12 months performance had been good, although the data had still been impacted by Covid. It was noted that reports of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had reduced by 51% and this was probably due to how covid breaches were being reported as ASB. There had been a 4% increase of all crimes, which had been attributed to covid and how crimes had been recorded. However, within Epping Forest, robbery had reduced by 11%, personal robbery was down by 14% and residential robbery down by 24%. Unfortunately, there had been an increase of 17% in violence against person offences and a 13% increase in violence with injury but there was on going work in this area. In additions to these figures further work was being carried out to improve public engagement in the district.

The Committee asked the following questions:

- Had domestic violence been included in the violence against persons offences figures and was there any data available on domestic violence figures in the district? The C/Insp advised that the common assaults figures would include domestic violence and within the district there had been a 6% increase in offences reported to the police.
- What engagement was occurring between the police and residents and how it could be improved? The C/Insp advised that engagement throughout the covid period had been very challenging, although improvements were required on a face-to-face basis which would include pre-pandemic events such as coffee with cops; forums; community events; and residents' meetings.
- Could the rural crime figures for the district be provided? The C/Insp advised that he would need to consult his Rural Engagement Team based in Chelmsford, although there was a Rural Specialist PC Officer, Andy Cooke for the District, as well as the neighbourhood beat officers.
- Did the police have plans in conjunction with TFL to monitor large groups of people entering the district via the underground stations? The C/Insp acknowledged that the underground stations were a focal point and had been affected by seasonal changes. There were several events in and around the district and plans were being put in place to monitor these events. Furthermore, there was also great partnership working between the Council, CSP and TFL and if the large groups involving young people were to become an issue, the Police would look for alternative methods to disperse people gathering, if required.
- How many of the 200 newly recruited police officers would be placed in the district? The C/Insp advised that formal recruitment was dealt with by a central office, although the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) had committed to continue the uplift in community policing in town centres.
- Did the recruitment process in Essex differ from the MET? The C/Insp advised that he did not know what the recruitment process for the MET was like, although the Essex recruitment process involved several assessments prior to the vetting stage which was then followed by a robust and lengthy training period. This was reviewed and amended in accordance with national guidelines.
- Would the police be carrying out any speed checks within the district? The C/Insp advised that speed checks were being carried out in the district. Centrally, work was on going with the road safety support team, in and

around Fyfield and Waltham Abbey. It was noted that residents could advise the police of areas within the district that had road safety issues and the community speed watch groups worked extremely well.

- Did the police work in conjunction with the highways authority to implement road cameras? The C/Insp advised that when several collisions occurred at a certain location, the highways authority would liaison with the police to collate the data to support recommendations for that location.
- How could the police assist with safety on rural roads? The C/Insp advised that the police were there to enforce the law and not to design, direct, change or implement traffic calming measures or speed restrictions as this would be in the remit of the highway's authority.
- Could the police monitor the rural roads for vehicles fly tipping? The C/Insp advised that the law would be changing with regards to the enforcement of flying tipping. At present, it was the responsibility of the Council.
- Do the police inform Essex Highways of fatalities? The C/Insp advised that he did not inform the relevant highways authority although this was not to say that it did not happen through either the Safer Roads Bureau, Roads Policing Team, or support staff.
- What support did the Community Speed Watch training officer get and were the statics available for the road accidents? The C/Insp advised that support would be given to the relevant officer to train Community Speed Watch volunteers. He would confirm where the data could be found and get back to the Committee.
- Did the police have the capacity to engage with schools? The C/Insp advised that there were 2 Young Persons Officers who worked with the secondary schools within the district.
- Do PCSO have the authority to issue penalty charge notices for parking on pavements? The C/Insp advised that the Chief Constables delegated powers of authority to their PCSO, and he would have to check what powers had been delegated.
- Do officers have the capacity to attend residents' properties to assess and make recommendations on how to secure their properties? The C/Insp advised that unfortunately they did not have the capacity for this. Although, where required, residents would be referred onto Crime and Prevention Advisors.
- Where there any initiatives to cut organised car crime in the district? The C/Insp advised that there were several initiatives involving cross-border collaboration, darker night patrols, special vehicle recovery unit and intelligence led investigations.

The Customer & Partnerships Services Portfolio Holder advised that the Safer Essex Road Partnership looked at problematic hot spot for traffic collisions and recorded data on personal injury or death related accidents. Regarding pavement parking, he advised that outside Greater London, parking on pavement was not illegal and enforcement could only be for obstruction. There were ongoing discussion at Government level regarding this issue and if delegated, the Council would look to NEPP to enforce.

- Could an update be given on successful initiatives that had prevented crime in the district? The C/Insp advised that there were no current updates, although operations may be occurring.
- The pandemic had changed the way many people worked, which had been reflected in local towns and high streets becoming busier. Had this effected crime? The C/Insp advised that there had been changes in crime trends although there had been nothing specific in relation to town centres.

Furthermore, the Council funded Police officers were currently working on reports of pick-pockets gangs working in Epping, High Street on market day.

* C/Insp Ballard gave the following responses after the meeting.

Was the District specific RTC data periodically published and accessible?

This was available on the Safer Essex Roads website – district casualty data - saferessexroads.org/collision-data/links-and-downloads

Do any of your teams offer specific additional support for speeding, road safety operations etc?

Chigwell would take over the management of OP CALYPSO funding from April 1st which would allow for a far greater focus on local road safety issues including speed enforcement. The team was also using a new Laser Cam 4 device which allowed enforcement at night. We would also be recruiting 3 additional police staff members during the summer to also enforce speed. At present a member of my team was reviewing our speed enforcement strategy to reflect what changes were needed to make in line with Vision Zero. On the Twitter account, there was significant speed enforcement around EFDC.

It was suggested that there may be scope for a joint police & council enforcement operation in relation to illegal waste carriers and similar offending to assist in tackling the issue of fly tipping in rural areas. Was this something that your teams might be interested in?

We regularly carry out OP NASH days of action in Loughton / Waltham Abbey. These were days planned and set by the Partnership. Samantha Wright was our planner and link and would be very happy to support and enhance those days.

47. Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Annual Strategic Assessment, Annual Report and Plan on a Page

The Specialist Technical Services Officer, C Wiggins presented the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership (CPS) Annual Strategic Assessment, Annual Report and Partnership Plan on a page.

The Community Safety Partnership was required to complete an annual Strategic Assessment which was used to direct and guide their activities, under the requirements as responsible authorities, of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

A strategic assessment included

- an analysis of the levels and patterns of crime and disorder and substance misuse in the area.
- an analysis of the changes in those levels and patterns since the previous strategic assessment.
- an analysis of why those changes had occurred.
- the matters which the responsible authorities should prioritise when each were exercising their functions to reduce crime and disorder and to combat substance misuse in the area.
- the matters which the persons living and working in the area consider the responsible authorities should prioritise when each were exercising their functions to reduce crime and disorder and to combat substance misuse in the area.

- an assessment of the extent to which the partnership plan for the previous year has been implemented.

The CSP had pulled together a review of the major issues facing the district in 2022 and the strategic assessment for 2021-22 which had been included in the agenda.

In preparation for the 2022-23 Strategic Assessment, the CPS had worked with Essex Police and wider Safer Essex partners to agree a common model, which could span across Essex and fulfil the needs of Safer Essex Community Safety Agreements and allow each, district, borough, city, and unitary area, to ensure their documents reflect the local needs and priorities.

The CSP Plan on a Page provided information at a glance on the planned delivery of Epping Forest CSP going forward.

The Committee asked the following questions.

- Why were the figures hate crime figures so high? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that this had been due to issues at the Bell Hotel in Epping. She would request a breakdown of the figures and email them to members.
- Whether based on the data for the number of fire incidents in Epping Forest, should there be a local campaign for the provision and installation of smoke detectors in common areas within the home and to promote the Government initiative that provided funding for this? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that she would be meeting with the Estates Manager from Essex Fire and Rescue to discuss accidental residential fires and supporting the new legislation for the social housing.
- Was the information about accident fires in relation to social housing or all properties; and could a breakdown be provided as social housing were fitted with both smoke and heat detectors? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that the data included all properties, and the type of tenure was stated on the profiles.
- Could further information be given on the hate crime figures associated with Waltham Abbey? The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that she would supply the data to the Member directly.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Community Safety Partnership Annual Strategic Assessment and Annual Report be noted; and
2. That going forward the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Plan on a Page 2021/22 includes a glossary and additional detail on the schemes.

48. Customer Service Update

The Customer Services Service Director, R Pavey presented a report on 'what our customers were telling us' and the Customer strategy in the following areas.

- What the customer was telling the Council
- Customer Centre & Community Hub
- Customer Service Strategy – 2022/23 Overview
- Online engagement Surveys and focus groups
- Causation data from incoming customer calls
- Website
- Mystery Shoppers
- Digital Inclusion
- Members Digital Journey

- Cash Payments
- In your shoes customer service behavioural training
- Telephony
- Corporate communications including digital news platforms

The Committee asked the following questions.

- Had the Council considered bench marking against other types of similar sized business other than just local authorities? The Customer Services Service Director advised that this was a valid point, and he would take this into consideration.
- Was the Project Manager for Telephony a new role? The Customer Services Service Director that this was not a new post but a resource from the Project Management Team.
- Where were the SLA reported? The Customer Services Service Director advised the SLA were reported at the Stronger Council Select Committee along with all Performance indicators.
- Concerns were raised regarding the digital inclusion of residents and how they had been consulted as the survey had only been accessible by residents who already used technology. Furthermore, there were issues with the planning department and that they had not responded to members and the public, which was not good enough. The Customer Services Service Director advised that discussions between the relevant departments would be carried out. The Planning Services Portfolio Holder advised the Committee that following the submission of an application there was no requirement for the planning department to contact the applicant or objector, although the Council had acknowledged that this was causing issues and a planning forum had been set up, which would be held regularly between officers and members.
- There were issues with residents and members leaving answer phone messages and not being contacted back, which was then resulting in more calls into the Council. The Customer Services Service Director advised that currently the telephony system could not track the calls and determine whether the issue had been resolved, although there was a business solution being developed.
- Due to the delay in the supply of blue recycling boxes, would it be possible for glass recycling to be placed in the recycling bags? The Customer Services Service Director advised that he would have to investigate this option.
- Could a report with data be provided on the Community hub usage? The Customer Services Service Director advised that although the hub had been launched post pandemic it was there to provided communication across the various hubs in the district as a community initiative rather than just a hub. He advised that the Digital Strategy was to enhance residents who wanted to use the digital services and not remove other ways of communicating with the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the update on 'what our customers were telling us' and the Customer strategy.

49. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting would be in the new municipal year on 12 July 2022.

