

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 28 October 2021  
**Subject:** Housing Services Portfolio  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Holly Whitbread

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Housing Services Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **Executive Summary**

The following report provides an update on progress in the following areas:

### **Housing Strategy and Policy**

#### **Review of the Big Four Housing Strategies and Policies**

We have achieved several milestones in the review of the 'Big 4' Housing Strategies and Policies and we are on target to complete all four reviews by April 2022.

The stage 1 consultation to capture initial views closed on 30 August 2021. The results have been analysed and used to inform the recommendations in the four reports that were presented to Stronger Communities Select Committee on 21 September 2021 for scrutiny, prior to being published for detailed stage 2 statutory consultation.

The key proposals include introducing five cross cutting priorities in the overarching Housing Strategy, five priorities in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 13 changes to the Allocations Policy, of which at least 5 would be considered to be major changes, and no changes to the Tenancy Policy. All 4 reports received a favourable response from the committee.

Stage 2 consultation will be open from 18 October 2021 to 3 December 2021 and will include widescale publicity and a breakdown of the results of the Stage 1 consultation.

#### **Appointment to Career Graded Housing and Communities Strategy Officer role**

Charlotte Wright has just been appointed as the Housing and Communities Strategy Officer. This is a career graded post which will include a bespoke professional development plan.

Charlotte joined the Council as a Housing apprentice in 2020 and is a student member of the Chartered Institute of Housing. We are delighted that she has the skills and ambition to continue her career development with EFDC in such a challenging and exciting role.

### **Housing Needs**

#### **Homelessness**

Following accommodating a number of rough sleepers during the pandemic, we are really pleased to have completed an HMO (house of multiple occupation) conversion of one of our own properties to lease to CHESS - our commissioned rough sleeper service. The HMO will provide supported accommodation to 4 clients at any given time, nominations will be made solely through the Homelessness Team at EFDC and CHESS will manage and provide the support to clients for the duration of their tenancy. The support provided will attend to mental and physical health needs, substance misuse and alcohol dependency issues along with education and employment aspirations.

We are extremely excited to have recently appointed a Domestic Abuse Support Specialist (Karan Morgan-Jones) into the Homelessness Team funded by the new burdens allocation from MHCLG designed to help local authorities meet the new requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act. The new postholder will work across Community Culture and Wellbeing, Community Resilience and Housing and Property providing support, guidance and expertise to officers on cases involving domestic abuse. The postholder will also work closely with the Safeguarding Team developing a Domestic Abuse Strategy.

#### Norway House (Temporary Accommodation)

The team are currently making plans for this year's Halloween party, which we will be hosting for the children at Norway House at the end of the month. This will include food, music and spooky games.

Preparations are also well underway for Christmas at Norway House and we have already secured funding for:

- Visit from Santa and a grotto at Norway House on 2<sup>nd</sup> December
- 76 tickets for the Harlow Playhouse pantomime on 12<sup>th</sup> December, funded by Epping Upper Clacton Rugby Club
- A Christmas present for each child to the value of £25, funded by Epping Upper Clacton Rugby Club
- Christmas food hampers for each family, donated by Epping Forest Food Bank
- Chocolate selection boxes for all children being donated by Kelsey Taverner of EFDC, via her Just Giving page

#### Afghan Aid

Portfolio holder authorisation was obtained to offer 2 x family sized accommodations from our own Council stock for the ARAP (Afghan Resettlement Assistance Programme) scheme. Two properties have been identified and details sent to the Home Office via our liaison at Essex County Council who are coordinating both the accommodation and support offer for those Afghans eligible for assistance through the ARAP scheme. We are currently waiting for information on the families who have been matched to those accommodations.