

# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AGENDA

### HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

**Date:** Thursday, 7 March 2019

**Time:** 6.00 pm

**Venue:** Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

**Members:**

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

Councillor S Dugan (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors I Bastable  
J M Englefield  
Mrs C L A Hockley  
Ms S Pankhurst  
Mrs K K Trott

**Deputies:** L Keeble  
S Cunningham



**1. Apologies for Absence**

**2. Minutes**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 22 November 2018.

**3. Chairman's Announcements**

**4. Declarations of Interest and Disclosures of Advice or Directions**

To receive any declarations of interest from members in accordance with Standing Orders and the Council's Code of Conduct and disclosures of advice or directions received from Group Leaders or Political Groups, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

**5. Deputations**

To receive any deputations of which notice has been lodged.

**6. Executive Business (Pages 5 - 6)**

To consider any item of business dealt with by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel that falls under the remit of the Housing Portfolio. This will include any decisions taken by the Executive Member during the same time period.

**(1) Fareham Housing Development Sites (Pages 7 - 8)**

**7. Affordable Housing Update (Pages 9 - 10)**

To receive an update by the Managing Director of Fareham Housing which provides Members with an update on Affordable Housing.

**8. Tenancy Management and Maintenance Report (Pages 11 - 18)**

To consider a report by the Managing Director of Fareham Housing which provides an update on Tenancy Management and Maintenance.

**9. Changes to the County Council Funded Social Inclusion Services in Fareham (Pages 19 - 28)**

To consider a report by the Managing Director of Fareham Housing which provides an update on the proposed changes to the County Council funded social inclusion services in Fareham.

**10. Housing Scrutiny Panel Priorities**

To provide an opportunity for Members to consider the scrutiny priorities for the Housing Panel.



P GRIMWOOD  
Chief Executive Officer

Civic Offices  
[www.fareham.gov.uk](http://www.fareham.gov.uk)  
25 February 2019

**For further information please contact:**  
**Democratic Services, Civic Offices, Fareham, PO16 7AZ**  
**Tel:01329 236100**  
**[democraticservices@fareham.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@fareham.gov.uk)**



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date**                    **07 March 2019**

**Report of:**        **Managing Director of Fareham Housing**

**Subject:**           **EXECUTIVE BUSINESS**

.

#### **SUMMARY**

One of the key functions of this Scrutiny Panel is to hold the Executive Portfolio Holder and Senior Officers to account in the delivery of the service and the Improvement Actions identified in the Council's Corporate Priorities and Corporate Vision.

Members are therefore invited to consider the items of business which fall under the remit of the Housing portfolio and have been dealt with by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel. This also includes any decisions taken by individual Executive Members.

The relevant notices for decisions taken are attached for consideration.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Members consider the items of Business discharged by the Executive since the last meeting of the Panel and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

2018/19  
Decision No.  
2069

### Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 3 December 2018

<b>Portfolio</b>	Housing
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Fareham Housing Development Sites</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Managing Director of Fareham Housing
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Providing housing choices

**Purpose:**

To seek approval of the process toward appointment of contractors for the construction of new affordable homes at the Bridge Road and Hampshire Rose sites. To also advise the Executive of the envisaged funding arrangements for these sites and other Fareham Housing led potential development opportunities.

The report provides Members with an update on eight potential development sites either to be used for, or currently being considered for, affordable housing provision.

It seeks Executive approval for delegated authority that will allow a time efficient appointment of an appropriate contractor to build out the Hampshire Rose (i.e. 96 Highlands Road) and Bridge Road sites.

The report also seeks to update Members on the current position with other potential development sites and to provide an overview of the funding available. This includes matters relating to the removal of the borrowing cap on the Housing Revenue Account.

**Options Considered:**

At the invitation of the Executive Leader, Councillor P Davies addressed the Executive on this item.

As recommendation.

**Decision:**

RESOLVED that the Executive:

- (a) agrees that the contract award and appointment of contractor(s) for the Hampshire Rose and Bridge Road development sites be delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources, following consultation with the Executive Member for Housing.
- (b) notes the on-going progress with Fareham Housing led potential development opportunities; and
- (c) notes the funding mechanisms available for the delivery of further sites.