CHAIRMAN

STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2019/20

Core Areas of Responsibility

- (1) To provide scrutiny for the following corporate projects:
 - Customer Excellence - Delivering services that put the customer at the heart of everything we do;
 - Behaviours and Insights - Future-proofing the Council's service provision by understanding customer needs and expectations over the next ten years and beyond; and
 - Partnerships - Working with public, private and third sector partners to deliver and develop services to our community, businesses and visitors to the district including shared and cross-border working.
- (2) To monitor levels of customer satisfaction and provide scrutiny of services that are not performing to standard and develop proposals for their improvement. This will also include matters of concern that are identified by the Stronger Council Select Committee in its review of Corporate Key Performance Indicators.

Scrutiny Role of the Select Committee

- (1) To engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved;
- (2) To develop a work programme each year that effectively scrutinises the areas of responsibility outlined above;
- (3) To consider any matter referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- (4) To look outwards and show community leadership;
- (5) To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives that affect the Select Committees areas of responsibility and the impact on customers, residents, businesses and visitors to our district, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
- (6) To establish working groups and task and finish panels to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
- (7) To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers to help develop policy;
- (8) To monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports; and
- (9) To engage with the community and encourage community engagement.

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Stronger Communities Select Committee

Work Programme 2022/23

Chairman: Cllr J Lea

Stronger Communities Corporate Programme Alignment focuses on People living longer, healthier and independent lives; Adult and Children were supported in times of need; and People and Communities achieve their potential.

No.	Item	Meeting	Progress and Comments	Owner (Officer)	Programme of Meetings
12 July 2022					
1.	Overarching Housing Strategy	EFDC's current Housing Strategy reaches end of life in March 2022. A revised strategy will need to be taken through governance structure ahead of formal adoption in August 2022.		J. Gould	July
		July 22	Considering the draft Strategy and make recommendations to Cabinet.		
2.	Sheltered Housing Refurbishment Programme	July 2022	Review of Frank Bretton Court and further recommendations.	D Fenton	
3.	Changing Landscape of Housing Paper 1 – Building Safety Bill & Fire Safety Bill & H&S Analysis	July 2022	To review the report on the new social housing regulation	D. Fenton	
4.	Cash paying customers at Debden Broadway	July 2022	To consider the report	S. Lewis	
5.	Transfer of services from the Broadway Housing Office		To consider the proposed closure and re-provision of the service	D. Fenton	
20 September 2022					
6.	“What are our customers telling us?” and the		Update reporting on a 6-month basis	S. Lewis	September

	Customer Services Strategy				
7.	Six-month report on the work of the Council-funded Police Officers		Six-month update report	C. Wiggins	
8.	Domestic Abuse Act		A briefing to members on the Act and the Strategy and impact on EFDC.	J. Gould/ C. Wiggins	
9.	Resident Involvement Strategy		Introduction and approval to progress to Cabinet.		
10.	Sheltered Housing rebrand and support model		Introduction and approval to progress to Cabinet.		
11.	Changing Landscape of Housing Paper 2 – Social Housing Regulation		To review the report on the new social housing regulation	D.Fenton	
12.	Changing Landscape of Housing Paper 3 – Social Housing Regulation		To review the report on the social housing white paper	D. Fenton	
13.	HRA – Proposed regeneration plans for housing estates		To review the proposal. (Cabinet decision due 7 October 2022 for approval on 5-year regeneration plans)	D. Fenton	
14.	Tenant Satisfaction Measures Consultation			D. Fenton	
15.	Review of caretaking in blocks		To review the proposal. (Links to TSM, residents will rate the cleaning in blocks)	D. Fenton	
15 November 2022					
16.	Sheltered housing rebrand and support model		To consider this proposal (Cabinet decision due 5 December 2022.)	D. Fenton	
17 January 2023					
17.	HRA Business Plan		Yearly Performance update	D. Fenton	January
18.	Annual Housing performance report		Report on annual housing KPI's including compliance around the Building Safety Act.	D. Fenton	

2 March 2023					
19.	Community Safety Partnership annual report and review of the district Strategic Intelligence Assessment	2 March 2023	Annual Report	C. Wiggins	March
20.	Presentation from the District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood	2 March 2023	Annual report	C. Wiggins	
21 March 2023					
21.	“What are our customers telling us?” and the Customer Services Strategy	21 March 2023	Update reporting on a 6-month basis	S. Lewis	March
Date to be confirmed					
22.	Unaffordable rents		To report on the numbers of social rents and affordable rents for properties being built under the Council Housebuilding programme and those being bought under right to buy receipts. (O&S 12.10.21)	J. Gould/ D Fenton	
23.	Customer Services (Overall satisfaction)		To receive a recovery plan on this failing KPI	S Lewis	

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SCRUTINY



Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022

Subject: Co-option of Independent Member to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That Mr Wyn Marshall be appointed as a non-voting Co-opted member of the Stronger Communities Select Committee until the end of the 2022/23 municipal year.**
- (2) That the appointment be recommended to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Report:

1. Mr Wyn Marshall is currently the Chairman of the Tenant's and Leaseholders Forum. The Forum represents the views of the tenant's associations and acts as a consultative body for the Council on a range of housing issues. It is particularly important that Tenants have a voice at this level especially in relation to the publication of the Social Housing White paper.
2. It is requested that Mr Marshall be co-opted as a non-voting member of the Committee until the end of the municipal year 2022/23.

Resource Implications:

The current Members' Allowances Scheme provides for the application of an annual allowance of £500.00 for co-opted independent members of an overview and scrutiny committee.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council's constitution sets out rules for the management of its overview and scrutiny responsibilities. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is entitled (Article 6) to recommend to the Council the appointment of appropriate persons as non-voting co-optees on select committees.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the district.

Consultation Undertaken: None

Background Papers: None

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The Council's constitution (Article 6) sets out rules for the management of its overview and

scrutiny responsibilities.

Equality:

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.



SCRUTINY



Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022

Portfolio: Customer (Cllr Alan Lion)

Subject: Cash paying customers at Debden Broadway

Officer contact for further information: Susan Lewis / Robert Purse

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

1. To issue existing council tax and Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) cash paying customers currently using the Debden Cash Office with Allpay cards which can be used face to face in any post office (including Debden Broadway) and any Allpay PayPoint.
2. Close the Debden Cash Office once the replacement Allpay service is in place.
3. Following this initial roll-out, open the Allpay scheme to all Council Tax and NNDR customers as an opt-in service.

Report:

Our current payment channels

- Direct debit.
- Website.
- Automated telephone payments.
- Assisted payments.
- Bank transfers and cheques.
- Face to face for cash, chip and pin plus contactless through Broadway cash office.
- Self-serve payment kiosks at Waltham Abbey library and Civic Office.

Key messages

- 73% reduction in cash payments year on year.
- 49% reduction in cheque payments.
- 71% reduction in chip and pin.
- 21% increase in call secure.
- 12% increase in self-serve payment line.
- 7% increase in website payments.
- 1% increase in direct bank payments.
- 8% decrease in PO/PP counter payments.
- 41% decrease in bailiff payments.
- 0.29% decrease in Revenues DDs.
- 1.87% decrease in housing DDs.

(Appendix 1: Overview and comparison of transactions via all payment channels between 2019 & 2020)

Current cash service – Broadway cash office & kiosks at Epping Forest Civic Office and Waltham Abbey Library

Currently cash and other face to face customers are served by the cash office at the Broadway, which is currently open Mondays and Tuesdays 10am until 2pm. As well as accepting payments for all funds, the office can take payment for and handover physical items such as radar keys and recycling sacks. Also, we have 2 self-service kiosks at the Civic Offices and another at Waltham Abbey Library.

Pre and Post Covid comparison

The cash office reopened in April 2021 following Covid restrictions. Since the cash office was closed for the same period in 2020, a comparison against 2019 shows income, transactions and unique visitors have all fallen by nearly 75%. Whilst the reduction in opening hours will account for some of this fall, channel shift whilst the office was closed during the pandemic probably accounts for the rest.

(Appendix Two – comparison data from Debden Broadway cash office)

Option 1: Allpay cards at Post Office Counters & PayPoints

EFDC currently has a contract with Allpay which includes the issue of plastic payment cards for housing rent and leasehold payers. The Allpay cards can be used at Post Offices and PayPoints, of which there are currently sixty-two in the district, to make cash or Chip & PIN/contactless payments.

The current contract with Allpay has been extended to August 2022. Providing there is a commitment to the Allpay contract in the longer term an additional scheme could be added to provide our customers who rely on a face to face transaction with a convenient solution.

Cost

- Each customer would require an additional card for each service they wish to pay at a cost of £2.0068 with inserts (Allpay cards issued to a customer would have a different insert design for each council service so customers can easily identify which card to use when making a payment). *Appendix 7 shows an existing EFDC Allpay card for Housing Rent.*
- A monthly charge (currently £10.84) for each new scheme along with standard transactional charges (Post office – £0.5048, PayPoints - £0.5074).
- One-off charge to update any interface with the Council's Income Management system (this would not be expected to be more than around £2K).

Dependencies

- A need to identify cash paying customers and engage them before issuing cards (*Appendix 3 shows current locations of Post Office & PayPoints. Appendix 6 shows current Council Tax users of cash office*). Customers would need individual cards for each service they wish to pay, so for example a customer paying housing rent and council tax would need 2 separate Allpay cards.
- The Post Office to remain at Debden Broadway (Opened October 2021). Post Office have confirmed that they believe they should be able to handle the additional cash transactions and footfall, however it is a new small and busy post office and they have suggested we work closely together on customer communications to encourage customers to visit other post offices as well.
- Staff resource (8 hours) currently allocated to the cash office redeployed to Payments team to support and enhance this and other payment channels.
- They only make up 2-3% of transactions in 2021, but a decision would also be required on how to service sundry debtor invoice and general ledgers payees.
- Housing have confirmed that closure of the Cash Office would also result in closure of the Housing office.
- Our contract with Allpay has a 5 working day settlement time.

- Replacement counter services would be required for counting/banking coins from automated public toilets along with payment and issuing of radar keys and rail discount cards.

Option 2: Allpay Bar coded bills

Allpay offer a bill barcoding service, whereby council bills can be taken to the Post Office and PayPoints and paid. We would need to ensure all invoice producing systems within the council could produce the barcodes or this solution will only be capable of servicing specific areas. The system for Council Tax and NNDR (Academy), already creates barcoded bills so the assumption is this could be updated to work with Allpay. Capabilities of other systems are not yet known.

Cost

- One off barcode implementation fee (currently £724.12).
- A monthly charge (currently £10.78) for the new scheme.
- Transaction charge of £0.0126 in additional to standard transactional charges (Post office – £0.5048, PayPoints - £0.4994).
- One-off charge to update any interface with the Council's Income Management system (this would not be expected to be more than around £2K).
- Charges to update bill generating systems. Consultancy fees expected to be in excess of £10,000 for Academy alone, plus significant staff resource.

