

18 JANUARY 2023

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, 18 January 2023

- * Cllr Anne Corbridge (Chairman)
- * Cllr Ann Sevier (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Kate Crisell
* Sean Cullen
* Philip Dowd
Andrew Gossage

Councillors:

* Joshua Kidd
* Neil Tungate
* Alex Wade
* Christine Ward

*Present

In attendance:

Councillors:

Edward Heron

Councillors:

Beverley Thorne

Officers Attending:

Tim Davis, Kevin Green, Richard Knott, Grainne O'Rourke, Ritchie Thomson and Karen Wardle

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Crisell and Gossage.

15 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2022 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

17 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No issues were raised in the public participation period.

18 HOUSING SERVICES RESOURCES 23/24 - ARISING FROM THE NEW SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION CHANGES

The Panel considered the report setting out the housing services resources which would be required to address the requirements arising from the new Social Housing Regulation Bill. 22 new Tenant Satisfaction Measures would be introduced in April 2023. 10 of these measures related to the collection of data on the Council's response to repairs, the safety and quality of housing, complaints and anti-social behaviour. The other 12 related to tenants' views on satisfaction with services which would be obtained via an annual survey.

The tenant satisfaction measures were welcomed by the Panel, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour which was challenging to address. It was noted that an additional net cost of £328,000 would be required in relation to staff resources to deliver the new requirements.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey methods would be developed by officers alongside an external agency, which may include online, phone calls, face to face methods of contact. It was recognised that the Council was required to return a minimum sample of 538 responses to be compliant. The intention, however, was to encourage as much feedback and engagement as possible. Further information on the surveys would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel as well to the Tenant Involvement Group for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the resources the Housing Service has requested as part of the 23/24 HRA budget to deal with the changes and improvements required under the Social Housing Regulation Bill, the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures regime and the new Social Housing Residents' Charter be noted.

19 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND THE HOUSING PUBLIC SECTOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMME FOR 2023/24

The Panel considered the HRA budget and the housing public sector capital expenditure programme for 2023/24.

The pressures the Council was facing as a Housing Authority were detailed in the report and further outlined at the meeting, which included, the costs of providing services to tenants, ensuring buildings were safe and hazard free, the requirement to deliver more energy efficient homes as well as to provide more affordable homes.

The HRA budget proposed increased expenditure of £3.609 million, exceeding the anticipated increased income of £2.328 million, thereby reducing the annual amount available to repay principal borrowing by £1.331 million. Members noted that a loan of £4.1 million was to be repaid during 2023/24 and this would be replaced by a potential new borrowing commitment of £1.331 million, which would put greater pressure on the HRA in future years. Members noted the draft HRA 30 year business plan which had been attached as Appendix 4 of the report.

The report proposed a rent increase of 7% from 3 April 2023, which was in line with the Government's revised cap on rents for 23/24. This was considered to be the right balance in order to ensure that the Council could continue to provide high

quality services as well as carry out the maintenance and repairs to the housing stock.

It was questioned how many tenants would be directly affected by the increase in social rent. Due to them being in receipt of housing benefit and / or Universal Credit, it was acknowledged that the majority of the Council tenants, 73%, would be largely protected from the proposed increase.

The proposed increase of 13% in garage rents was noted. It was acknowledged that this increase was necessary in order to carry out maintenance programmes to garages. Garage rents had not been increased in the last 2 years. Officers felt that anyone renting a garage, despite this proposed increase was still being offered good value for money. A Garage Asset Strategy was proposed to be developed, taking a more strategic approach to the management of garages and would consider the income and expenditure impacts on garages.

A member of the Panel questioned the position on void properties. It was noted that on average 30-35 properties were vacant at any one time. Each property would require a maintenance inspection and any repairs prior to being relet. A small number of properties had been vacant in the longer term due to structural issues and additional funding had been proposed to reduce the void time and to bring properties back for rent sooner.