**Reason:**

To enable the time efficient delivery of affordable housing at the Hampshire Rose (96 Highlands Road) and Bridge Road sites and to update Members of progress with other sites, including the funding mechanisms available.

**Confirmed as a true record:**

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)  
Monday, 3 December 2018



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Presentation to The Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date:** 07 March 2019

**Subject:** Affordable Housing Update

#### **SUMMARY**

The purpose of the presentation is to inform Members of the Panel of the progress with the Fareham Housing sites and other relevant strategic housing matters

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Members consider the contents of the presentation and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.



# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### **Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel**

**Date**                **07 March 2019**

**Report of:**        **Managing Director of Fareham Housing**

**Subject:**           **TENANCY MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE REPORT**

.

#### **SUMMARY**

This report provides the Panel with information about the housing management and maintenance services provided by the Neighbourhood Team and the Repairs and Maintenance Team.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel consider the contents of this report and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The Council owns c.2380 homes comprising general purpose properties and sheltered properties. The stock figure is affected by right to buy sales, re-purchases, new builds, demolitions and other disposals such as sale on the open market or change of use.
2. A breakdown of our properties by size, type and area can be seen at Appendix A.
3. We also own 582 garages which are let to tenants and private residents.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

4. The Neighbourhood Team is responsible for the day to day management of council housing tenancies. The functions provided by the team include the following:
  - Tenancy Support, Rent Collection & Estate Management (General Purpose and Sheltered Housing)
  - Tenant Involvement
  - Right to Buy
  - Mutual Exchanges
  - Tenancy Fraud
5. The team also play a key role in the management of our empty properties and adaptations for disabled tenants.

### Rent Collection

6. Income due from rents for the current financial year is just under £12 million. For most of our tenants, we charge 'social rent' (set using a Government formula and typically 50% of market rent) but for those in new-build or newly acquired properties, an 'affordable rent' (80% of market rent) is set.
7. Housing rents and service charges are set and notified on an annual basis. Two thirds of our residents receive full or partial housing benefit which is paid directly into their rent account. We actively encourage tenants who have rent to pay, to set up direct debits and in recent months we have improved our direct debit service to better suit tenant's individual circumstances.
8. Unfortunately, some tenants fall into arrears with their rent and it is a key priority for the Neighbourhood Officers to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent these arrears accruing to unacceptable levels. This intervention could be by way of support to maximise income from benefits or provision of budgeting advice. The options for moving to smaller, cheaper accommodation may also be discussed. In most cases, tenants will agree to a mutually acceptable repayment arrangement and Neighbourhood Officers monitor these cases to ensure the arrangement is being kept to.
9. In cases where the tenant does not engage or does not repay rent arrears, legal action is taken through Portsmouth County Court for the recovery of the debt and in extreme cases, possession of the property.
10. The total value of the arrears owing is £369,530 which is 3.09% of the total rent due. This is slightly higher than for the same reporting period last year (2.84%) and in part

can be attributable to the full roll-out of Universal Credit in Fareham. The inherent delay in receiving Universal Credit when compared to a determination of Housing Benefit immediately puts tenants into arrears. Also, the majority of tenants claiming Universal Credit have their housing-cost support paid directly to themselves which can lead to arrears. We are currently recruiting a Welfare Support Officer to join the Neighbourhood Team, to provide additional and targeted support to tenants experiencing financial difficulties as a result of Universal Credit or other welfare reforms.

### Sheltered Housing

11. The sheltered housing service enables our older tenants to live independently with the security of help being available should it be required. We have 26 sheltered schemes located across the borough, of which 6 are 'core' schemes with designated Sheltered Housing Officers on hand throughout office hours. Tenants in the non-core schemes are supported by a team of Mobile Sheltered Housing Officers. All tenants have the added security of an alarm system which is linked to a central control centre which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week throughout the year.
12. Many of our schemes have regular social activities, such as coffee mornings, bingo and raffle sessions and tea parties and they also welcome a variety of external speakers to give talks on a range of subjects. Work is currently underway for a special event on 4 April 2019 to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Crofton Court in Stubbington.

