

Housing and Health Committee Handover Report

1. Relevant Corporate Plan Objectives

The most relevant priorities are;

Priority 1: Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all

- 1.2 Work with registered providers, developers, and community-led housing groups to pursue all viable opportunities for increasing the supply of affordable and social housing across the borough, and ensure that standards in the private rented sector are robustly enforced

Priority 3: Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone

- 3.1 Undertake targeted interventions to identify our most disadvantaged families and communities, improve our understanding of the issues they face, and develop new ways of working to reduce social exclusion and enhance opportunities and quality of life.
- 3.2 Reduce health inequality by developing more productive relationships with local health partners and making health and wellbeing a central consideration in all relevant council decision-making, recognising especially the link between housing and health.

2. Key Policies and Strategies

- Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Housing Assistance Policy
- Tenancy Strategy
- Enforcement Policy for the Housing Health and Safety Hazard Rating system – Housing Act 2004
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Safeguarding Policy

3. Key Functions and Staffing

The list below gives a high-level list of functions that will be covered by this committee.

- housing advice, homelessness prevention and housing register;
- affordable and social housing;
- disabled facilities grants, home improvements and Staying Put;
- empty dwellings;
- private-sector housing support and enforcement;

- health inequalities;
- liaison with public health, health providers and adult social care;
- children and young people, including liaison with children's services; and
- child and vulnerable adult safeguarding.

Key Management contacts are as shown:

- Charlotte Hudson – Head of Housing and Communities
- Steph Curtis – Community Safety Manager (Safeguarding)
- Roxanne Sheppard – Housing Options Manager
- Glyn Pritchard – Private Sector Housing Manager
- Rebecca Walker – Affordable Housing Manager

4. Success Highlights

- Restructured the housing options team to create a more efficient structure.
- Completed development of and adoption of Housing and Homelessness strategy
- Set up The Homelessness Prevention Team which has successfully prevented 590 households from becoming homeless since its creation.
- Developed and adopted a new fairer Housing Allocations Policy which prioritises need over length of time residing in the borough, including the introduction of an income taper based upon number of bedrooms required as a qualifying criteria.
- Set up the Rough Sleeper Outreach team
 - We have reduced rough sleeper numbers in the borough by 81% since May 2019
 - Pre-Pandemic, we had the second highest percentage decrease in rough sleeper numbers in the country (69% reduction), going from 32 rough sleepers to 10.
 - Further reduced rough sleeping in 2020 to just 5. (Another 50% reduction).
 - Implemented the Rough Sleeper Initiative, including “Everyone in” through the pandemic.
 - 46 former rough sleepers currently accommodated by the borough
 - Secured 2 housing units and support service through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme.
 - Secured funding for a dedicated Drug and Alcohol addiction support worker and for psychological support services.
 - Housing options, via direct lets and Kent Home Choice have housed 1,055 households in social/affordable rent homes through our housing register.
 - More new affordable homes delivered in borough
 - 600 new affordable homes in borough since May 2019. Including 98 social rent homes (none delivered in preceding 5 years)
 - Another 536 firm delivery due and an additional 512 in the pipeline (excluding the 185 Rainbow homes planned). Total Pipeline including SRH now stands at 1,233.
- 251 Long Term Empty Dwellings brought back into use.
 - 2019-20 =116

- 2020-21 =76
- 2021-22 =59
- Set and renewed the Staying put framework
- 420 Disabled Facilities Grant Works completed
- 1,414 jobs completed by SBC handy person service
- 5,371 enquires to Home Improvement Agency
- Set up a partnership with BEAM to support those at risk of homelessness going forward (launching soon)
- Set up Swale Rainbow Homes to directly deliver affordable housing with Swale, with initial plans on 3 sites in Sittingbourne to deliver 185 new affordable housing units on council owned land.
- Utilising Data from the housing team to support the Xantura Pilot project.
- Set up an in-house system to distribute the remaining £281k of community housing grant fund.
 - £3,700 of grants issued to community led housing groups in the borough so far with £277,532 available to assist Community Led Housing groups (this is Ringfenced funding from the Stamp Duty Levey that we cannot redistribute to other projects).
- Conducted Home Assessments for the Homes for Ukraine Programme.
- Appointment of dedicated Health and Wellbeing Officer
- Adoption of first Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Stronger emphasis on health in all policies including the Local Plan
- Improved relationship with CCG to create an improved estates plan linked to Local Plan and S.106 contributions
- Strong partnership liaison with Kent Health and Wellbeing Board
- Representation on Integrated Care Partnership/Board and key engagement around obesity and population health management agendas
- Representation on Local Children Partnership Group
- Delivery of Reconnect Scheme for summer 2021
- Phase 1 and 2 of Building Barriers Initiative, system change project.
- Refreshed Safeguarding Policy
- Pilot into Early Childhood Development
- Dementia Friends Training completed
- Strong linkage with a range of VCS groups to further health outcomes. Including disability forums, mental health charities.

5. Current Workload / Significant Issues

Current Workload

- Local Housing company (Swale Rainbow Homes) and development of 3 identified sites.
- Enablement of Affordable Housing through S.106 and grant and liaison with Registered Providers
- Engagement and support for Community Land Trusts
- Delivery of rough sleeping service (including mobilisation of new services from successful RSI bid 2022 – 2025)
- Delivery and administration of housing register

- Homeless prevention, relief, and statutory homeless services.
- Management and administration of temporary accommodation.
- Implementation of Beam project
- Implementation of Xantura project
- Service improvement programme for Housing Options
- Delivery of Disabled Delivery Grants
- Delivery of Staying Put Service
- Caravan Licencing
- HMO Licencing
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement
- Empty Dwelling programme
- Homes for Ukraine Scheme
- Delivery of Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Engagement with Clinical Commissioning Group, Integrated Care Partnership and Public Health.
- Delivery of Building Barriers Initiative in Sheerness
- Day to Day Safeguarding issues.
- Engagement with Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards

Significant Issues

- Demand on Housing Options service continues to increase and is likely to continue with cost-of-living crisis.
- Increasing costs of Temporary Accommodation and the impact of this on Council finances.
- Loss of Kent Homeless Connect Service

6. Forward Plan Decisions

- Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023/27
- Housing Allocations Policy (2023/24)
- Nightly Let Procurement Award
- Temporary Accommodation Options