

16 JUNE 2021

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 16 June 2021

* Cllr Anne Corbridge (Chairman)

* Cllr Ann Sevier (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

* Kate Crisell
Jack Davies
* Andrew Gossage
Joshua Kidd

Councillors:

Ian Murray
* Neil Tungate
* Alex Wade
* Christine Ward

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Jill Cleary

Officers Attending:

Tim Davis, Kirsty Farmer, Richard Knott, Grainne O'Rourke, Sheryl Parry and Karen Wardle

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Davies, Kidd and Murray.

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 17 March (Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel) and 5 May 2021 be signed by the Chairman as correct records.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by members in connection with an agenda item.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

7 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PANEL

The Panel noted that it was responsible for the overview and scrutiny of the following Cabinet Portfolio Holder and their area of responsibility:

Housing and Homelessness Services (Portfolio Holder - Cllr Jill Cleary)

- a. Housing Strategy and Development
- b. Council House/Tenancy Management
- c. Housing Allocations
- d. Homelessness
- e. Housing Maintenance
- f. Private Sector Housing

8 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE AND PROVISIONAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2020/21

The Panel considered the Annual Performance and Provisional Budget Outturn report for 2020/21, which provided an overview of the performance and delivery of the Corporate Plan, Community Matters as well as setting out the provisional outturn results for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The report reflected on performance for 2020/21, highlighting the Council's response to Covid-19 and provided an overview of the performance for each portfolio area. This included an assessment of performance for each key service area in terms of the availability of staff, the impact on budget and overall service delivery impact. The Panel noted the performance of the Housing Services Portfolio.

The Panel acknowledged that over the last year, staff had faced considerable challenges as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The performance report demonstrated that services had continued to be provided in difficult circumstances which was testament to the hard work and dedication of staff. Members requested their thanks and appreciation be passed onto all members of staff in housing services.

Members noted that there had been a significant increase in neighbour complaints between March to August 2020, compared to the same period for 2019 and questioned the reasons for this and how officers had responded. It was considered that at the beginning of the pandemic, there had been a pulling together of the community, however as lockdown continued, with residents spending more time at home, tensions had arisen within communities which resulted in complaints to the Council. Staffing resources had been redirected to try to resolve the complaints from residents, defuse tensions and offer mediation. It had been a challenging time.

The investment in the Council's digital services and the ability for staff to work from home was a great benefit. It was questioned how residents had responded to digital services. It was noted that the emergency helplines had continued to be maintained at all times. Since the introduction of the new housing allocation policy in January 2020, the housing register had been available online and 50% of homelessness reports had been received online prior to covid. Digital interaction was therefore normal for a large proportion of housing services customers. The housing hub for reporting maintenance issues continued to be managed, whereby Council tenants could report issues online or on the phone. Face to face contact at information offices ceased during the first coronavirus lockdown, however, posters

had been displayed in the windows of the information offices to redirect customers to use the online services or to telephone the Council.

The Tenant Involvement Group had moved to online meetings, via MS Teams and been provided with tablets in order to facilitate this work. It was noted that the group met more frequently than they had done when meeting face to face.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Annual Performance Statement for 2020/21, including impact of Covid-19 on performance be noted;
- (b) That the provisional outturn on the General Fund revenue and capital budgets for 2020/21 be noted;
- (c) That the provisional outturn of the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21 be noted; and
- (d) That the hard work of officers in housing services to continue to deliver services in challenging times be acknowledged

9 EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Panel considered the proposed draft Empty Homes Strategy. The main aim of the strategy was to focus actions on returning privately owned empty properties to use, which had been vacant for a minimum of two years. Three strategic priorities had been identified in the strategy. Two priorities were to work pro-actively to identify empty properties and to provide support and advice to homeowners to bring the properties back into use. The third priority was to take enforcement action using legislative powers, should all prior attempts to return properties back to use fail.