The Panel accepted that the recommendations in the report sought to maximise HRA income and that this was necessary given the current financial pressures on the HRA.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the following recommendations to Cabinet in relation to the HRA budget and housing public sector capital expenditure programme for 2023/24:

1. That the HRA budget, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report be agreed;
2. That from 03 April 2023, an increase in rents of 7.0% from the 2022/23 weekly rent level, in accordance with Government guidelines, be agreed;
3. That from 03 April 2023, an increase in garage rents of 13% from the 2022/23 weekly rent level be agreed;
4. That from 03 April 2023, an increase in shared ownership property rents of 7% from the 2022/23 weekly rent level, varied from the allowed RPI +1% increase of 13.1%, in accordance with Government requests of the Housing Sector, be agreed;
5. That from 03 April 2023 a further uplift in domestic energy service charges, up to a maximum of 25% and an increase of up to 7% in communal service charges, in line with the annual rent increase, ahead of a wider review and consultation later in the year, be agreed; and
6. That a Housing Capital Programme to 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 4, be agreed.

20 HOUSING SERVICES RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY

The Panel considered the proposed rent setting and service charge policy.

The proposed policy largely reflected National Government Policy. Changes had been proposed in relation to the reletting of social rent dwellings, to apply formula rent and rent flexibility, where applicable. It was noted that this would be CPI plus 1% (the formula rent) and would only be applied when reletting social properties. Rent flexibility could be applied in particular circumstances where the energy efficiency of a property had been improved or received significant expenditure.

It was also proposed that there be an increase in domestic energy charges from 2023/24. The Council was currently under recovering the costs incurred in providing tenants with energy and / or communal heating and lighting. It was proposed that an uplift of up to 25% from April 2023, and an uplift of up to 7% for communal services be introduced. This would help to reduce the gap between charges incurred by the HRA account and that charged to tenants. A wider review would be undertaken later in 2023/24 in order to ensure there was a fair and transparent charging mechanism in place for all properties liable for a service charge. Tenants would therefore be able to see the charges specific to their property and be able to hold the Council, as landlord to account. Some tenants would see service charges increase / decrease, and some would have them introduced for the first time.

It was noted that each year 250-300 properties were relet and any tenant moving into these properties would be charged the formula rent. With regard to flexible rent, it was noted that the 5% uplift could only be charged in specific circumstances and that this would be reviewed. The tenant would benefit from the improvements which had been made to the property in terms of energy efficiency and therefore savings would be made on the cost of utilities. It was necessary to generate more HRA income, particularly where investment had been made in properties which would benefit tenants. It was highlighted to the Panel that the Council had a Tenancy Support Worker who worked with tenants and would provide support to those in need.

Members noted that the Tenant Involvement Group had been largely supportive of the proposed recommendations. The importance of recovering costs in a managed way was acknowledged.

The Panel recognised that the HRA was under strain and that income needed to be generated, which could enable the Council to maintain and further invest in properties.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations to Cabinet be noted:

1. The proposed rent setting and service charge policy (Appendix 1) in the context of government rent setting policy, HRA housing revenue account budget and housing public sector capital expenditure programme 2023/24;
2. The proposed changes to current rent setting processes to apply formula rent to the reletting of social rent dwellings and rent flexibility where applicable; and

3. The further proposed increase to domestic energy charges of up to 25%, and up to a 7% uplift of the charges for communal services received, to match the proposed increase in the basic rent for 23/24 from 3rd April 2023.

21 MOBILITY SCOOTER POLICY FOR HOUSING (LANDLORD SERVICES)

The Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered the proposed new Policy on Mobility Scooters for Housing (Landlord Services).

The Policy proposed to introduce a registration scheme whereby residents living in Council owned accommodation would apply to the District Council to store a scooter. The application would then be considered taking into account the safe storage of the scooter, in particular ensuring that the scooter did not pose any fire safety risks.

The Policy had been presented and considered by the Tenant Involvement Group on two occasions. Feedback from the first meeting had been mixed and therefore officers had held a further session to further explain the purpose of the policy. The Tenant Involvement Group, following this additional meeting with officers had broadly supported the policy but had requested that some of the wording be reviewed.