Dependencies

- Updating bill production templates and systems to allow creation of Allpay supported barcodes. This is likely to be a costly and resource intensive project.
- The Post Office to remain at Debden Broadway (Opened October 2021). Post Office have confirmed that they believe they should be able to handle the additional cash transactions and footfall, however it is a new small and busy post office and they have suggested we work closely together on customer communications to encourage customers to visit other post offices as well.
- Housing have confirmed that closure of the Cash Office would also result in closure of the Housing office.
- Our contract with Allpay has a 5 working day settlement time.
- Replacement counter services would be required for counting/banking coins from automated public toilets along with payment and issuing of radar keys and rail discount cards.

Following discussions with the Systems and Contracts Team Manager, it is apparent there is a significant amount of complexity to this project to implement the Academy back-office system. We would need to buy in consultancy for templating Academy and the configuring the Proprint application and ensure the councils external print suppliers (PSL) are able to print these templates to required quality. We would also need to update the payment kiosks to support these new barcodes.

Alongside external consultancy, significant resource would be required. Due to the complexity and integrations a project manager would be required to manage the inter-dependencies of this project and testing of the vast number of templates would require resource within the System Admin team that is not currently available.

Conversely, the new Housing System Cx comes as standard with an Allpay barcoding schema, however consultancy and testing with the councils PSL printing service would be required.

Option 3: Bar coded paying in slips

Uttlesford District Council provide their cash paying customers with payment cards provided by

the Council's bank which allow for cash payments to be made at Post Office counters and for the monies to be received into the Council's bank account. The customer account number is used for identification and reconciliation purposes at no additional cost over and above the existing contract.

Our bank does not offer an identical scheme but are proposing that something similar could be utilised with barcoded paying-in slips for use at Post Office Counters. While not as seamless this is a potential alternative solution. The suggested option would involve an additional business account which could feed into the existing datalink file.

Cost

- £3.74 per book (50 slips per book) based on 100 books + delivery.
- Current bank charges.

Dependencies:

- Additional business account.
- Engagement with an approved printer to produce the paying-in slips required.
- The Post Office to remain at Debden Broadway (Opened October 2021). Post Office have confirmed that they believe they should be able to handle the additional cash transactions and footfall, however it is a new small and busy post office and they have suggested we work closely together on customer communications to encourage customers to visit other post offices as well.
- Housing have confirmed that closure of the Cash Office would also result in closure of the Housing office.
- Our contract with Allpay has a 5 working day settlement time.
- Replacement counter services would be required for counting/banking coins from automated public toilets along with payment and issuing of radar keys and rail discount cards.

Option 4: Payment kiosk at Broadway

We already have kiosks at the Civic Office and Waltham Abbey Library. This option would be able to serve all current service users at Debden.

Cost

- £16,089 one off fee for the kiosk.
- £1,585 per annum in maintenance.
- 16.75 per cash collection.
- Accommodation costs, however these are likely to exist whether we have a kiosk or not.

Dependencies

- Identify the ongoing demand on self-serve kiosks at other sites – the above option could be extended to all cash paying customers.

Cost Savings

- As the set-up costs for Options 1 and 2 are nominal savings they could be realised by accommodation share costs of £3,640 and salary costs of £7,130 although it would be likely that the Broadway would still be in use and the staff resource could be redeployed in improving customer service.
- Cash collection charges currently £16.75 per collection. The current contract in place provides cash collection services for Fleet Operations as well as the kiosks and cash office.

We have vulnerable groups of customers who continue to rely on cash and/or need face-to-face assistance to facilitate payments. Resourcing our own cash office is expensive and doesn't provide a district wide service. Issuing of Allpay cards is most cost-effective alternative in terms of return on investment. We already have this service for Housing so would only need to implement this for Council Tax and NNDR to pick up the vast majority of cash payers. There is a slight inconvenience to customers who would need different Allpay card for each payment service, so may hold multiple cards. This would be outweighed however by the addition of district wide face to face services 6 days a week via 20+ Post Office counters, along with the additional ability to pay via over 30 Allpay PayPoints within the district.

Options considered and rejected:

1. **Allpay bar coded bills** – All invoicing systems within the council would need adapting involving high costs and complexity, particularly to adapt Academy system with consultancy required for templating and configuring. Update to Kiosks would be required to read new barcodes. No resource available for the significant amount of testing required across multiple back office systems.
2. **Bar coded paying in slips** – Payment cards issued by some banks can be issued to customers for payments to be made at Post Office Counters, however EFDC's bank do not offer this service. They have proposed a similar scheme where bar coded paying in slips could be issued to customers to use at Post Office Counters. This would involve an additional business account to feed into datalink file. Complex with high set up and resourcing costs. Open to customer error through incorrect completion of slips. Ongoing costs not much lower than Allpay card option.
3. **Payment Kiosk at Broadway** – Would serve all existing DCO customers but is the most expensive alternative and would require accommodation, customer support and servicing whilst continuing to maintain a cash handling risk for the council.

Moving forward, our cash paying customers need a solution that is easy to use and that they can trust.

Consultation undertaken:

Customer survey

During October 2020 we spoke to customers paying cash at the Debden Broadway cash office to understand the challenges and reasons why they still choose cash.

Key facts

- 75 customers engaged.
- 50%+ did not feel confident or competent in using alternative methods, relying on assurance of face-to-face support.
- Reasons included no bank account, paying for someone else, for some people disability was a factor.
- Mosaic customer segmentation data backs up this survey indicating we have residents in this area of an ageing population and/or on modest incomes.

Information from external sources also backs up our findings: -

- **The Rowntree Foundation** published research based on focus groups to understand the impact of financial exclusion. Those at highest risk include the elderly (over 70),

people who do not have a secure job, women who become mothers at an early age and minority ethnics with language or understanding barriers.

- **‘Which?’** ran a campaign to support those struggling as a result of reduced access to cash. They hi-light stories from people with disabilities and those who use cash to budget and manage their money to get out of debt. Their research shows that some of the most vulnerable are at risk of being excluded.
- **The Treasury** the government announced at the March 2020 budget that it would legislate to protect access to cash and ensure that the UK’s cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long-term to protect access for everyone who needs it. Following this, in October 2020, the Treasury published a call for evidence to inform its future strategy.
- **John Howells, CEO of LINK** (cash machine network in the UK) says that the Coronavirus has accelerated changing habits, but they are pleased the Government will be putting forward legislation to protect these customer segments reliant on cash.

To explore all options and identify the best solution we have reached out to neighbouring District and Borough councils as well as our bank, Allpay and the Post Office.

Our findings

Most Councils consulted have external off-site additional cash payment options in place. The most popular of these are contracts with Allpay which facilitate counter facilities in Post Offices and at PayPoints.

Resource implications:

Summary of option costs

The following table tries to enable comparison of year 1 set-up costs and ongoing costs. To enable comparison there are several estimates on transaction numbers and assumptions on costs where values are not known. This should therefore only be used as a guide for comparison purposes and not a reflection of actual costs.

Option	Year 1 estimated cost	Ongoing yearly cost	Ongoing costs per transaction	5 year costs	5 year savings	10 year costs	10 year savings
Allpay cards at Post Office Counters & PayPoints	6,570.24	2,899.58	0.6069	18,168.54	46,998.96	32,666.42	97,668.59
Allpay Bar coded bills	27,449.20	2,725.08	0.5635	38,349.52	26,817.98	51,974.92	78,360.08
Barcoded paying in slips	6,850.86	2,808.84	0.5808	18,086.22	47,081.28	32,130.42	98,204.58
Payment kiosk	23,577.50	7,488.50	1.5485	53,531.50	11,636.00	90,974.00	39,361.00
Relocate 1 kiosk from Epping	7,488.50	7,488.50	1.5485	37,442.50	27,725.00	74,885.00	55,450.00
Existing cash office	13,033.50	13,033.50	2.6950	65,167.50	0.00	130,335.00	0.00

Note that accommodation costs have been included in the Payment kiosk option, and both accommodation and staffing costs within the existing cash office. I’ve also included a consideration of relocating one of the kiosks from Epping to Debden, saving the cost of purchasing a new kiosk.

(Appendix Five – data used for cost comparison)

Legal and Governance Implications:

This proposal meets with all requirements.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

The introduction of post office counter services Allpay PayPoints for council tax and NNDR customers provides local face-to-face cash payment locations throughout the district, reducing car journeys and with longer opening hours enables these customers to choose off-peak and weekend times to pay their bills.

Background Papers: None

Impact Assessments: None

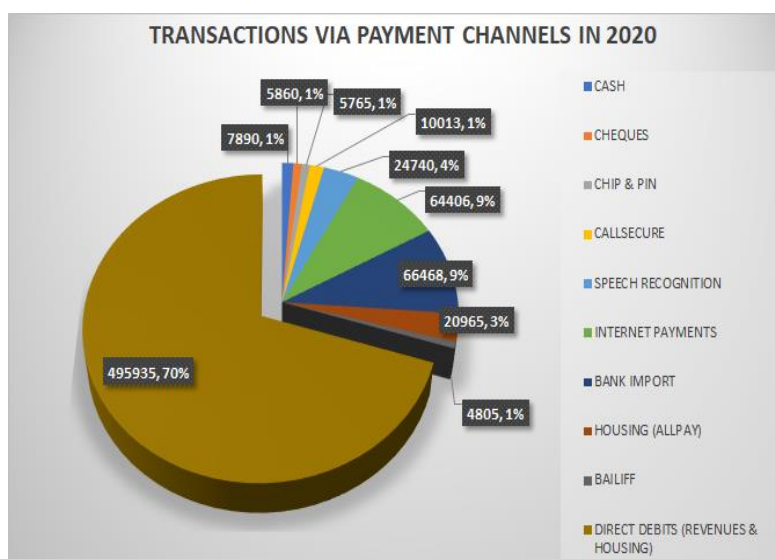
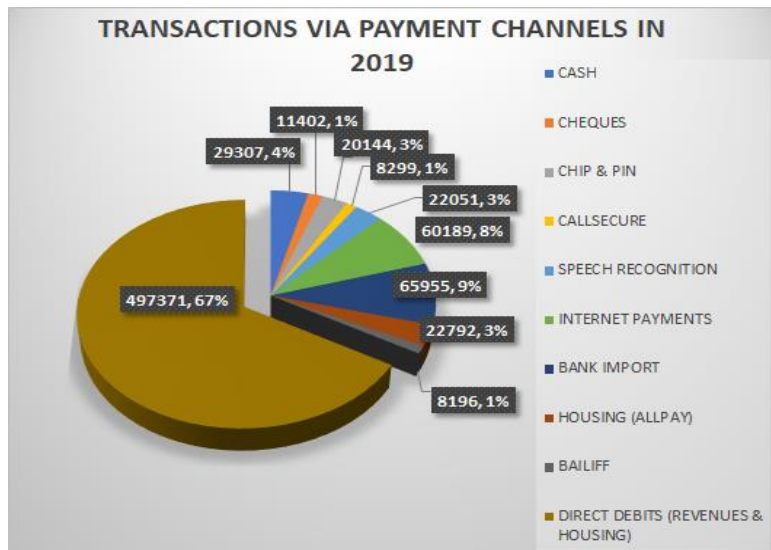
Risk Management:

Projects of this nature are developed and managed under a project management system which includes risk management.