### Tenant Involvement

13. We provide a range of involvement opportunities and consultation events enabling tenants to be involved in the services we provide and to play a key role in shaping and monitoring housing services. To ensure tenants are able to fulfil this vital role, we fund training and allocate resources where necessary.
14. Neighbourhood Officers carry out 16 estate inspections each year. The inspections are carried out of a defined local area and local tenants and leaseholders are invited to attend to discuss local issues of concern and identify action required to remedy these.
15. Tenant and leaseholder representatives assist in the monitoring of block cleaning, grounds maintenance and gas servicing. This information is used to discuss performance with the relevant service provider throughout the term of the contract. We also facilitate a Tenant & Leaseholder forum, which, chaired by a tenant representative, meets five times a year.
16. We provide support to a Tenant Editorial Panel who develop and produce regular tenant's newsletters throughout the year.

### Providing safe and secure neighbourhoods

17. We want our tenants to feel safe and secure in their homes so tackling anti-social behaviour and the harm that it can cause, is a priority for us. Anti-social behaviour can be described as behaviour that has caused, or likely to cause, harassment, alarm, or distress to others. This includes hate crime, which is when the victim or another person thinks they are being targeted because of their difference or perceived difference.
18. We try and prevent anti-social behaviour through the following actions:

- Carry out checks before anyone is offered a home, such as previous history of anti-social behaviour. We will also look at what support may be needed to be put in place to help tenants meet the terms of their tenancy.
  - Allocate homes sensitively, especially where tenants are vulnerable or have been victims of anti-social behaviour before
  - Offer Introductory Tenancies to new tenants
  - Encourage tenants to resolve minor nuisance and lifestyle issues themselves
  - Carry out estate improvements to increase the level of safety and security
19. Generally, instances of anti-social behaviour are of a low level and will be dealt with easily and quickly. In more serious cases, the team work in partnership with colleagues from the Council's Environmental Health and Community Safety Teams, together with external agencies such as the Police and health services (mental health, drug and alcohol, etc). A range of enforcement options are available in the most extreme cases, such as the issuing of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts or ultimately repossession action through the court.
20. In the last 12 months, 1 tenant has been evicted from their home due to anti-social behaviour.

## **RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

### Responsive Repairs

21. The Housing Responsive Repairs Service is primarily delivered by directly employed operatives, with supporting contractors where necessary. A van stock system and materials delivery service enable efficient delivery of the repairs. This has been working successfully and data is being collected on materials used on repairs to continuously improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the service and supporting 'what matters' to customers in doing the repair with the least visits as possible.
22. There are five key steps that are of value to the customer when they need a repair to their home. These are:
- i. Collect "Clean information" – Name, address, contact number, brief detail of the problem, date and time when it is convenient for us to attend
  - ii. Allocate the work – at the right time, allocate the job to an operative with the right skills
  - iii. Access – attend at the right time, be polite, courteous and presentable
  - iv. Diagnose – identify the root cause of the problem, understand the individual needs of the customer and tailor a solution that is necessary and proportionate
  - v. Repair – use the right skills and have access to the right materials to fix the problem
23. The service is currently attending an average of 50 appointments per day which has increased from 36 per day last reported in August 2018.
24. A measure to understand how long a job takes to be completed is taken from when a trade operative arrives on an agreed date to when it is finally completed. The average 'end to end' time for a job to be completed from the convenient appointment date for

the last 6 months Aug 18 – Jan 19 was 7.5 days. This trend has not significantly changed since data collection started in January 2017. The total number of appointments undertaken during this period was 6853, with 73.5% of all jobs being completed on the same day as the customer enquiry.

25. The team relies on outside contractors to carry out larger works and specialist work to our buildings. All the current contracts have now come to a natural end therefore we will shortly be tendering these works and hope to attract some local, small to medium companies to join us in maintaining and repairing our properties.

