

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Housing Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Whitbread

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing and Property Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Executive Summary

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

Housing Strategy

The Public Consultation opened on Monday 15th November 2021 for two of the Big 4 Housing Reviews

- The draft Allocations Scheme 2022-2027; and
- The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027

The week began with publishing both draft documents on the Housing Consultation page of the EFDC website.

This was followed by two very well attended and extremely successful professional stakeholder workshops on Wednesday 17th November 2021 to consider the in principal proposals.

The morning session focussed on The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and all who attended - including representatives from statutory services, housing related organisations, community and voluntary groups - were keen to be actively involved with the strategy and the associated delivery plan.

The afternoon session concentrated on the Allocations Scheme. Staff and partners were able to draw on their professional knowledge and experience to debate the benefits and mitigate risks associated with each of the recommended changes.

The discussions were captured and will be evaluated along with the outcome of the other planned events with Members of the Council, Town and Parish Councillors, resident groups and the online consultation which closes on 17 December 2021.

Dates for your Diary

Audience	Strategy/Scheme/Policy	Date	Time	Location
Members	Allocations Scheme (draft)	29 November 2021	7pm-8:30pm	Zoom
Town and Parish Cllrs	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (draft) & Allocations Scheme (draft)	2 December 2021	7pm-8:30pm	Zoom
Members	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (draft)	14 December 2021	7pm-8:30pm	Zoom
Portfolio Holder	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy & Allocations Scheme (outcome of consultation)	11 January 2022	3pm – 4:30pm	Microsoft Teams
Members	Overarching Housing Strategy	19 January 2022	7pm – 8:30pm	TBC
Portfolio Holder	Overarching Housing Strategy (outcome of consultation)	8 February 2022	TBC	Microsoft Teams
Members	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy & Allocations Policy (pre-scrutiny)	10 February 2022	7pm-8:30pm	TBC
Members	Overarching Housing Strategy (pre scrutiny)	22 February 2022	7pm-8:30pm	TBC

Homelessness

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

With the cold weather creeping in, we are carefully triggering our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in order to ensure that those rough sleeping, or at risk of, aren't doing so in dangerously low temperatures. Due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, there won't be many night shelters operating this year and therefore, our winter provision will be either within our own Council stock (most likely the pods at Norway House) or in the event that our own stock is full or is inappropriate for some reason, bed & breakfast, albeit we are not anticipating high numbers given the sustained work we have been doing over the last 18 months preventing and relieving rough sleeping across the District. We continue to work in collaboration with CHSS to verify and engage any new identified rough sleeping.

Additional Homelessness Prevention Grant

The Government recently announced an additional £65m Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) to local authorities and EFDC's allocation from this is £117,000, which can be used to fund interventions to prevent evictions and homelessness due to loss of a tenancy.

We are currently mapping out exactly how we intend to ensure this funding is made available readily to those that need it and the priority will be to upstream our prevention activity by identifying tenants with arrears at the earliest opportunity, negotiations with landlords and tenants and promoting contact with our service as early as possible.

Norway House (Temporary Accommodation)

Our Christmas plans are well underway at Norway House! The residents have the following festive events to look forward to:

2nd December, 4:30pm – Santa will be visiting our Christmas Grotto at Norway House, to meet all the children and hand out some treats. There will also be refreshments and Christmas music in the Dining Room until approx. 6pm. This event has been funded by Kelsey Taverner's fantastic fundraising efforts, via her Just Giving page.

7th December – All children will receive a brand-new Christmas jumper, in time for Christmas Jumper day. This has been kindly funded by St Mary's Church.

12th December – All families have been given tickets to the Robin Hood panto at the Harlow Playhouse, courtesy of Epping Upper Clacton Rugby Club. We will also be providing sweets to take along to the panto, which have been funded by the Befrienders Club at Voluntary Action Epping Forest.

14th December, 4pm – We will be visited again by Santa, this time driving through the grounds of Norway House on his sleigh. This event has been planned by Epping Rotary Club. We will also be providing food and hot chocolate for all attendees.

16th December – All residents will be receiving a Christmas food hamper, which has been kindly donated by Epping Forest Food Bank. Our Housing Apprentices will be handing these hampers out.

21st December – All children at Norway House will receive a Christmas present to the value of £25, funded by Epping Upper Clacton Rugby Club. Our Apprentices have already wrapped these presents and will be handing these out for us and spreading some Christmas cheer!

Our Senior Officer Sarah Smith has been working tirelessly to make this all happen for our residents.