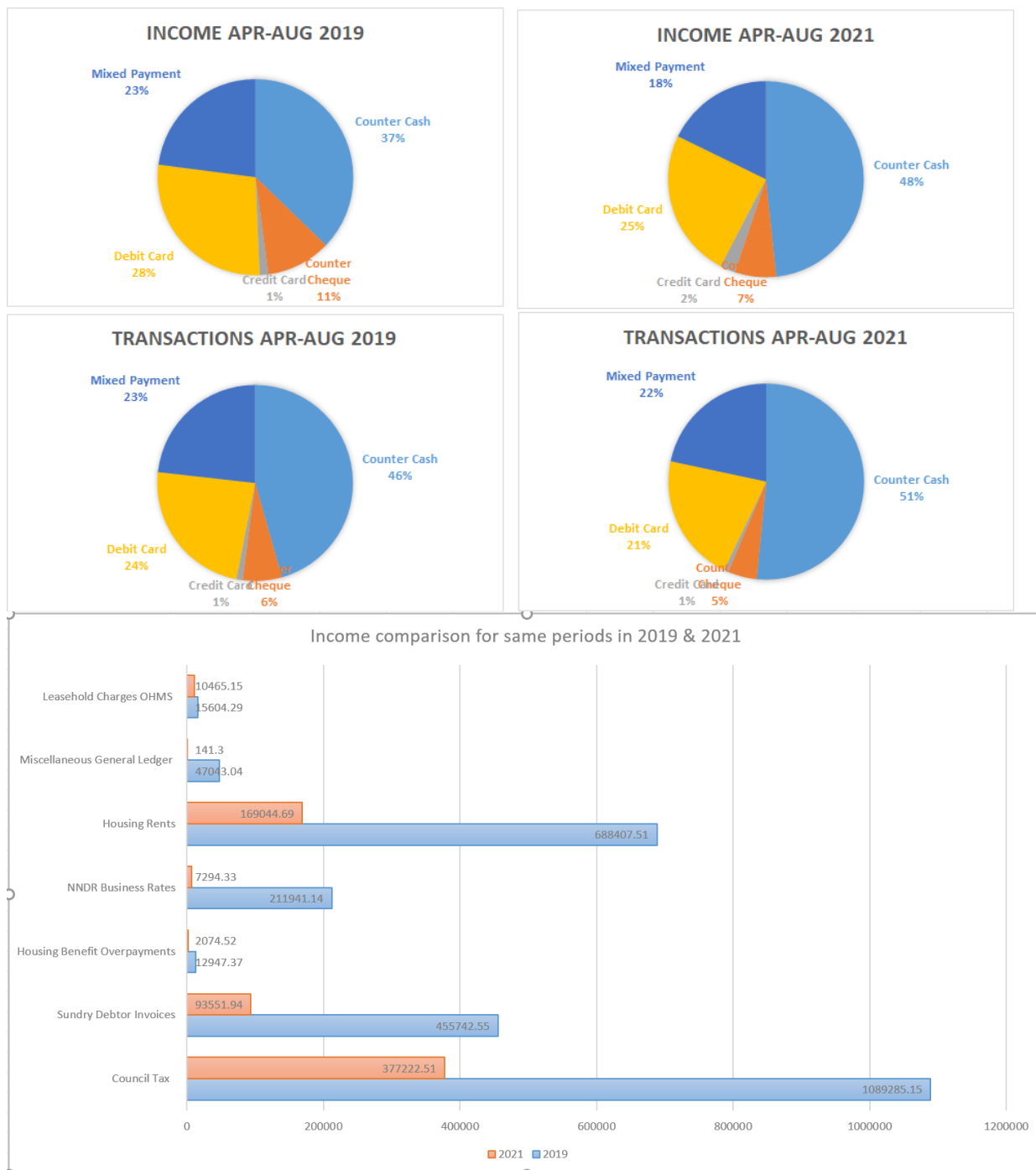
Equality:

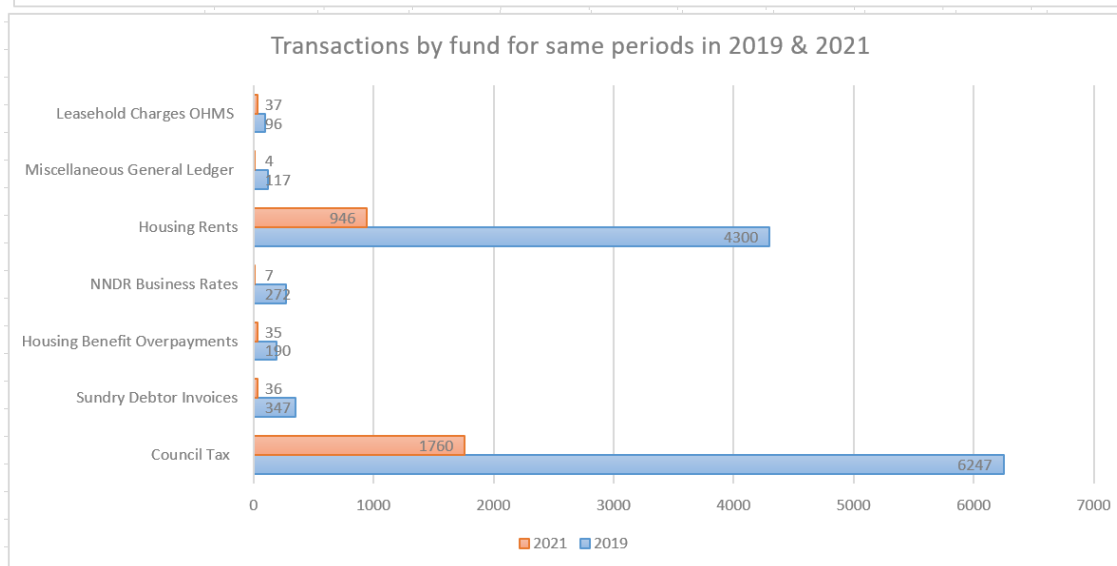
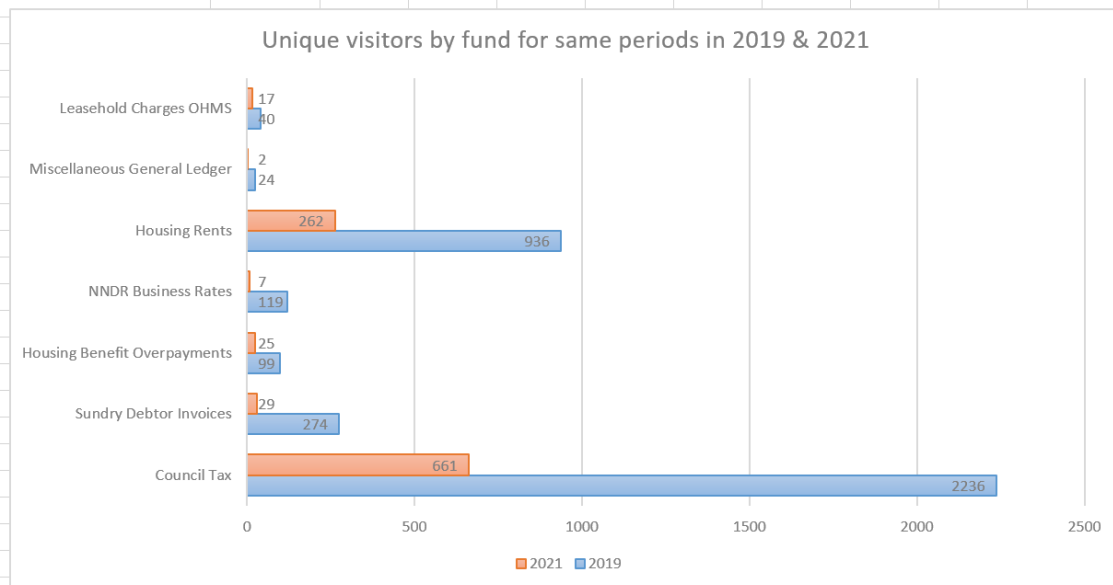
It's recognised that cash payments will remain going forward. Our district has pockets of deprivation and primarily these customers will choose to pay by cash. We must ensure from an equality perspective that we do not exclude this group of customers.

Appendix One - Overview and comparison of transactions via all payment channels between 2019 & 2020