#### Planned Maintenance

26. Planned Maintenance is the collective term for all our major repairs and improvements to our properties. This includes improvements such as installation of central heating, fitted kitchens, bathrooms and double glazing when they reach the end of their useful life. It also includes any major repairs to the outside of properties such as roofs and balcony repairs as well as improvements to the general environment in hard landscaped areas.
27. Our Planned Maintenance Programme is planned over a period of many years. To assist us in doing this, we have independent stock condition surveys carried out regularly which provides us with the information to deliver the programme of work, review the viability of our housing stock and explore regeneration opportunities. A 20% sample survey of our stock (c. 480 dwellings and 230 blocks) is currently being undertaken by Rand Associates and at the time of writing, 204 dwellings and 92 blocks have been completed. It is anticipated that all surveys will be completed by the end of March 2019 with the full analytical reports delivered shortly thereafter.
28. We have a statutory responsibility to carry out fire risk assessments (FRAs) on all communal areas in our buildings (corridors, staircases, lobbies etc). These assessments are either carried out in-house or by an external independent consultancy and are undertaken at regular intervals as determined by previous assessments and risk rating of the building.
29. There are 56 buildings within our stock that require FRAs and at the time of writing, 53 have been undertaken, with the final 3 to be completed by the end of March 2019. Each assessment generates a list of actions or recommendations with appropriate priority and timescales to improve the fire safety of the building. The progress against these are monitored at our Fire Safety Meetings, chaired by the Managing Director of Fareham Housing and attended by key officers from the Neighbourhood and Maintenance Teams. A breakdown of the current actions is as follows:
- **Immediate (Priority A)** - 8 actions which are being actioned and in progress. For example, 4 relate to impeded stairwells.
  - **Short term (Priority B)** - 157 actions which are being actioned and in progress. For example, a broken door closer to a front entrance door.
  - **Medium term (Priority C)** - 78 actions which are being actioned and in progress. For example, upgrading of fire alarm systems in sheltered common areas.
  - **Long term (Priority D)** - 50 actions which should be considered at the time of refurbishment. For example, improvements in the level of smoke detection within sheltered accommodation flats.

30. We also carry out annual smoke detection testing in all our properties; 99% have been completed.
31. In accordance with legislation, the Council has a statutory obligation to ensure all gas heating appliances are inspected and have an annual Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR). The current aim is to service all gas heating appliances every 10 months, allowing for any access difficulties. Liberty Group were appointed the gas heating servicing and repairs contractor from June 2018. The current compliance figures as of 18 February 2019 are shown below:

Properties with a current LGSR	1755
Properties capped at the gas meter	3
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 0 to 3 months	1
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 3 to 6 months	0
Properties without a LGSR - expired within 6 to 12 months	0
Properties without a LGSR - expired over 12 months	0

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

32. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

## **CONCLUSION**

33. This report provides panel members with an update about the work of the Neighbourhood and Maintenance services in recent months.

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Council owned homes by size, type and area

## **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Newman. (Ext 4645)



General Purpose	Fareham North	Fareham South	Locks Heath	Park Gate	Portchester	Salisbury Green	Stubbington	Titchfield	Warsash	Totals
Ground Floor Bedsit Flat	11	12						2		25
Upper Floor Bedsit Flat	27	25						8		60
1-Bedroom Bungalow		33		9	4		18	30	2	96
1-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	27	41	15		19		10	2		114
1-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	54	57	10		20		11	2		154
1-Bedroom House								1		1
2-Bedroom Bungalow	3	1			9		2	1		16
2-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	49			12	53		4	8	6	132
2-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	51	5		5	58		5	8	5	137
2-Bedroom Ground Floor Maisonette	9	62								71
2-Bedroom Upper Floor Maisonette	48	75			1					124
2-Bedroom House	9	1	2	9	17	6	24	1		69
3-Bedroom Bungalow					1					1
3-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat					1		1			2
3-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat							1			1
3-Bedroom Ground Floor Maisonette							1			1
3-Bedroom House	162	125	19	55	114		54	92	29	650
4-Bedroom House	6	7	1	4	6		2	7	2	35
5-Bedroom House		1								1
Totals	456	445	47	94	303	6	133	162	44	1690