A member questioned whether there would be enough storage capacity within the extra care and age restricted housing blocks for mobility scooters. It was recognised that over 100 spaces had been identified within the policy, but it was possible that demand might exceed capacity. Should this occur, the provision of additional capacity would be considered. A waiting list would also be operated which would identify those housing blocks with a high demand.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Mobility Scooter for Housing (Landlord Services) Policy be supported.

22 HOUSING STRATEGY / HRA PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION UPDATE

The Panel received an update on the HRA development and acquisition. The presentation is attached to the minutes of the meeting as an Appendix.

Since June 2022, the Council had delivered the following accommodation:

- Gorse Close, New Milton: 3 structurally unsound houses had been demolished and 6 flats had been built for social rent. The development had been completed in October 2022. The scheme had received Homes England grant funding and been built to enhanced environmental standards with air source heat pumps. Two electric vehicle charging points had also been provided.
- Pentagon Court, Fawley: Planning permission had been sought to provide two additional rooms for temporary accommodation. This had been completed and was currently occupied.
- Rumbridge Street, Totton: Seven 1 bedroom flats and a commercial unit had been completed and occupation had commenced.

The following schemes were under construction:

- Ladycross, Hythe: This was under the advanced stage of construction to provide 6 houses.
- Former Testwood Club, Totton: Work had been progressing on site for 12 flats to be constructed to the Future Homes Standard. Completion was expected Autumn 2023. An energy expert had been appointed to ensure there was no performance gap.
- Burgate Acres, Fordingbridge: 14 homes had been secured for affordable housing and three Shared Ownership, funded by Homes England. Completion was expected October 2023-May 2024.
- Moore Close, New Milton: Progress was being made. A bid would be submitted to Homes England for funding towards 16 new homes.
- Hythe Medical Centre: This site had been considered by the Planning Committee and resolved to approve the scheme for 22 homes (7 houses and 15 flats). The land purchase had yet to be completed.
- 37-39 Salisbury Road, Totton: A pre-planning consultation exercise was being undertaken for 20 1 and 2 bed flats.

The Panel noted that the larger projects had been progressing. It was necessary to achieve the best value. The difficulties of finding suitable land for development was acknowledged, particularly with rising costs. Officers were also looking to provide temporary accommodation for families as the demand had increased across the District.

The current housing development programme to deliver more affordable housing was noted. To date 292 properties had either been completed or had a high certainty of being completed, a further 125 properties were in a firm pipeline of development. 204 properties had been identified as possible future opportunities by April 2026.

Members raised the issue of empty homes and bringing them back into occupation. It was acknowledged that these were usually only single units and therefore would not deliver the scale of accommodation which was required as part of the Housing Development Programme. (Having checked with Revenues and Benefits it can be confirmed there were currently 178 long-term empty homes in the District out of a total of 82,857 council tax banded properties). Officers within the Private Sector Housing Team had been working with property owners to try and bring them back into use.

23 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

The Panel received an update on Homelessness. The presentation has been attached to these minutes as an Appendix.

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme: This had seen 350 guests with 167 sponsors. To date, 16 households had been accommodated into the Private Rented Sector. 3 households had moved into temporary accommodation for a short period of time. 65 six month home visits had been completed which were necessary to carry out safeguarding checks as well as to try and prevent homelessness. A number of households had returned to the Ukraine.

The Government had extended the scheme for a further 12 months. Those households who had hosted Ukrainian guests for 12 months would receive a payment increase to £500 per month.

Homelessness: A 3 year settlement (2022-2025) of £730,000 had been awarded to the Council for the new Rough Sleeper Initiative. This included the funding of bespoke accommodation solutions for Rough Sleepers, mental health support, employment services and counselling.

Two year funding of £150,000 had been awarded for accommodation for ex-offenders to secure 24 tenancies in the Private Rented Sector. This funding also enabled a support worker to be employed.