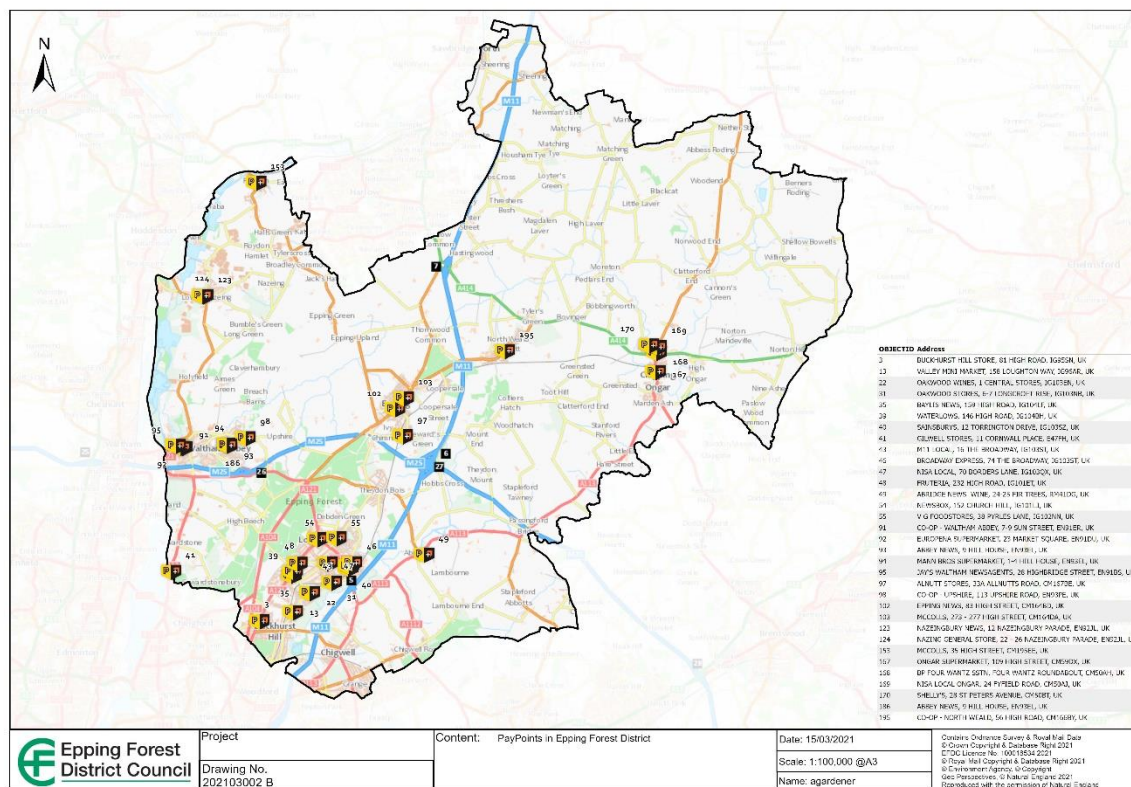
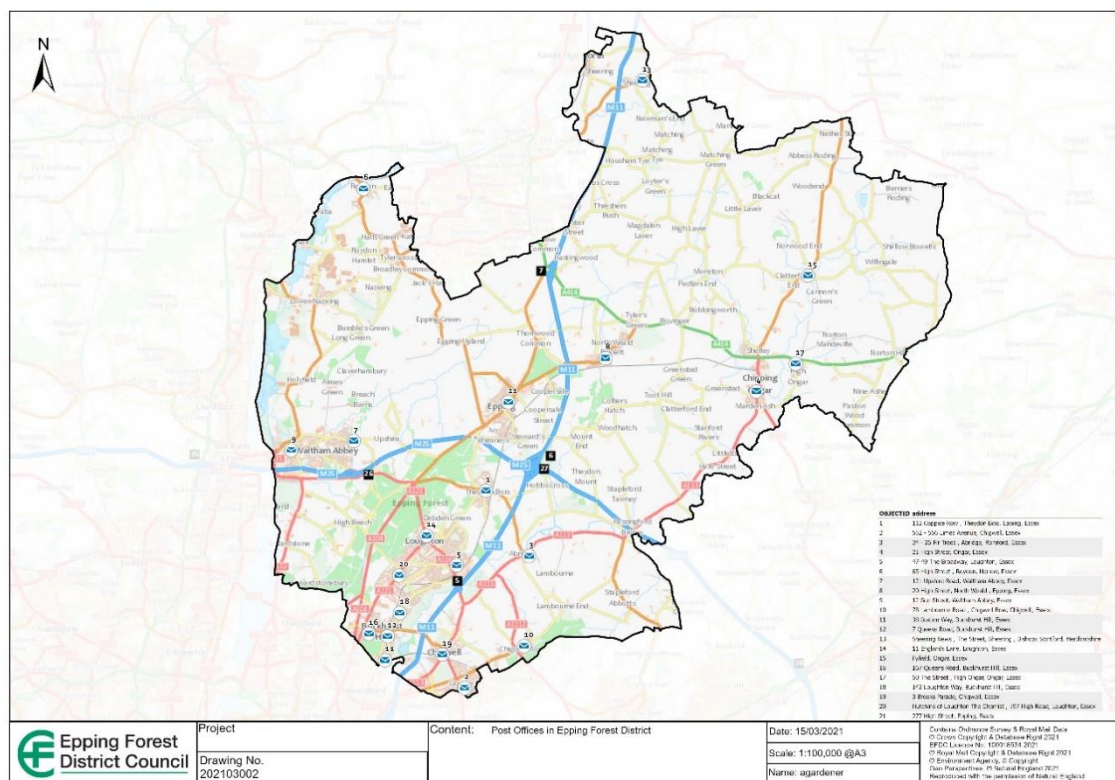


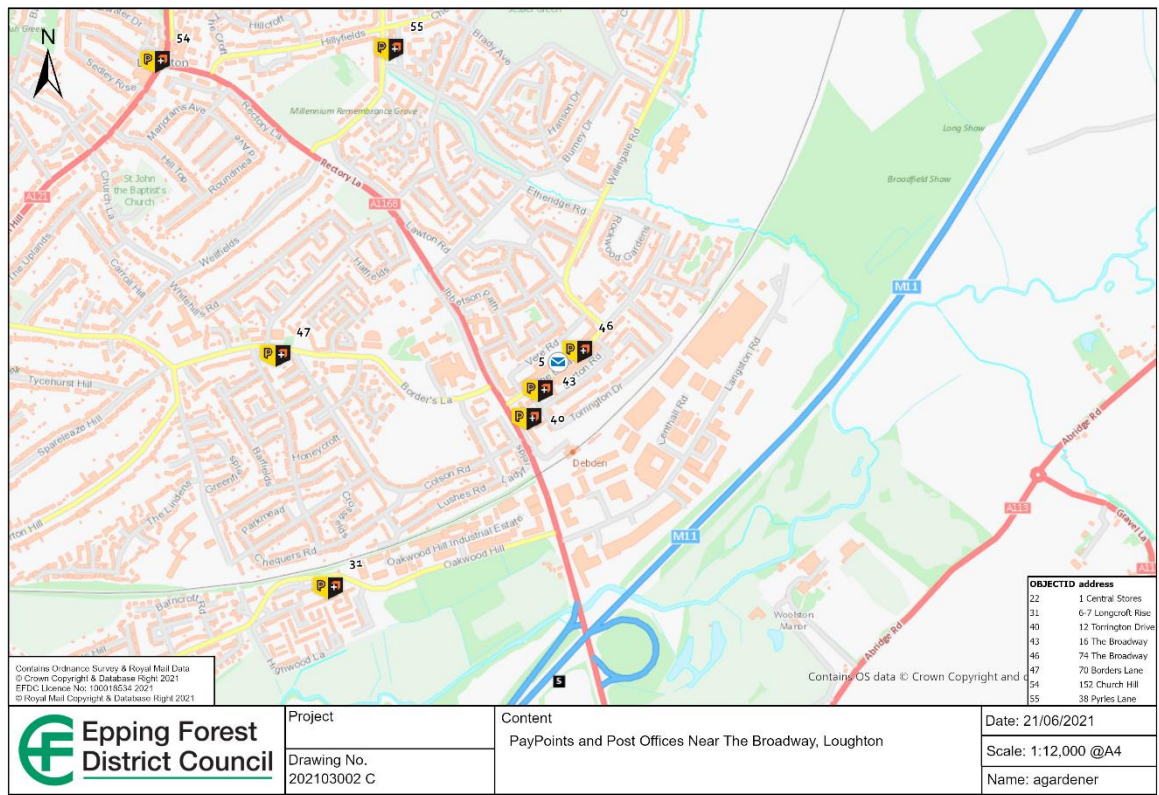
Appendix Two - Data from Debden Broadway cash office





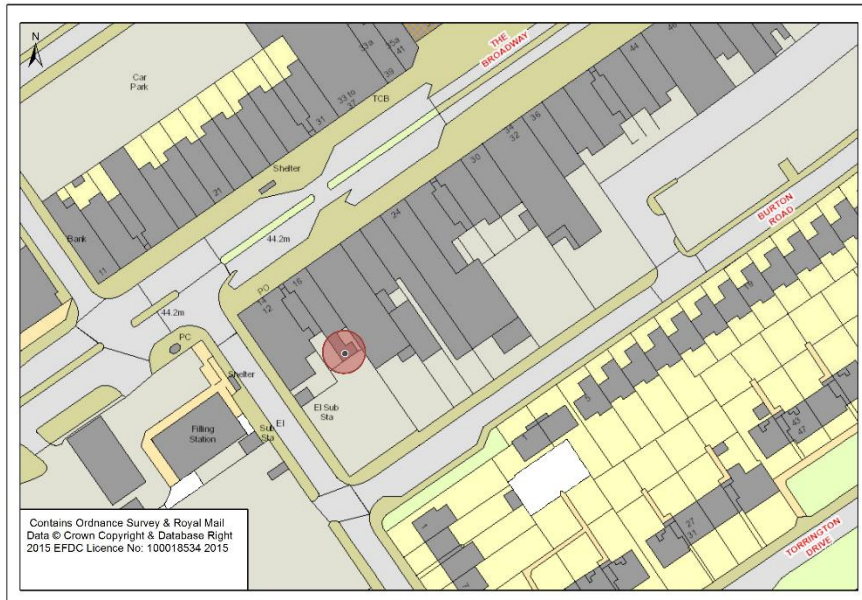
Appendix Three - Allpay PayPoints and Post Office locations





Appendix Four – New Post Office

New Post Office opened Tuesday 12th October 2021

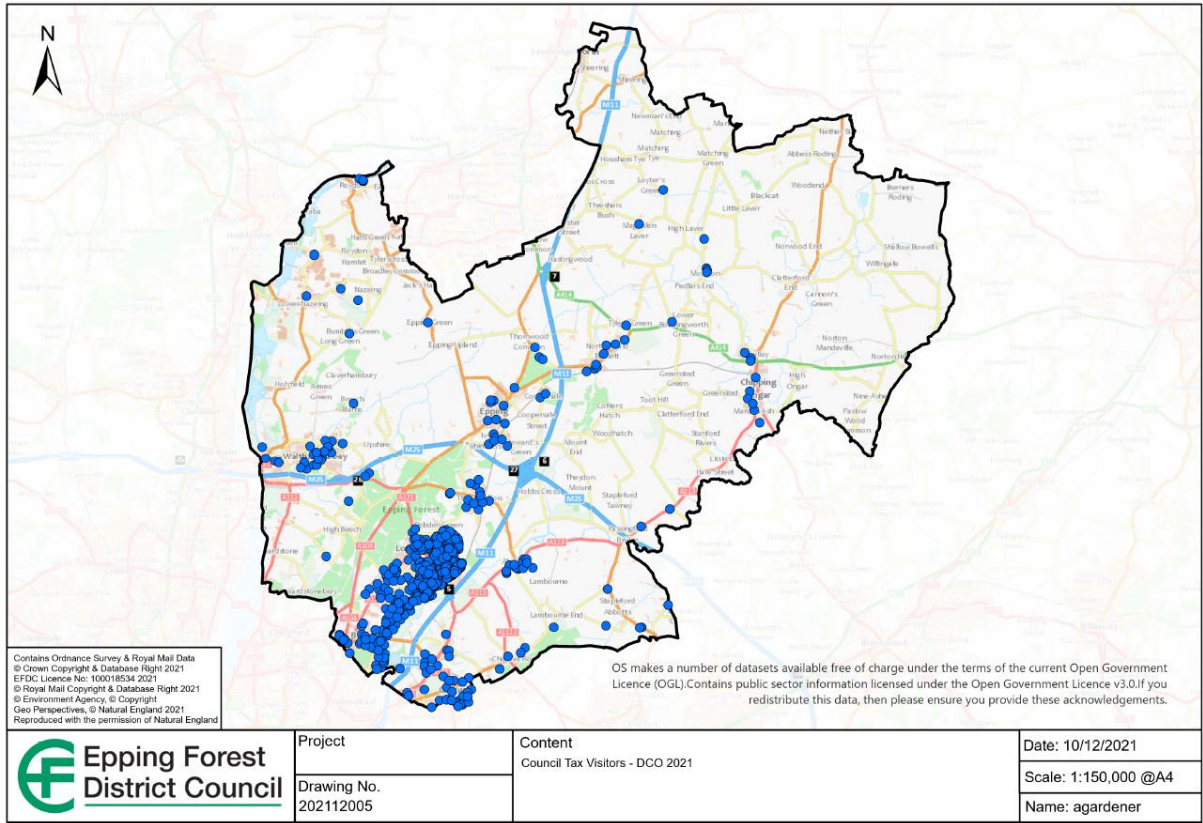


<https://www.postofficeviews.co.uk/national-consultation-team/the-broadway-ig10-3sx-213026-1/>

Appendix Five – Breakdown of comparison data used.