It was noted that there were in the region of 193 empty homes which had been vacant for two or more years based on Council Tax records. Empty Homes in the District currently had a premium of 150% applied to them when vacant for more than five years. Premiums were due to be reviewed by a Task and Finish Group during 2021 and the proposed draft strategic actions and outcomes would feed into this group as the premiums were reviewed.

There were no financial implications of the draft Strategy at this stage, however, should any enforcement action be taken there would be legal costs and possible works in default costs if the Council had to carry out works. This would only be used as a last resort.

Following the adoption of the proposed Strategy, annual monitoring reports would be presented to the Panel and the Council Tax Task and Finish Group.

The Panel welcomed the draft Strategy and commented it had been presented in a clear, easy to read format. Members noted that there were no particular geographical areas of the District which had a higher concentration of empty homes.

In response to a member question, it was noted that all Town and Parish Councils would be notified of the Strategy following adoption.

It was recognised that dealing with empty homes was often a sensitive subject and that each case would be looked at on its own merits. The proposed draft policy

would enable the Council to address empty homes and the housing need for those in the District.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Empty Homes Strategy be supported.

10 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation on homelessness which is attached to the minutes as an Appendix.

239 placements had been made into Emergency Accommodation since March 2020. 46 households were currently living in external emergency accommodation, which was 10 less (after new cases had been taken into account) than previously reported at the last Panel meeting in March. The majority of these households had accommodation lined up for them to move in to, which included the 9 families moving into the Council's private sector leased accommodation. Officers had been successful in moving households on within 56 days of becoming homeless with 132 applicants securing accommodation for 6 or 12 months between May 2020-May 2021.

The housing team had also been successful in preventing homelessness for 255 households over the last year. This had been carried out by securing accommodation in the private rented sector, assisting with deposits or rent in advance, helping with debt management or working with the landlords to resolve any problems. Members noted that the ban on evictions from accommodation had ended and that contact from tenants threatened with homelessness had continued throughout the pandemic enabling the Council's homelessness Prevention Officers to find alternative accommodation in order to avoid a rise in the number of people presenting themselves to the Council as homeless.

The Tourlands scheme for rough sleepers had accommodated 3 rough sleepers to date. The first resident was expected to move into Blease Court, Lymington on Friday and would be assisted with supporter workers.

The Council had been successful in securing a £300,000 bid to support rough sleepers. This would continue to fund the housing support team for a further year, £33,000 was to help to move on rough sleepers, as well as new funding to appoint a mental health nurse and a new Rough Sleeper Prevention Worker. Transformation work across Hampshire continued to bring health and housing together, working with GP's and mental health services.

Members noted the statistics within the presentation of those on the housing register and lettings figures. Council properties had been made available to people within all four housing bands.

In response to a member question about the next meeting of the Multi-Agency Forum, it was noted that this Forum and a new Landlord Forum was anticipated to be held face to face in the Autumn following the relaxation of restrictions. The Multi-Agency Forum had previously received good attendance and the benefits of meeting face to face were recognised, enabling free interaction. The new Landlord Forum would focus on the work identified in the various strategies which had been adopted by the Council to improve the relationship with landlords and lettings agents, to educate and ensure they were aware of their responsibilities. It was

anticipated that the Council would promote a campaign, "Call before you serve", which would encourage landlords to contact the Council prior to serving any notice to evict their tenants.

Members noted that there had been an increase in the number of housing register applications for housing. It was acknowledged that following the change to the housing allocation policy in January 2020, the number on the register had significantly reduced initially and this rise in number was not unexpected. Officers would continue to work with the private rented sector to find affordable housing for residents as well as continue to seek to provide further affordable housing through the Housing Strategy.

In response to a member question regarding working with neighbouring authorities, it was noted that officers had been working with colleagues at Test Valley, Southampton City Council as well as NHS Primary Care to share knowledge and local expertise, enabling a greater understanding on the flow of rough sleepers and their needs. Members noted that the coronavirus pandemic had positively contributed to developing and enhancing relationships with other authorities.

11 HOUSING STRATEGY / HRA PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation providing an update on the Housing Strategy and property development. The presentation is attached to these minutes as an Appendix.