The DLUCH Rough Sleeper Advisor had visited the District on 9 November. As part of the visit the advisor had met ex-rough sleepers in accommodation. The feedback received had been positive and a further visit was expected on 22 February 2023.

New burdens funding had been made available in relation to the Domestic Abuse Act. The District Council had been working with HCC and other Districts. Work was also being carried out with the Community Safety team to draft a Needs Assessment and a Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The Local Accommodation Housing Fund (LAHF) was available to help to provide longer term accommodation for arrivals on the Afghan and Ukraine schemes. It also aimed to mitigate expected increased pressure on homelessness and housing resources.

The Panel noted that a report had been presented to Cabinet in November 2022 which approved additional funding to deal with the increase in homelessness. It was explained that as part of this, more work would be carried out to prevent homelessness occurring. It was recognised that as of 18 January, there was 60 households in temporary accommodation which had reduced from 94 in June 2022.

The statistics of those on the Housing Register and the demand for properties with 1-4 bedrooms was noted (see slide 7 of the presentation attached to these minutes).

In response to a question about the number of homeless cases officers had, which had been raised as an issue by the DLUCH Homelessness Advisor, it was noted that the number had decreased from 90 cases at the most extreme, to roughly 40 cases each. Further work would be carried out to continue to reduce this to around 35 which had been the maximum number recommended by DLUCH.

24 PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT AND PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness Services reported that this was a new portfolio to him. He recognised the challenges that housing services was facing, particularly with an increase in families presenting themselves as homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and the increased demand for temporary accommodation.

He urged members when speaking to local residents at risk of becoming homeless to contact the District Council at the earliest opportunity. It was noted that whilst the Council might not be able to provide a solution, they would be able to advise residents and provide information which could help to alleviate stress and any feelings of helplessness.

A member of the Panel raised concerns about the provision of suitable temporary accommodation. In response, the Portfolio Holder recognised the pressures of providing temporary accommodation. Officers reported that risk assessments were carried out prior to placing people in any accommodation to ensure the safety of tenants.

25 DATES OF MEETINGS 2023/24**RESOLVED:**

That the following meeting dates be approved:

21 June 2023
20 September 2023
17 January 2024
20 March 2024

26 WORK PROGRAMME**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be noted.

CHAIRMAN

Housing and Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel January 2023

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Housing Strategy and Development Update



Minute Item 22

Gorse Close, New Milton

- 3 structurally unsound houses



Gorse Close, New Milton

- 6 flats now complete
- Homes England grant
- Air source heat pumps & EVCPs



Pentagon Court, Fawley

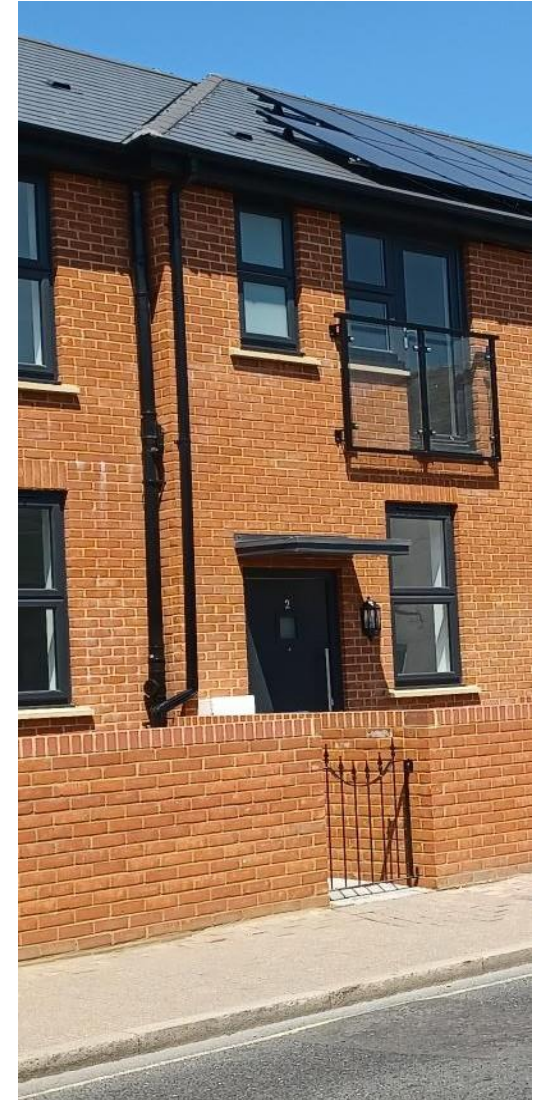
- Two additional Temporary Accommodation rooms