Option	Item	Price per item	No of items	Year 1 cost	Ongoing cost	Notes
Allpay cards at Post Office Counters & Pay Points	Estimated cost of cards for unique customers	2.0068	925	1856.29	185.629	Card price plus delivery. Estimated 10% new/lost card replacement assumed 2 services * 12 months
	Monthly charge (assume Council Tax, NNDR services)	10.84	24	260.16	260.16	
	Estimated transaction charges (Council Tax+NNDR)	0.5074	4836	2453.7864	2453.7864	
	Estimated IM System update cost	2000	1	2000	0	
	Total			6570.24	2899.58	
Bar coded bills	Barcode implementation fee	724.12	1	724.12	0	
	Monthly charge (assume Council Tax, NNDR services)	10.78	24	258.72	258.72	
	Estimated transaction charges (Council Tax+NNDR)	0.51	4836	2466.36	2466.36	
	Est. IM System update cost	2000	1	2000	0	
	Adding barcodes to invoices (Academy for CT and NNDR)	15000	1	15000	0	
	Adding barcodes to invoices (forthcoming Cx system for Housin	5000	1	5000	0	
	Charges to update Kiosks to support new barcodes?	2000	1	2000	0	
	Total			27449.20	2725.08	
Barcoded paying in slips	Book costs (would need to supply a book per unique customer)	4.74	925	4384.5	2192.25	Book price plus delivery. Based on estimate 50% of customers would need new book each year
	Estimated transaction charges (Council Tax+NNDR)	0.51	4836	2466.36	616.59	
	Est. IM System update cost	2000	1	2000	0	
	Total			6850.86	2808.84	
Payment kiosk	Hardware cost	16089	1	16089	0	Kiosk will need locating Est 55 credit cards + 988 debit. Cheque transaction charges? Estimate 2 collections per week * 52 weeks
	Accommodation	3640	1	3640	3640	
	Maintenance	1585	1	1585	1585	
	Estimated transaction charges (Council Tax+NNDR)	0.5	1043	521.5	521.5	
	Cash collections	16.75	104	1742	1742	
	Total			23577.50	7488.50	
Cash Office	Salary	7130	1	7130	7130	Accommodation cost will remain with the council but the office could be repurposed if cash office was closed. Est 55 credit cards + 988 debit. Cheque transaction charges? 2 collections per week * 52 weeks
	Accommodation	3640	1	3640	3640	
	Estimated transaction charges (Council Tax+NNDR)	0.5	1043	521.5	521.5	
	Cash collections	16.75	104	1742	1742	
	Total			13033.50	13033.50	

Appendix Six – Unique Council Tax users of Debden Cash Office since reopening on April 2021.



Appendix Seven – Example Allpay card



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Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022



Portfolio: Housing and Community (Cllr H Whitbread)



Subject: Transfer of services from the Broadway Housing Office

Officer contact for further information: Deborah Fenton (07988 860412)

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required

(1) That members agree to the proposed closure of the Broadway Housing office and agree on the reprovision of the service using a hub approach.

Executive Summary:

In 2019 officers reviewed the number of tenants visiting the Broadway Office to see housing staff. The review found that on average the number of tenants coming to the office to access housing staff was an average of 13 per week.

This is against a backdrop of a restructure in housing, which led to the creation of 3 specialist teams. One of the aspirations of the new teams was to take more of a hands-on approach, meaning that staff were able to spend time on our estates to ensure an active presence. In addition, officers wanted to take a more holistic approach, therefore, visiting tenants in their own homes. It was agreed to reduce the opening times of the office to facilitate the team spending more time on the estates.

Report:

Much has changed since the review was carried out in 2019, not least the impact of Covid and the move toward digital solutions. Officers have carried out a further review to understand the usage of the Broadway post Covid, also whether there was a better, more efficient way to carry on providing the service for those people who need it while allowing for the need to spend more time on the estates. This led to work being carried out to understand the opportunities for a collaborative way of working with partners. This would help support residents with a more holistic approach. In addition, help encourage more usage of the support on offer.

The following table shows the number of people who have visited the Broadway office to speak to a member of the housing team and for what reason, over 4 months.

Usage

Month	Total number of visits to housing office
Dec-21	29
Jan-22	44
Feb-22	43
Mar-22	41

Fob Request,
Tenancy Sign-Up
Rent Statement
Repairs
Tenancy Enquiry - Copy of Tenancy
Tenancy Sign-Up
Essex County Council - Bus Pass Enquiry
Rehousing Enquiry
Housing Benefit Enquiry

The visits to the office remain consistently low, with many of the visits for transactional reasons rather than one-to-one support from an officer. Provisions can be made to ensure the current reasons for visiting the office can be provided for:

Fobs – provision will be made at a central location
Sign-ups will be carried out at the time of viewing

The other functions can be provided at the hub

Alternatives

Officers have been in contact with a hub that is operated by the church and has several partners operating from it. The church is looking to join up and work in partnership with other professionals to give a much more joined-up service for tenants and residents alike.

It is therefore proposed that the service provided to tenants from the Broadway be moved to the Church Hub. This will act as a one-stop shop and provide a more meaningful service. Officers are proposing to close the current office in July

Following the closure of the office, the unit will be put on the market, and it is expected that rental income will be in the region of £22k per annum,

Reason for decision:

There is a need to review our current services and provide something more meaningful

Options considered and rejected:

The option was considered to carry on with the current service however this was rejected.

Consultation undertaken:

Residents have been consulted and are largely positive about a one hub approach

Resource implications:

Additional income of £22k per annum.

Legal and Governance Implications:

This proposal meets all requirements

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

Background Papers:

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management:

Officers will keep records of attendance to ensure an appropriate service is still being provided.

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SCRUTINY



Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022

**Portfolio: Housing & Community Services
Councillor Holly Whitbread**

Subject: Sheltered Housing Refurbishment Programme

Officer contact for further information: Deborah Fenton – Director HRA Functions (01992 564221)

Democratic Services Officer: Rebecca Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. The successful refurbishment of Frank Bretton House, Sheltered Housing Scheme be noted.**
- 2. It is recommended that approval be given to the continuation of the sheltered housing refurbishment program undertaking refurbishments at one to two sheltered schemes a year until complete.**
- 3. It be noted that sheltered housing refurbishments are eligible for Housing Benefit, the Council fund the scheme upfront with money from the HRA. A new component is added to the service charge which has been accounted for in the HRA business plan.**

Report:

1. Following the successful refurbishment of Frank Bretton House, sheltered housing scheme, member approval is being sought to continue the refurbishment program at other sheltered schemes undertaking one or two refurbishments a year in order to define interior design standards for the communal areas that meet the aspirations and expectations of our growing older population, making best use of the Council's housing stock, making them feel modern, welcoming and improve desirability.

2. Epping Forest District Council invited ARK to undertake a review of its sheltered housing. The principal focus of this assignment was to review the performance and sustainability of the Council's sheltered housing schemes. As a result of the review ARK made several recommendations one of which was to modernise the communal areas of the Council's sheltered housing schemes to create modern and sustainable housing stock.

3. At the Cabinet meeting on 21st June 2021, Members approved a pilot refurbishment scheme at Frank Bretton House working with Buckingham Interiors who are part of FRC Group a registered social enterprise and charity. Residents were consulted on three different mood boards which contained samples of fabric, curtaining, carpet etc. They were also able to try various seating and give their views on their preferred choice of colour scheme. Work began around August with EFDC undertaking the decoration of the scheme based on the specification of colours provided by Buckingham Interiors design team. The colour scheme on the ground floor varies to the first floor making the building dementia friendly. Residents were kept up to date throughout the work. The pilot took 6 months to complete, this was slightly longer than expected due to delays in obtaining materials and furniture which was a result of the covid pandemic. When the work was complete a post work survey was undertaken. Of the

33 properties at the scheme, 20 returned the post work survey. Of those 20, 15 flats were happy with the refurbishment which equates to 75%. Three of the five properties were unhappy due to having to contribute to the cost of the work. Six properties felt that given the cost of the carpet, the quality was poor. The full results of the post work survey can be found at **appendix 1**. This being a pilot we learned a lot from resident's feedback including the order in which the work should be undertaken, consulting residents on the artwork for their scheme and their views on flooring. These comments will help improve the customer experience if approval is given to continue the refurbishment program. This refurbishment has transformed the scheme and overall residents are happy with the modern and warm feel of the building. Before and after pictures can be found in **appendix 2**.

4. Funding the refurbishment

The project was funded from the HRA and repayment from a new component added to residents rent accounts. This process will be applied to any future refurbishments with the money being paid back over a ten-year period. These refurbishments qualify for housing benefit subsidy, therefore, those tenants on housing benefit have the cost covered by their benefit entitlement. Those residents not in receipt of housing benefit do have to pay the new charge which will vary from scheme to scheme.

5. Costings

The cost of future refurbishments will be determined by the footprint of the scheme for flooring, the number of windows to be dressed and both the number of rooms to be furnished and the level of furnishings / artwork etc. to be provided. The cost for Frank Bretton House was £115,810.14 broken down to:

Furniture, Artwork, signs and accessories	£38,314.75
Carpet	£66,126.67
Window Coverings	£11,368.72

In terms of the service charge costs, it is likely to be in the region of £5 - £10 per week depending of the size of the scheme. The service charge for Frank Bretton was £7.77 per week.

The scope of works includes interior design, which includes paint colours, flooring finishes, window coverings, furniture, artwork etc. This is suited to communal spaces for older people's housing, is fresh and modern, is compliant with fire regulations and compliant with the specification of fit for purpose products e.g. non slip flooring surfaces, safety glazed artwork, furniture styles which aid mobility, antimicrobial fabrics, medium risk settings fire compliant fabrics and upholstery foams (i.e. higher level of fire retardancy than required in domestic settings), and aids safe use of spaces by people who may be experiencing visual impairment and early stages of dementia.