The Council's first two Shared Ownership properties in Mulberry Close, Blackfield had been exchanged and completion was expected shortly. Photos of the recently completed Blease Court scheme in Lymington were shown to the Panel, which provided 7 x 1 bedroom self-contained flats with shared separate laundry facilities. A planning application for housing in Moore Close, New Milton had been submitted and support had been expressed by the National Park Authority for a rural exception site in Netley Marsh.

The current development programme of affordable housing was noted by the Panel, which identified completed schemes, those in contract, predicted with delivery expectations and those in the future programme with assumptions. Work would continue to seek opportunities for further affordable homes.

A brief outline of the Government's First Homes scheme was provided to members. The majority of First Homes would be provided as a planning requirement and further detailed guidance was awaited. It was expected that every development above the affordable housing threshold would have to provide 25% of the affordable housing as First Homes. The scheme would be available for first time buyers only, buying with a mortgage and for households earning less than £80,000 outside of London. Local authorities would be able to set local connection restrictions. First Homes was expected to have a significant impact on the number of Shared Ownership homes provided through Section 106 agreements. Further information would be presented to the Panel when it was available on this new Government scheme.

12 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services reported that the Panel had heard through the discussions at the meeting about the work of the

housing and homelessness services. The housing department had not stood still despite the coronavirus pandemic. The Annual Performance report demonstrated the hard work and commitment of officers who had delivered services at a challenging time. She believed that the future was bright and wanted to continue the housing journey to improve the lives of residents in the District.

13 WORK PROGRAMME**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be noted.

CHAIRMAN

Homelessness Update

Richard Knott

Service Manager – Housing Options, Rents, Support and Private
Sector Housing

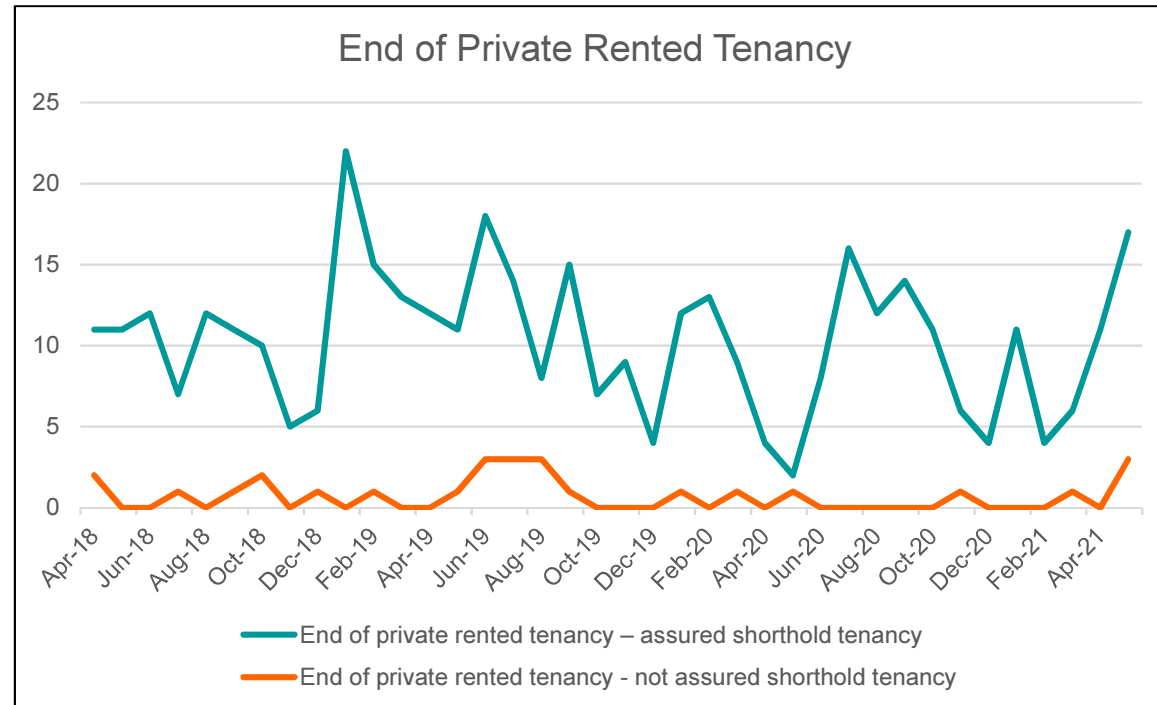
- 239 placements since March 2020
- 46 (-10) households currently in external provider Emergency Accommodation (EA)
 - 9 families
 - 2 couples
 - 35 Single people
 - 13 Females
 - 22 males
 - Of which 5 under 25s
- Move on within 56 days of becoming homeless