# Sheltered

	Fareham North	Fareham South	Locks Heath	Park Gate	Portchester	Salisbury Green	Stubbington	Titchfield	Warsash	Totals
Bedsit Flat					14	2	12	2		30
1-Bedroom Bungalow	18	3			14	1	4	9		49
1-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	53	55	18	5	27	4	49	50	10	271
1-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	36	69	18	20	33	7	47	56	10	296
2-Bedroom Bungalow	3									3
2-Bedroom Ground Floor Flat	7			3						10
2-Bedroom Upper Floor Flat	12			8	2				1	23
Totals	129	127	36	36	90	14	112	117	21	682

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

**Date**                **07 March 2019**

**Report of:**        **Managing Director of Fareham Housing**

**Subject:**           **CHANGES TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL FUNDED SOCIAL INCLUSION SERVICES IN FAREHAM**

#### **SUMMARY**

Social Inclusion services are the services currently funded by Hampshire County Council for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This report sets out the findings of the County's 'Transformation to 2019 Review', the implications to provision of Social Inclusion services in Fareham, and work being undertaken by Fareham Borough Council to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the Borough.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Housing Scrutiny Panel:

- (a) consider the contents of this report and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification; and
- (b) recommends to the Executive that the Flexible Homeless Support Grant is used to fund the commissioning of Social Inclusion Services in partnership with Hampshire County Council from 1 August 2019.

## INTRODUCTION

1. In December 2018, Hampshire County Council (HCC) agreed a £1.8 million reduction in the Adult's Health and Care budget for Social Inclusion services. These services, also known as Homelessness Support Services, provide support for homeless people living in supported housing schemes across the county together with community support to vulnerable individuals or families requiring help to access or maintain accommodation.
2. The decision by HCC to reduce funding for these services from 2019 was part of a set of broader savings options (known as Transformation to 2019 Programme) to reduce spending.
3. Although HCC has no direct statutory responsibilities to deliver homelessness support services, they accept that as these services are relied upon by some of the most vulnerable in society, they will continue to invest, albeit at a much-reduced rate.

## CURRENT PROVISION OF SERVICES IN FAREHAM

4. Two Saints, the not-for-profit organisation who run the hostel at 101 Gosport Road, are currently under contract to HCC to provide Social Inclusion services across Fareham and Gosport. The contract, which commenced in April 2016 and ends 31 July 2019, includes the following provision:
  - **Street Outreach:** support for people sleeping rough
  - **Stage 1 accommodation:** 24/7 support at 101 Gosport Road, Fareham for single homeless people (18 units plus fluctuating number of emergency beds)
  - **Stage 2 accommodation:** short-term supported accommodation at Acton Lodge, West Street, Fareham with a lower level of support for single homeless people (10 units)
  - **Community Support:** short-term housing related support which is not attached to accommodation and available to any person who is homeless or at risk of homelessness regardless of their current housing status

## CHANGES TO SERVICES IN FAREHAM

5. Senior officers have been working in partnership with HCC over the last 18 months to establish a mutually acceptable "core service" offer for the provision of HCC funded social inclusion services in Fareham. The current HCC contract with Two Saints will be modified and extended to 31 March 2021. HCC have included an option to extend this contract for a further 12 months which would be exercised if more time is needed to fully explore all the potential opportunities for recommissioning services after 31 March 2021.
6. **Stage 1 accommodation and Street Outreach:** HCC have agreed and approved sufficient funding which will ensure the Stage 1 accommodation at 101 Gosport Road and the Street Outreach service are retained. These services are critically important and the commitment from HCC to continue to fund these core services is extremely positive.

7. **Stage 2 accommodation:** To achieve the level of savings required within the Transformation to 2019 programme, HCC will cease funding Stage 2 accommodation in areas where Stage 1 accommodation is being retained. Therefore, the support services currently attached to Acton Lodge will end however residents will be able to access the revised Community Support service detailed below.
8. **Community Support:** Community Support will only be available to people who are moving on from 101 Gosport Road, living in Acton Lodge or are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough and have complex support needs which mean they are unable to access support from other sources. Therefore, people who do not fall into these categories who currently use community support services will be directed to alternative support services.