As with Frank Bretton House, the continuation of these refurbishments will be led by a Business Development Manager from Buckingham interior who will coordinate all elements of the work and be on hand to work with the EFDC team throughout the planning, implementation and review processes. Installation work is all carried out by specialist installers, coordinated by a dedicated Project Manager. There is also a full aftercare service which includes advice on care, cleaning, maintenance and registration of warranties.

Reason for decision:

Members are being asked to approve the refurbishment of our sheltered housing schemes because this was one of the recommendations from ARK's sheltered housing review which was undertaken during 2019-20 and their more recent review in March 2022. The report highlighted the need to define interior design standards for communal areas of our sheltered

schemes in order to make them sustainable and desirable to an ageing population.

Options considered and rejected:

Officers considered whether to carry out a smaller scale upgrade, however this was rejected due to the long-term implications and properties in sheltered schemes being difficult to let.

Consultation undertaken:

Buckingham interiors will be supporting our officers to consult with the residents from the on-set of each refurbishment on colours and styles. Residents will also be able to try out the chairs and furniture being considered for their scheme and a post work survey is undertaken after each refurbishment to monitor customer satisfaction.

Resource implications:

It is proposed that 1 or 2 sheltered housing schemes are renovated each year. The cost to the Council would be the internal decorations of the sheltered schemes for which there is existing budget provision.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Buckingham Interiors are on a number of frameworks and officers have consulted with the procurement team to ensure the policy requirements are met.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

The furniture provided by Buckingham Interiors is manufactured in the UK. In addition, support would be given to help us put to good use, our old furniture, either by donating it to local good causes such as the re-use scheme or recycling it through FRC Groups recycling scheme.

Background Papers:

C-001-2021-22 - Report to Cabinet 21st June 2021

Risk Management

Should the project not go ahead there is a risk that properties within our sheltered schemes will become more difficult to let resulting in rent loss.

Equalities:

No impact identified

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SCRUTINY



Epping Forest District Council

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022

Portfolio: Housing and Property (Cllr Holly Whitbread)

Subject: The changing landscape of Housing and Property Services 1

Officer contact for further information: Deborah Fenton (07988860412)

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required

- (1) That members note the changing landscape for housing and property services
- (2) That members note this, as the first paper on regulation and note that further papers will be presented in the future.

Executive Summary:

2021 proved to be another big year for social housing. There have been several significant changes, and some of these changes apply specifically to Local Government. The landscape will look significantly different in the future. This is against the backdrop of changing demographics and the changing aspirations of our residents. As a housing service, we are acutely aware that just producing bricks and mortar is not enough to create great places and instil a sense of community for our residents.

Members can expect a significant increase in reports and papers being presented following the changes. This paper gives members an overview of the Consumer Standards in which registered providers are obliged to adhere to.

This, and the other changes need to be planned for and resourced accordingly. Part of this includes informing members of the changes and their responsibilities under the new landscape. This report seeks to inform members of the glide path around the following:

National context

Regulation

Local context

Estate Regeneration & Creating great places where people want to live

Sheltered housing

Asset management strategy

Policy and Strategy

Report

National context

Social Housing Regulation - Consumer Regulations

Although social housing regulation is not new for registered providers such as housing associations, it is new for local government. This report sets out to cover one of the most

significant changes. That is that all local authorities are now to be regulated by the regulator of social housing. The regulator produces a regulatory framework that housing associations and now councils must adhere to. There are consequences for not adhering to regulation, this can include deregistering a housing provider.

The key point for members is their role in the co approach, the below was taken from:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards#our-approach>

Our approach

We take a co-regulatory approach. This means boards and councillors who govern providers' service delivery are responsible for ensuring their organisation is meeting our standards, and for being open and accountable in how their organisation meets its objectives. Co-regulation also requires providers to support tenants in the shaping and scrutinising of service delivery and in holding boards and councillors to account.

We are risk-based in our regulatory approach. We use our sector risk analysis and assessments of registered providers with 1,000 or more social housing units to identify those we judge to be more complex and who consequently have an increased level of risk exposures. Providers with fewer than 1,000 social housing units are subject to a lower level of regulatory engagement. Our Sector risk profile is published annually and it can help registered providers to manage risks effectively.

As part of the co-regulatory approach, the Regulator will carry out an in-depth inspection every 3-4 years. We are aware that these have started within stock holding authorities.

There are standards within the regulations first of which is the consumer standards, these are significant as the regulator emphasizes tenant involvement and empowerment as well as health and safety. The requirements for this standard are as follows:

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

This requires RPs to:

- consult with tenants
- provide good customer service and service choices to tenants (including information about any additional costs relevant to specific choices)
- have in place a clear and accessible complaints procedure
- respond to the diverse needs of tenants
- Where an RP wishes to dispose of property to another landlord, it must:
- consult in a fair, timely, appropriate, and effective manner
- set out its proposals clearly, giving sufficient detail
- set out actual or potential advantages and disadvantages in both the immediate and longer-term
- be able to demonstrate that they have considered the outcome of the consultation when reaching a decision

Home standard

This requires registered providers to achieve equality of accommodation, this is set out in the decent home guidance. Members should be aware that this is currently being reviewed.

Required outcomes

Registered providers shall:

- (a) ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance^[footnote] and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard

- (b) meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance^{[footnote](#)} if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- (c) in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance.

Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers shall:

- (a) provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- (b) meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.

Neighbourhood and community standard

This requires RPs to:

- consult with tenants in developing a policy for maintaining and improving their neighbourhoods
- co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental, and economic well-being in their areas
- work in partnership with other public agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour

Timeline

Regulation is now in place; it is normal practice for organisations to undertake a mock IDA to help understand the gaps and assist in developing an action plan. Officers will be looking to commission this shortly and present a report to the relevant committee later in the year, members may be asked to participate in the mock IDA.

Report Local context

Regeneration

Members received the business plan report on February 22, which listed the sites which were in line for regeneration, this follows a review of capital works and the ambition to carry out the works in a short time frame to save costs for both EFDC and Leaseholders. Also, to create a bigger impact, therefore, creating great places where people want to live. This follows the path of the new proposed Decent Homes Standard

Sheltered Housing

Following the review of Sheltered Housing which was undertaken in 2019 officers have now extended this to include a strategic review of the future of the schemes, considering changing aspirations and demographics. The review also considers that a high percentage of let's go-to people on the supplementary list, these are people who do not meet the local connection requirements.

In the last 5 years, 229 allocations have been made to sheltered housing, of these 140 have been off the supplementary list and 89 on the main waiting list

Timetable

Cllr H Whitbread and members have attended a presentation to view the recommendations, following this, a strategy, will be co-produced with stakeholders.

Policy and strategy

The changes not only impact the way we work but require the internal framework to be put in place. Officers are currently working through the resource implication for this and the timetable for presentation to the relevant Committee.

Other significant areas of work

Member should note that this is not an exhaustive list of work projects for housing, several additional areas of work will also be presented to future committees in the next 12 months these include:

Housing Management System update
Asset management strategy
Net-zero
Council House Building
Return on Investment (it's more than bricks and mortar)
Tenant involvement strategy (White Paper requirement)
Penningtons – a review of compliance

Reason for decision:

Given the increase in reports coming to committees over the coming year, it was felt to be appropriate to give members an overview.

Options considered and rejected:

The option was considered not to offer support, however, that, it was rejected.

Consultation undertaken:

The housing and property team have input into this paper

Resource implications:

Officers are currently reviewing the resources and if necessary, will present a report to SLT.

Legal and Governance Implications:

This proposal meets all requirements

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

Background Papers:

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management:

The risks are a mix of legislation, reputation and financial the housing operational risk map will be updated according



SCRUTINY



Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 12 July 2022

Portfolio: Housing and Community (Councillor H Whitbread)

Subject: Review of Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Officer contact for further information: Jennifer Gould (075481 45639)

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

1. That the Committee considers the draft Public Consultation Outcome Report for the Review of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 at Appendix 1 and makes recommendations for Cabinet approval.
2. That the Committee considers the draft vision, five proposed priorities and associated aims and objectives for the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 contained within this report and makes recommendations for Cabinet approval.
3. That the Committee considers the proposal to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community to approve the periodic publication of an associated Housing Strategy Action Plan and makes recommendations for Cabinet approval.
4. That the Committee considers the proposal to ensure the Housing Strategy for 2022-2027 is reviewed and updated no later than 2027 and makes recommendations for Cabinet approval.

Reason for proposed recommendations:

For the Committee to make their recommendations to Cabinet for consideration and approval to enable the publication of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the associated Public Consultation Outcome Report.

Executive Summary

Stronger Communities Select Committee is being asked to consider the proposal set out in this report and make recommendations for Cabinet to approve the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 and the Public Consultation Outcome Report.

The current Housing Strategy 2018-2022 is due for renewal. Although the Housing Strategy is not a statutory requirement it provides a cohesive direction of travel for cross-cutting housing related services. The aim is to reflect and facilitate the co-ordination of activities for those services that directly impact on current and projected need for and supply of affordable housing in the District.

A review of the Housing Strategy commenced in May 2021 underpinned by a review of the Allocations Scheme, the Tenancy Policy and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (which are statutory documents). These were approved by Cabinet on 1 March 2022 to take

effective in September 2022 for the period 2022-2027.

Other options for Action:

- (i) Not to recommend approving the Public Consultation Outcome Report for publication.
- (ii) To make alternative recommendations to the style, content, or presentation of the Public Consultation Outcome Report before publication.
- (iii) Not to recommend the proposals for the for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027.
- (iv) To make alternative recommendations for the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 (subject to further consultation where appropriate).

Report:

Purpose, style, and format of the draft Housing Strategy for 2022-2027

The proposal is to update the style and format of the draft Housing Strategy for 2022-2027 to agree, reflect and achieve the Council's vision for affordable housing in the District over the next five years and establish five overarching housing priorities and associated aims, objectives actions and outcomes that span housing related services to achieve this vision.

Part of the aim of the Housing Strategy is to recognise, highlight and strengthen the links between Housing, Planning Policy, Public Health, Community Safety and Social Care with regards to the duties we have as both a Local Housing Authority area and a stockholding authority in respect of the need for and supply of affordable housing and housing related services.

The draft Housing Strategy reflects our commitment to community involvement health and wellbeing and working in partnership, all of which have been integral to this review and the proposal to agree a joint action plan with named partnership organisations.

The draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027 also recognises and aims to respond to evolving social policy, legislation and regulation which increasingly blur lines between traditional departmental responsibilities within national and local government.

Consistent format with other Housing related strategies.

The success of the Housing Strategy is the translation of the proposed vision, priorities aims and objectives within the strategy into a tangible action plan with SMART targets. These will be agreed with our partner organisations once Cabinet approval for the Strategy has been granted, and before the agreed implementation date of the Strategy.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 has already been formulated to this end, and the proposals are to apply this format to the pending Development Strategy and Resident Involvement Strategy.