Reason Relief Duty ended	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Total
Secured accommodation for 12 months	0	3	2	0	2	1	0	0	1	5	0	3	9	26
Secured accommodation for 6 months	5	11	4	4	11	8	13	7	10	12	5	12	4	106
														132

Statistics - Positive Outcomes and PRS

Reason Prevention Duty Ended	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Total
Secured alternative accommodation for 12 or more months	9	11	8	6	9	5	4	5	4	3	8	5	1	78
Secured alternative accommodation for 6 months	12	15	13	15	16	14	12	10	16	9	8	6	0	146
Secured existing accommodation for 12 or more months	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	8
Secured existing accommodation for 6 months	1	7	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	1	0	0	23
														255

Monthly approaches due to end of PRS tenancy



Updates

- Tourlands now open – 3 residents
- First resident in Blease court on Friday
- 2 new Support Workers for the Tourlands RS project commenced – 3 year funding
- Replacement Homelessness Prevention Officer commenced
- Bid for funding for Rough Sleeper Initiative Year 4 successful - £298,850
 - Follow on funding for Housing Support Team – 1 year
 - £33,000 to help RSs move on
 - New MH Nurse in partnership with MH Services
 - New Rough Sleeper Prevention Worker
- £130,000 in Post Covid Accommodation funding
- Forthcoming RSAP Capital bid
- Continue to feed in to transformational work across Hampshire
 - Mental Health – GP/Wellbeing
 - Mental Health Strategic transformation
 - Discharge protocols

Housing Register

Band	March 2021	June 2021	%
1	17	20	1.5
2	226	245	18.2
3	369	413	30.6
4	655	672	49.8
Total	1,267	1,350	

Bedroom need	Count of Applicants	%
1 bedroom	578	42.3
2 bedroom	464	34.4
3 bedroom	250	18.5
4 or more bedrooms	58	4.3
Grand Total	1350	

Area of First choice	Count of Applicants	%
Totton	225	17
Lymington	214	16
New Milton	160	12
Hythe (+1)	157	12
Ringwood (-1)	146	11
Calmore	70	5
Dibden and Dibden Purlieu	60	4
Holbury and Hardley	54	4
Fordingbridge	50	4
Ashley (+1)	38	3
Blackfield and Langley(-1)	38	3
None of these (+2)	35	3
Pennington	33	2
Marchwood (-2)	32	2
Eling	19	1
Walkford	10	1
Fawley	6	0
Calshot	3	0
Grand Total	1350	100

Lettings

Band	March 2021	June 2021	%
1	20	42	9.1
2	128	*216	46.9
3	90	126	27.3
4	56	77	16.7
Grand Total	294	461	

Area	% of lettings
Ringwood	17.19%
Hythe	13.75%
New Milton	13.75%
Totton	12.89%
Pennington	8.31%
Fordingbridge	6.88%
Ashley	5.73%
Lymington	5.44%
Calmore	4.58%
Blackfield and Langley	4.01%
Dibden and Dibden Purlieu	2.58%
Holbury and Hardley	2.01%
Eling	0.86%
Marchwood	0.86%
Calshot	0.57%
Fawley	0.57%
Grand Total	100.00%



*154 Full Duty Homeless cases moved on from TA

% of properties by Bedroom	%
1	42.7
2	38.4
3	17.2
4	1.8
Grand Total	

- Questions?