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Rumbridge Street, Totton

- 7 x 1 bedroom flats and commercial
- Complete and occupied



Ladycross, Hythe

- Advanced stage construction
- 6 x houses



14



Testwood Club, Totton

- F E Chase Building Contractor
- Site cleared. Ground works underway
- 12 flats for completion Autumn 2023



Burgate Acres, Fordingbridge

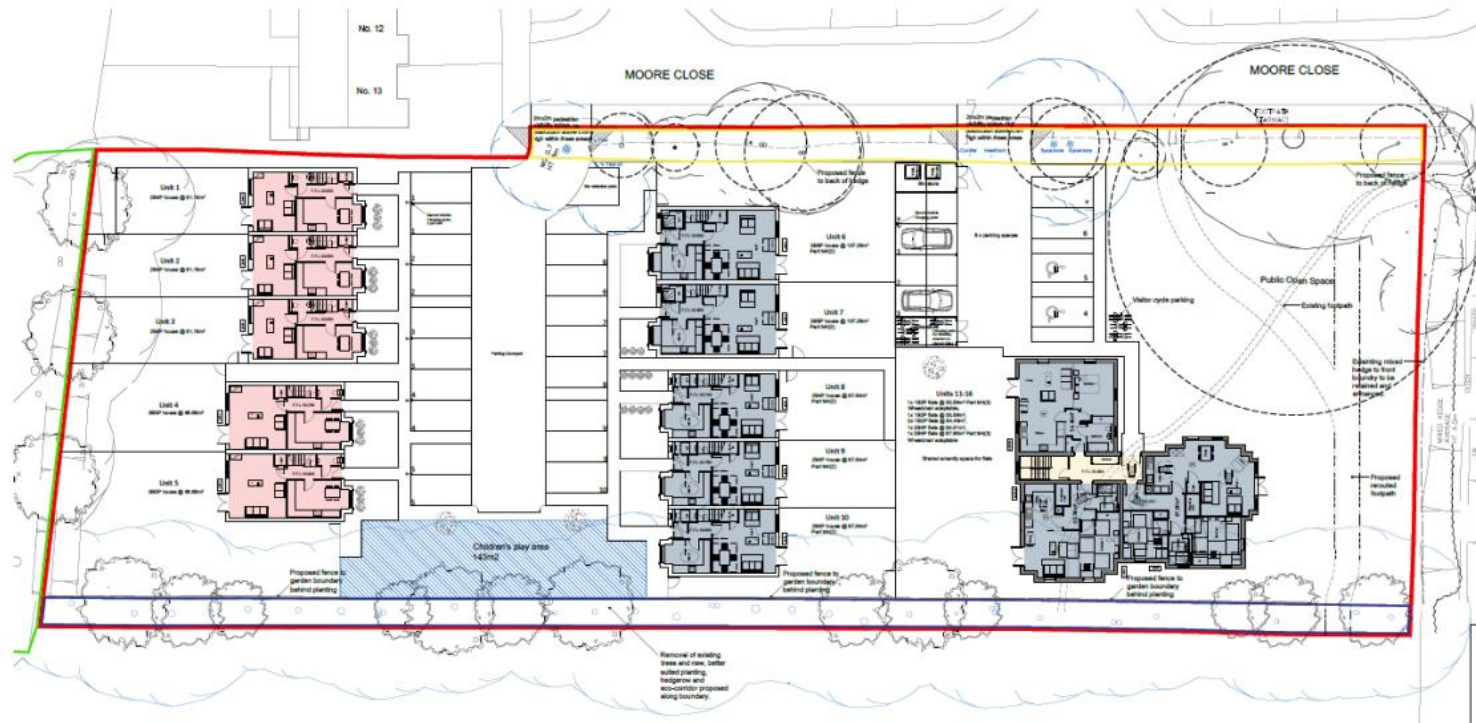
- Metis Homes
- 14 x S106 element + 3 additional shared ownership
- Homes England funding
- Due to complete from October 2023 to May 2024



