

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2022
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 review of the 'Big 4' housing strategies and policies

On 1 March 2022 Stronger Communities Select Committee agreed the officer recommendations for the Allocations Scheme, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Tenancy Policy for the period 2022-2027.

On 7 March Cabinet approved the recommendations for the Allocations Scheme, the Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Tenancy Policy for the period 2022-2027 with one minor amendment to all three reports – that they shall be reviewed in the year leading up to 2027.

The Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 will take effect from September 2022 to allow for the Rehousing team to put the mechanisms in place to allow for implementation.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 will take effect in July 2022 to enable the Homelessness team to agree the details of the delivery plan with signatories to the strategy.

Stage 2 Consultation for the overarching Housing Strategy will commence in May 2022 and Members will receive an invite within the next 2 weeks for a briefing session during the consultation period.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Strategy team co-ordinated a response to the Regulator of Social Housing Consultation on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that it is proposing to introduce as part of the Tenants Charter for Social Housing. The team held a resident focus group and an exceptional meeting with the Tenant and Leaseholders Panel in conjunction with the Land and Estates Team Manager and the Resident Involvement Officer to ensure their views were incorporated into the response.

National Housing Hero Awards

The Housing Hero Awards are organised by Inside Housing as part of the Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference which will be held between 28-30 June 2022.

The team has submitted nominations for the following categories:

- Inspirational Leader of the Year: Deborah Fenton, Director of Housing and Property
- Best Company Health and Wellbeing Initiative: Bringing Housing Services and Community Culture and Wellbeing together
- Team of the Year: The collaborative team of Estate and Land Management and Culture and Community

The nominations are assessed and shortlisted by a panel of judges representing all parts of the housing sector. The winners will be announced at an award ceremony and featured in Inside Housing Magazine.

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation

Jennifer Gould is sponsoring a joint project between Community Safeguarding and the Homelessness team to achieve DAHA accreditation. This includes fulfilling 8 priority areas and standards within the legal framework of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

DAHA is a partnership between three agencies who are leaders in innovation to address domestic abuse within housing; **Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse, Peabody** and **Gentoo**. The Council's aim is to complete its action plan to achieve accreditation by 2024.

Homelessness

In December of last year, the Government announced the Protect and Vaccinate scheme which saw a further £28 million allocated to local authorities in England to build on the work throughout the pandemic. The aim of this funding is to support rough sleepers off the streets and drive the uptake of Covid-19 vaccinations within the rough sleeping community. EFDC have, to date, accommodated a total of 21 rough sleepers and are working to move those on into more settled accommodation. Together with our NHS colleagues and ECC, we have set up a drop-in vaccination clinic for this cohort, which is taking place on the morning of 29th March 2022, at St Johns Church in Epping.

We've recently welcomed a new Private Sector Lettings Officer into the team who joined us this month. We're very excited to continue developing a private sector lettings scheme and really strengthen our offer to all prospective landlords while increasing provision for our customers.

Rehousing Team

The team have welcomed new tenants into several of our new build sites so far this year, including Bewlay Close in Ongar, Aspen Close and Plane Close in Buckhurst Hill. We have a further 10 new build sites being handed over to us throughout the rest of the year, which is a fantastic achievement for a local authority to be building so many new properties in the current climate.

The team are also hard at work on our implementation plan for the new Housing Allocations Scheme, as mentioned by Janice earlier in the report.

Norway House

The staff at Norway House are currently planning 2 events for the residents to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and Ride London passing through the district. The children will be hard at work in the After-School club creating banners and flags that we can display outside Norway House when the Ride London event passes along Epping Road. We are also planning a 'street party' type event to celebrate the Jubilee.

We are currently at full capacity at Norway House and are trying to identify other potential accommodation examples, if for example we need to accommodate any families coming to us from Ukraine at short notice.