## PROPOSALS

9. It is vital that supported move-on opportunities remain to ensure there is an effective pathway out of rough sleeping and into independent living. Therefore, it is proposed that we supplement HCC's "core service" funding and co-commission the support services at Acton Lodge with HCC and Gosport Borough Council. It is also proposed that additional funding is also provided by both boroughs to double the Street Outreach resource.
10. The Flexible Homelessness Support Grant received from Central Government (payable over three years to support the implementation of the new Homelessness Reduction Act) still has sufficient reserves to fund these proposals which total £42,000 per annum (£70,000 for the period 1 August 2019 to 31 March 2021) and will secure the provision of homelessness support services for those in greatest need.
11. Analysis of the Community Support service users who will be unable to access this under the new arrangements indicates there has been a steady reduction in numbers over the last 12 months and the snapshot data (November 18) shows the number of individuals accessing this support in Fareham was 31. The majority of these people were also receiving support from one or more of the other services listed below.
12. HCC are now working with service providers, the Council and voluntary sector partners to implement the changes and ensure that people who may be affected are provided with clear information regarding alternative support services and how to get help to prevent homelessness in the future.
13. Alternative provision for existing Community Support service users include:
  - Homeless Prevention and Relief services provided by Fareham Borough Council's Housing Options Team.
  - HCC's Family Support Services and Wellbeing Centres
  - Universal Support Services funded by Central Government to support the roll out of Universal Credit
  - Citizens Advice who provide independent advice covering a wide range of problems which is available to all residents.
  - Tenancy Support Services provided by Fareham Borough Council and Registered Providers of social housing.

- Voluntary Sector Organisations such as the Money Advice Service, Step Change, Independent Age and Turn2us.
14. During this transition period, HCC will also assess individuals who may be affected and who it appears have care and support needs. Following assessment, where eligible care and support needs are identified, HCC has a duty under the Care Act 2014 to ensure these identified needs are met.
  15. There is a risk that, due to the vulnerability of some of the people who use the existing Community Support services, they may not seek or access the help they need to prevent homelessness. This could lead to an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping and subsequently an increase in demand for more intensive support services.
  16. Therefore, it is vitally important there remains an effective partnership between HCC and Fareham Borough Council to ensure access to alternative services is promoted across key stakeholders to minimise this risk.

## **OTHER EMERGING PRESSURES**

### Universal Credit

17. Universal Credit (UC) for new claimants was rolled out in Fareham in November 2018. We have undertaken a lot of work in partnership with our local Jobcentre to prepare claimants for the change, but there is still a risk that there will be an increase in homelessness, particularly amongst hard to reach groups. In January 2019, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Amber Rudd, announced a number of changes to UC, designed to ensure that the new benefit is delivered in a way “that meets the needs of claimants” and that plans to expand its further rollout nationally will only proceed with “utmost care”.
18. As a result, the planned migration of millions of existing benefit claimants to UC this year will be delayed allowing for an initial pilot of 10,000 claimants to be undertaken. Other changes announced include making it easier to access more regular UC payments and the creation of a private landlord portal – making it much easier for tenants in the private rented sector to have their rent paid directly to a landlord. This will help vulnerable tenants to better manage their money and give private landlords greater peace of mind that they will receive their rent in time, while reducing the likelihood of rent arrears. The Minister also confirmed that the four-year benefits freeze is unlikely to be continued beyond 2020. Although this won’t bridge the gap between frozen benefits and rising living costs, it should stop this gap from widening even further.
19. Citizens Advice have been provided with significant Central Government funding to provide comprehensive and practical support to Universal Credit claimants. This will include advice and assistance to help claimants manage their Universal Credit claim, with a focus on budgeting advice and digital support.
20. Whilst these reforms to UC are welcome, there is still considerable work to be done to ensure vulnerable people are provided with the financial support they need to access and maintain housing thereby preventing the risk of homelessness occurring.

### Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

21. The Council’s statutory homelessness duties have significantly increased following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) on 3 April 2018. It

considerably extends our duties to prevent homelessness and requires us to have a sharper focus on preventing homelessness as early as possible and for all households, not just those in priority need. The HRA is the biggest change in homelessness legislation in 20 years and is a real positive change for homeless people.