Moore Close, New Milton

- Delayed due to additional costs and cost uncertainty
- Undertaking further detailed design to reduce risks
- Aiming to tender building contract by end of February
- Homes England funding essential for all 16 homes

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Hythe Medical Centre

- Planning Committee resolution to approve
- 22 homes (7 houses and 15 flats)
- Not yet completed land purchase
- Advancing detailed design

18



37/39 Salisbury Road, Totton

- Pre-Planning consultation undertaken
- Planning application submitted
- 20 x 1 and 2 bedroom flats proposed

19



37/39 Salisbury Road, Totton

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- Planning application submitted
- 20 x 1 and 2 bedroom flats proposed



20



Current priorities

- Moving the larger projects forward and getting on site:
 - Moore Close
 - Hythe Medical Centre
 - 37/39 Salisbury Road

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 - Moore Close
 - Hythe Medical Centre
 - 37/39 Salisbury Road
- Identifying and delivering projects for family Temporary Accommodation
- Building the pipeline
 - Scarcity of land and viable land
 - Limited new-build developments underway
 - Addressing costs (materials, labour, energy-efficiency measures, nitrates & mitigation)
 - Not driving-up affordable housing values

Current priorities

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 - Moore Close
 - Hythe Medical Centre
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 - Scarcity of land and viable land
 - Limited new-build developments underway
 - Addressing costs (materials, labour, energy-efficiency measures, nitrates & mitigation)
 - Not driving-up affordable housing values
- Maximising Homes England grant funding
- Delivering other refurbishment and modernisation projects

Current Development Programme

Affordable housing development programme as at 16th January 2023

	Affordable housing completions							
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Completed	57	90	64	24				
In Contract (Full delivery expected)								
New Build (planning-led, NFDC land, other land, off the shelf) (4)					12	28	1	
Property acquisitions and works (1)					7			
New Build Temporary Accommodation (2)					9			
Sub total					28	28	1	
Predicted with delivery expectations (planning in place, no planning required or high planning confidence)								
Buy-Back					15	15	15	15
New Build (planning-led, NFDC land, other land, off the shelf) (4)							58	
Property acquisitions 'off the shelf'					7			
Sub total					22	15	73	15
Future programme assumptions and identified sites								
New Build (planning-led, NFDC land, other land, off the shelf) (9)							90	96
NFDC conversion works (8)							4	14
Sub total							94	110

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total	57	90	64	24	50	43	168	125
						328	496	621

Completed or certain = 292

'Firm' pipeline = 125

Identified future opportunities = 204 (potential by April 2026)

Any questions?

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Housing & Homelessness Overview and Scrutiny Panel

18 January 2023

Homelessness Update

18 January 2023

Richard Knott

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

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

- **Current Numbers**

- Visa Applications - 223 Sponsors, 456 guests
- Arrivals – 167 Sponsors, 350 guests
- 16 households accommodated in the PRS
- 65 6-month home visits completed
- Several households returned to Ukraine

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- **Emerging Homelessness situation**

- 3 households accommodated in Temporary accommodation but only for a short period

- **Scheme Updates**

- Payments to hosts extended for another 12 months
- Where Ukrainian household has been with hosts for 12 months the payment increases to £500pm
- We are working with Hampshire to increase funding to all hosts to £500
- Personal payment fund available to support transport, IT etc.