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Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel June 2021

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Housing Strategy and Development Update

- *Latest headlines and Blease Court*
- *Current programme*
- *“First Homes”*



Minute Item 11

- **Mulberry Close: First Shared Ownership homes sold and exchanged**



- **Blease Court, Lymington: Ready for occupation**

- 7 x 1 bedroom self-contained flatlets plus office and small laundry
- Acquired from Peabody and had been empty for over 2 years
- Very tired condition.
- Amalgam of older buildings plus modern alterations and extensions
- Challenging site (Jewsons and parking sold off)
- Fully refurbished by Stepnell (Building Contractor Framework)
- Main contract completed in March but additional works required prior to occupation

- **Blease Court: BEFORE!**



- **Blease Court**



- **Blease Court:**

20



- **Blease Court:**



- **Blease Court:**

22



- **Blease Court:**



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**

29



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**

30



- **Blease Court: Ready for occupation**



Other headlines:

June 2021

- **Moore Close, New Milton: Planning Application submitted**
- **Awaiting outcomes on two bids**
- **Architect selected for 37/39 Salisbury Road, Totton (finalising appointment)**
- **Support for proposed rural exception scheme at Netley Marsh**
- **Evaluating building contract tenders for Gorse Close**
 - ❑ Bid submitted to Homes England
- **Preparing to tender Ladycross, Hythe**
- **Making progress on the purchase of two sites**
- **Negotiating building contract for 110 Christchurch Road, Ringwood**

Current Development Programme

Affordable housing development programme as at 15th June 2021

		Affordable housing completions							
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Completed		57	90	64					
In Contract (Full delivery expected)									
Buy-Back	GN				15				
Acquisition and refurb and reversions (2)	TA/GN				8				
Sub total					23				
Predicted with delivery expectations (planning in place, no planning required or high planning confidence)									
Buy-Back	GN					15	15	15	15
New Build (planning-led, NFDC land, other land, off the shelf) (7)	GN/TA					47	37		
Property acquisition and works (1)	TA				7				
NFDC conversion works (3)						7			
Sub total					7	69	52	15	15
Future programme assumptions and identified sites									
New Build (planning-led, NFDC land, other land, off the shelf) (7)	GN/RSAP				7	29	65		
NFDC conversion works (4)							7		
Sub total					7	29	72		

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	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total	57	90	64	37	98	124	15	15
						470	485	500

	Client group	Existing Housing Stock							
		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Long Term Voids (2)	GN/TA			7					

“FIRST HOMES”



- **Priority for Government and Ministry of Housing. Majority will be delivered as a Planning requirement**

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- **Awaiting the detailed guidance but what we know so far:**
 - Every development above the affordable housing threshold will have to provide 25% of the affordable housing as First Homes
 - Must be sold with a minimum discount to open market value of 30% and this discount will always be applied in perpetuity
 - When people resell they will have to apply the same percentage of discount
 - In higher value areas there will be scope for levels of discount up to 50%
 - The scheme will be for First Time Buyers exclusively, buying with a mortgage
 - Will be restricted to households earning less than £80,000 outside London
 - FTBs will have to be buying with a mortgage
 - Homes will have to be a main residence and will be restrictions on renting
 - A price cap will apply to the initial sale of a First Home (£250,000 in the New Forest)
 - Local Authorities will be able to set local connection restrictions but with limitations
 - Special arrangements will apply if first time buyers aren't found for First Homes

- Vast majority of First Homes will be delivered as a Planning requirement
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 - A price cap will apply to the initial sale of a First Home (£250,000 in the New Forest)
 - Local Authorities will be able to set local connection restrictions but with limitations
 - Special arrangements will apply if first time buyers aren't found for First Homes
- **Local policy consequences?**
 - Not yet evaluated but the First Homes requirement is likely to have a significant impact on how many shared-ownership homes come forward through S106 schemes in the future. NFDC Planning (with Strategic Housing support) will need to carefully consider options.



Any questions?

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