22. Two additional full-time posts have been created within the team from funding provided by Central Government at a total cost of £84,300. These posts ensure the team can meet the Council's extended responsibilities and supplementary advisory commitments to any individual or family who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.
23. In addition to the new posts above, the Housing Team have recently created a new Welfare Support Officer post. This post will provide support and advice to our vulnerable tenants who are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancies.
24. In October 2018, the HRA also introduced a new 'Duty to Refer' which means that specified public authorities must refer people who they have identified as homeless or threatened with homelessness to the local authority.
25. The following are public authorities with this duty to refer:
  - Prisons, youth offender institutions and youth offending teams
  - Secure training centres
  - Probation services
  - Job Centres
  - Hospitals (including A & E departments) and urgent treatment centres
  - Ministry of Defence
26. This duty will help to ensure that there is effective cross-service working to prevent homelessness as peoples' housing needs are considered when they come into contact with a range of public services.

## **ACHEIVEMENTS**

27. People present to the Housing Options Service for advice and assistance for a variety of reasons and those reasons are not always directly attributable to housing. Whilst the housing market in Fareham is challenging, the problems are often rooted in people's financial capacity, employment, ill health, alcohol and/or drug misuse, relationship breakdown or other underlying causes.
28. Following the fundamental 'systems-thinking' review of the Housing Options service and the subsequent implementation of the HRA, our approach to preventing and tackling homelessness is now more holistic and focuses on the individual circumstances of each person.
29. Everyone who approaches the service for assistance (or who are referred to us) receives a comprehensive "strengths based" interview, where we look at all the housing options available to them and the strengths they have to ensure appropriate housing is secured. A personal housing plan is agreed, setting out the actions they will take and the support they need from us to resolve their housing problem. We bring in other agencies who have specialist skills and knowledge to help in this

process.

30. Between April 2018 and January 2019, just over 1000 people approached the Housing Options Service for assistance. The majority of these can be categorised as follows:

- Can I go onto the Housing Waiting List?
- I am on the Housing Waiting List, but my circumstances have changed
- I am on the Housing Waiting List, when will I receive an offer of accommodation?
- My home no longer meets my needs, what are my options?
- My circumstances will change in the future which means my home will not be available to me/will not meet my needs/will be unaffordable, what are my options?

31. In 215 cases, the team were required to take formal action to prevent or relieve homelessness in accordance with the new duties under the HRA. This is a significant increase to the 77 cases in the same period the previous year.

32. We have seen a 36% decrease in the number of people requiring emergency bed and breakfast accommodation and this is a reflection of work being undertaken by the team to prevent homelessness occurring.

33. Despite this, we are still seeing a relatively high number of individuals sleeping rough in the borough so in March 2018, we brought together relevant partners to look at the issues affecting or caused by rough sleepers in Fareham. Chaired by a member of our Housing Options Team the group, comprising representatives from the police, probation service, FBC Community Safety and Enforcement Teams, Two Saints, Southern Health and HCC commissioned substance misuse service Inclusion, met regularly to develop operational and strategic responses to rough sleeping in Fareham.

34. Following the rough sleeper conference in July 2018, the group has evolved to become known as Fareham StreetAid and is now supported by a number of charities (Catch 22, Acts of Kindness, Friends of the Homeless and One Community). Its aim is to help vulnerable people move off the streets through the provision of bespoke assistance tailored to meet the needs and issues of each individual.

35. The needs of rough sleepers are normally quite complex, spanning substance misuse issues, mental and physical health problems to financial and employment difficulties. As a direct result of StreetAid, joint outreach services are now in place thereby ensuring specialist advice and assistance is available to those sleeping rough.

36. Providing information to the public is also an important part of the group's work. Posters, leaflets and a dedicated website ([www.farehamstreetaid.org.uk](http://www.farehamstreetaid.org.uk)) have been developed and in January, representatives from the group held an information session in the shopping centre.

37. This multi-agency approach has made a real difference to some individuals who have slept rough in Fareham and some of our most challenging, entrenched rough sleepers are now in their own accommodation as a result of this work.