Homelessness Updates

New Rough Sleeper Initiative funding round 4 2022-25

- 3 year settlement notified July 2022 - £730,000
 - Funding for bespoke accommodation solutions for Rough Sleepers
 - Employment Services
 - Counselling
 - Winter funding
 - Continuation of MH Practitioner and Support Team
 - Ends March 2025

Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO)

- 2 year funding - £150,000
- 24 tenancies in the PRS
- 1 Support Worker

DLUCH Rough Sleeper Advisor visit 9 November 2022

- Met with support worker
- Met ex-rough sleepers in accommodation
- Positive feedback - Next visit in February

Homelessness Updates

Social Housing Accommodation Programme (SHAP)

- Requested DLUCH/Homes England lead with RPs in partnership with NFDC
 - Meeting to be held in March TBC

Domestic Abuse Act New Burdens Funding

- 2 years of additional funding
- Working with HCC and other Districts
 - Working internally with Community Safety
 - Proposal to produce a Needs Assessment and Council Domestic Abuse Strategy

The Local Authority Housing Fund

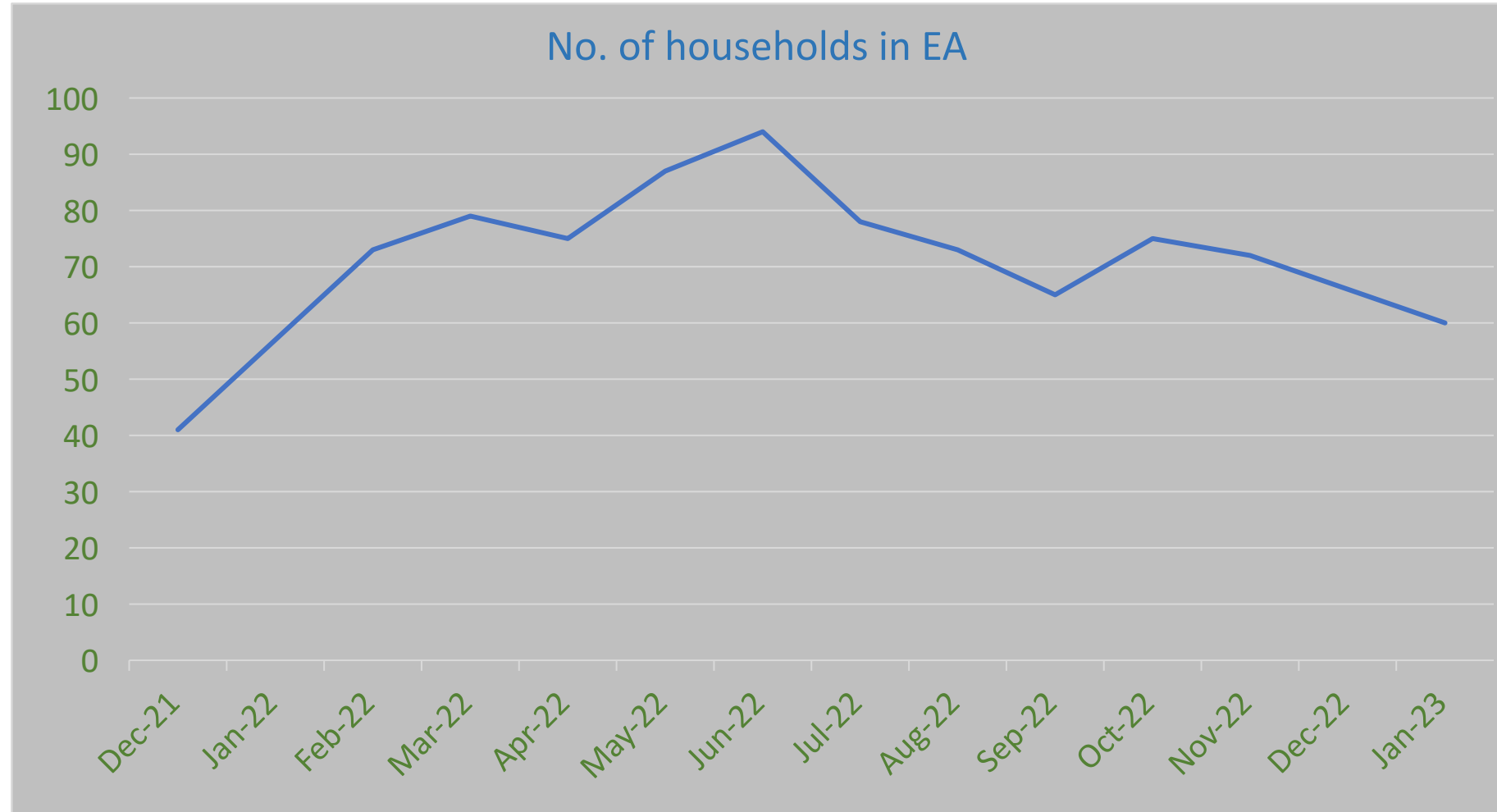
- Ensure arrivals on Afghan and Ukraine schemes are provided with sufficient longer-term accommodation
- Mitigate the expected increased pressures on local authority homelessness and housing resources
- Reduce emergency, temporary and bridging accommodation costs
- Create a legacy of a new permanent supply of accommodation to help address local housing and homelessness pressures.