This approach also facilitates the golden thread from the Council's corporate plan creating the synergy required to feed into service plans, team plans and individual one-to ones.

An example of the colour pallet, style and limited number of illustrations that could be used in the report (subject to meeting with Corporate Communications approval) has been included at Appendix 2.

Content

The proposal is for the Housing Strategy to begin with a Forward from Holly Whitbread Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community, followed by an introduction to that sets out the national context, the local context, and Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Objectives.

The relevant up to date demographic and housing need information that will be included in the introduction is due to be published after this paper is presented to Stronger Communities Select Committee and before the circulation date for September Cabinet.

A position statement will describe the headline demographics for the District and comparative supply and lettings data over the last 3 years (available at the end of July 2022) and details of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (updated in 2017)

Reference will be made to the census data that was released on 28 June 2022 which shows the population growth in Epping Forest over the last 10 years and any additional relevant census data or analysis that is released before the report on the review of the Housing Strategy is to be submitted to APG on 10 August 2022 will also be included.

This will be followed by a brief summary of the aspects of the emerging Local Plan relating to the delivery of affordable housing in the District; including the current and projected need for different sizes and types of tenure, how this is determined and the plans to meet this need.

The report will then highlight the planned growth and development of up to 23,000 new homes in Harlow and Gilston Garden Town including the associated infrastructure, overall projected timescales for delivery, and the intended relationship between the adjoining districts for the development and letting of the affordable housing on the sites.

Vision

The proposed vision for the Housing Strategy 2022- 2027 is:

‘To work with the community to provide great places where people want to live, work, thrive and prosper in safe good quality homes that meet their needs.’

Priorities

The five proposed priorities are:

Priority 1 Increasing the supply of affordable housing

Priority 2 Ensuring quality, safety, and high standards

Priority 3 Promoting health wellbeing and independence

Priority 4 Facilitating economic growth and regeneration

Priority 5 Protecting and enhancing the environment

Aim and objectives

The aim and proposed objectives for each priority is:

Priority 1 : Increasing the supply of affordable housing

The aim is to maximise opportunities to increase the supply of suitable affordable housing and make the best use of existing affordable housing (both affordable rent and affordable home ownership) in the District.

The Councils housebuilding programme

The Councils Housebuilding programme includes the redevelopment of x garage sites, building x properties for rent over the next x years, and the potential to develop a variety of tenure types for affordable rent and affordable home ownership.

Where possible new-build Council housing will be built to Passivhaus standards and include electric vehicle charging points (EVPs) to maximise energy efficiency. Passivhaus will also be

considered for retro-fitting existing stock depending on site suitability.

The Council's Employers Requirements for well-designed sustainable housing will be translated into a comparable design brief that other registered providers of housing will be required to follow when developing affordable housing in the District.

The Development team will actively pursue land purchase opportunities and joint ventures and have created attractive hoardings as a marketing tool to generate interest.

Strengthening partnerships

We will strengthen the links between Housing, Planning and Development partners including pre- planning application discussions about in principle tenure mix and developer contributions to affordable housing to improve efficiency and prevent avoidable delays to scheme delivery.

Maximise funding opportunities

We will maximise the opportunities to secure funding for affordable housing. We will continue to work with Homes England and seek to have the mechanisms in place to consider and respond to openings to submit strong bids within the required timescales (where it is appropriate and in the local interest to do so).

Affordable Homeownership

Measured consideration will be given Government initiatives to increase the supply of affordable home ownership, such as first homes, community self-build and reforms to shared ownership to promote first steps into home ownership where circumstances allow.

Private landlords

We will work with private landlords to increase the supply of good quality affordable private rented housing in challenging times. This includes preparing for the potential impact of the reforms introduced in the publication of the Governments white paper 'A Fairer Private Rented Sector' including the end of no-fault evictions, the introduction of a decent home standard, and changes to rights, responsibilities, and enforcement action.

Letting accommodation

We will let accommodation fairly and efficiently in accordance with the updated Allocations Scheme 2022- 2027, the Tenancy Policy 2022-2027 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022- 2027. We will make best use of available temporary and settled accommodation, aim to minimise the void turnaround time, and assist and incentivise people who want to move to smaller accommodation and/or sheltered housing.

Priority 2 Quality, safety and standards

Our aim is to provide and maintain high quality safe housing and neighbourhoods that achieve or exceed both regulatory standards and tenant led measures, and that residents feel respected, listened to and have redress when things go wrong.

The Building Safety Act and Construction and Design Management Standards

We will set out our commitment to ensuring compliance with the Building Safety Act 2022 Design Management Regulations 2015 and our intention to apply the Fire Safety Standards to all our general needs residential apartment blocks including those that are lower than the 11-metre threshold.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents

Our draft Resident Involvement Strategy will reflect our guiding principle to put residents at the heart of our operations. We will ensure residents are aware of the Charter for Social Housing, know what they should be able to expect from the Council and that we are fully compliant with the statutory requirements that underpin the Charter.

Modernisation of sheltered housing schemes

We will review and publish our plans to modernise sheltered housing and housing for older

people, including technology to support residents to remain as independent as they can for as long as they can, with access assistance if and when needed.

Accountability

We will review the way we capture and publish information on how we are performing as a landlord. We will also review our complaints policy and procedure, so that we are truly accountable to our tenants and leaseholders. We will work with the Regulator for Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman to prepare for the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures and ensure we have the mechanisms in place to gather and submit the necessary data returns and use the information to continuously improve service delivery.

Priority 3 Promoting health wellbeing and independence

Our aim is to promote health and wellbeing to enable residents to live safe independent lives and access the appropriate housing related support if and when they need it.

Shared services

We will continue to be an active partner on the Health and Wellbeing Board and work together with public sector services to develop non-clinical activities to improve wellbeing and prevent or reduce mental and physical health problems. We will learn from the co-located shared NHS support staff including a mental health clinician and a health coach how this approach can help people improve resilience who may also be struggling to obtain or sustain settled living arrangements.

Community development

We will build on the success that our Community Culture and Wellbeing service and Estates and Land Management have achieved with local communities in some of the most deprived areas of the District. Our strategy including gardening projects, after school clubs' sports and outdoor gyms to increase activity, reduce isolation develop skills and build social support networks.

Social prescribing

We will launch a campaign and train customer facing housing staff to adopt the principles of social prescribing and incorporate social prescribing as standard practice in Personal Housing Plans for people who approach the Council for help. As part of this we will continue to develop our relationship with Voluntary Action Epping Forest to promote the potential benefits of volunteering to both the volunteer and the recipient of their voluntary work.

National Disabilities Strategy

We will review the Housing related aspects of the National Disability Strategy and create an action plan to include ensuring disabled people can fully participate in consultation, that disability is included in hate-crime policies, and that we maximise the use of the data that we collect as part of customer profiling work to help tailor services.

Priority 4 Facilitating economic growth and regeneration

Our aim is to work with partners to level up the life-chances of our residents including bridging the gap between housing related costs and the ability of households on low incomes to meet these costs.

Fuel Poverty

We will tackle fuel poverty by promoting and delivering initiatives to reduce energy bills and increase the take up of financial help to meet increasing costs. This will include providing information and advice and signposting residents to services and organisations that can provide practical assistance with applying for specific schemes, acting as a delivery vehicle to administer financial assistance as where we are able to do so, and investing in energy efficient technologies for newbuild and retrofit dwellings for longer term solutions

Employment, training, and apprenticeships

Where it is appropriate, we will identify opportunities to encourage households in housing need to take up employment, training, and apprenticeship initiatives, both to improve economic wellbeing and address local skills shortages. As a large employer of mainly local residents, we are one of 30 anchor organisations across Essex that invests in training and developing our staff and supporting good health and wellbeing. We have recently secured funding for a job coach to support people experiencing multiple disadvantages into work, and along with the Develop me interactive hub will continue to pursue opportunities to link local employers with local residents who are seeking employment or training.

Debt management and respite

We will review the support that is available for households in debt and the impact of the Debt Respite Scheme Regulations 2020 on the way that we help tenants to maintain their rent accounts, if they have been granted respite to ensure they receive the appropriate advice and assistance with regards to any arrears of rent for the duration of the respite, and once it has ended

Regenerating Council and mixed tenure estates

We will continue with our programme to regenerate Council and mixed tenure estates as part of our More than Bricks and Mortar initiative. We aim wherever possible to develop tenure blind affordable housing, both to reduce the stigma associated with social housing and promote and enable aspirations for local people to move from rented accommodation to affordable homeownership in the same area if they are in a position to do so.

Keyworker housing

We will explore the feasibility of developing more keyworker housing in specific areas where there is a community led demand and need for it to address local skills shortages. We have modified Housing Allocations Scheme 2022- 2027 to allow for local lettings plans to facilitate keyworker housing in exceptional circumstances subject to Cabinet approval.

Priority 5 Protecting and enhancing the environment

Our aim is to make a significant contribution to preserving restoring and celebrating the natural environment and the culture and heritage that is unique to the District.

Improving green spaces

We intend to increase the number of joint ventures with the local community to improve the look and feel of green spaces on our Council and mixed tenure estates. The strategy includes planting trees, raised flowerbeds and vegetable planters that the community can then maintain, creating outdoor spaces where families older people and single people can socialise and enjoy recreational activities

Climate change

We will actively contribute to achieving the Council's targets to achieve net zero by 2030 in the design of our newbuild and retrofit achieving passivhaus standards and providing Electric Vehicle charging points where possible. We will organise campaigns to help tenants reduce carbon emissions in the home and as part of their day-to-day activities. We will encourage sustainable transport through the provision of bicycle stores and attractive well- lit communal walkways, and reduction in waste generated by our maintenance and capital works programmes

Environmental Health

We will develop joint policies and strategies with the Community Safety Partnership and Regulatory Services, and the North Essex Parking Partnership to use the full range of environmental health and landlord tools available to tackle environmental health issues such as noise and air pollution, fly tipping, anti-social behaviour, the condition of private sector stock and licencing laws.

Raising awareness

We will develop campaigns and exhibitions with local people in conjunction with Museums and Heritage services to raise awareness of environmental issues such as climate change and how to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions, and social issues such as lived experiences of homelessness to understand the causes and reducing the stigma associated with housing need.

Next Steps

The next step is to produce a full draft Strategy document and stage 2 Consultation document that incorporates the Committee recommendations to present to Cabinet for approval along with the associated Equalities Impact Assessment and the Legal, Governance, and Safer Cleaner, Greener and confirmed Resource implications.

Consultation undertaken:

See the Draft Public Consultation Outcome Report at Appendix 1

Resource implications:

The actions contained within this strategy shall largely be managed within existing and future service budgets. Any additional burdens associated with the introduction of the new post Grenfell and post pandemic statutory and regulatory requirements aimed at levelling up the sector will be addressed by the relevant Service Director through the usual business planning process.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Awaiting comments

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

Awaiting comments

Background Papers:

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Equality:

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