Homelessness Updates

Emergency Accommodation as at 17/01/23

- 30 families – (48 in June 2022)
- 30 Singles (46 in June 2022)
- 23 Nominations to TA and housing register for the above in place

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Homelessness Updates

Current Trends

- Recognition of dedication of staff to improving situation
- Reduction in TA placements and expenditure despite consistent level of approaches
- Increased staff levels increasing capacity to:
 - reduce caseloads
 - Allow additional time to triage cases and prevent homelessness
 - allow dedicated time to support move on from TA
 - Increase numbers of home visits to family and friend evictions
- Increased access to PRS
 - Building additional relationships with Landlords
 - Additional finances made available to secure housing
- Upturn in Social Housing offers
- DLUCH Homelessness Advisor happy with progress

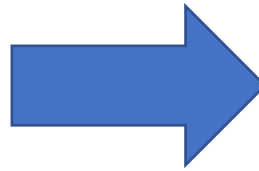
Rough Sleepers

- 3 current rough sleepers –
 - Last of complex cohort
 - 2 with offers in place, 1 refuses accommodation
- 3 new rough sleepers accommodated
- Tourlands House currently full
- Rumbridge Street rough sleeper building occupied in phased approach

Statistics

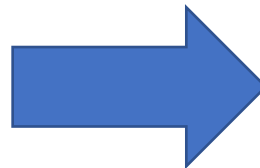
Housing Register

Band	March 2021	June 2021	Sep 2021	Jan 2022	March 2022	June 2022	Jan 23
1	17	20	24	21	19	20	22
2	226	245	256	283	272	274	306
3	369	413	421	408	415	438	495
4	655	672	688	696	679	696	795
Total	1,267	1,350	1,389	1,408	1,385	1,428	1,618



Housed Applicants

Band	June 2021	Sep 2021	Jan 2022	March 2022	June 2022	Jan 2023
1	22	10	10	14	13	19
2	88	39	57	33	33	110
3	36	26	20	11	6	17
4	21	8	7	4	5	10
Total	167	83	104	62	57	156



Bedroom need	Count of Applicants	%
1 bedroom	714	44.1
2 bedroom	525	32.4
3 bedroom	290	17.9
4 or more bedrooms	89	5.5
Grand Total	1,618	

Bedroom need	Count of Applicants	%
1 bedroom	70	44.8
2 bedroom	42	26.9
3 bedroom	40	25.6
4 or more bedrooms	4	2.6
Grand Total	156	

Questions?

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