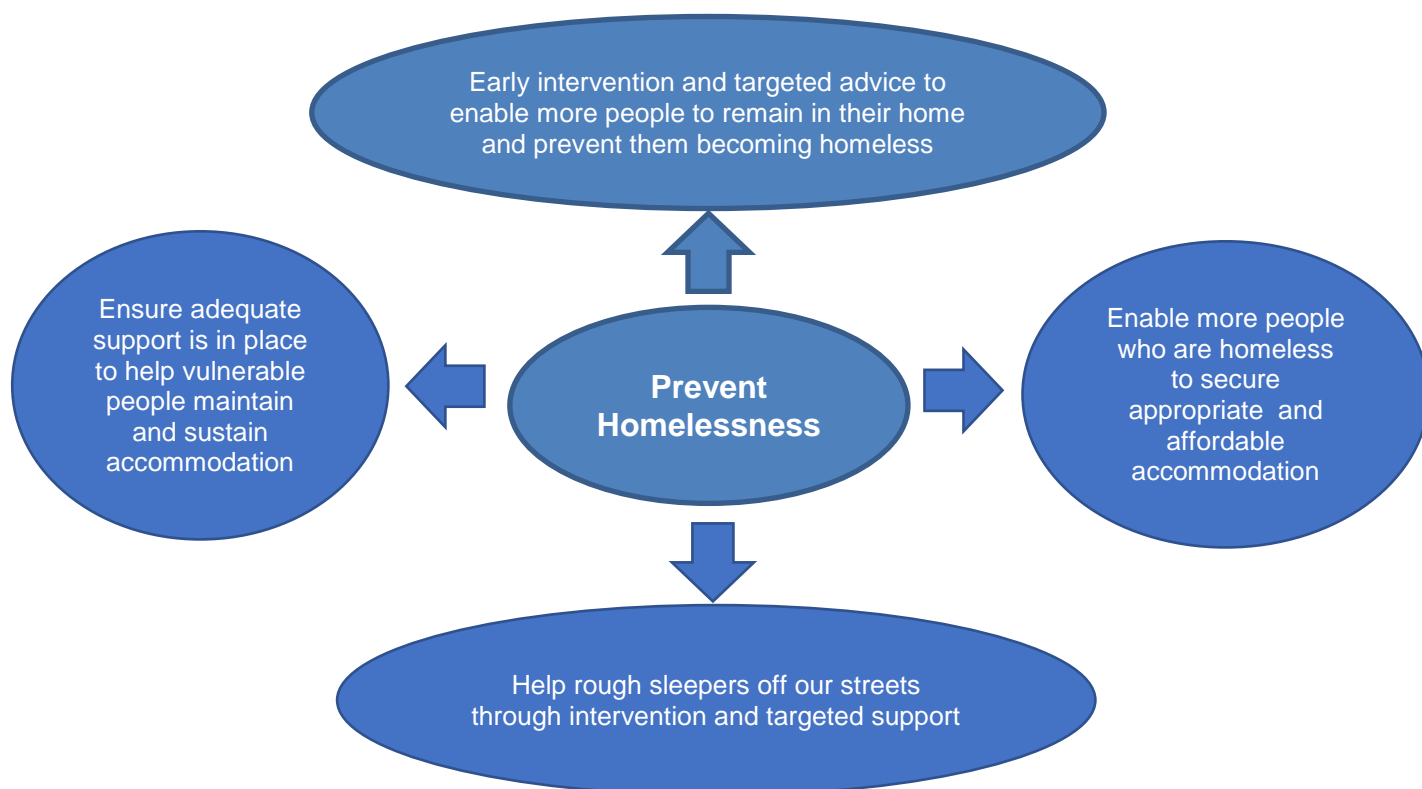
38. Every individual currently sleeping rough in Fareham is known to the StreetAid group and is being provided with tailored support to help them move off our streets. The journey from sleeping rough to secure accommodation can be long and complex and much depends upon the individual being willing to engage and accept the support offered.
39. We have repeated the Winter Bed Provision at 101 Gosport Road by providing funding to Two Saints to enable an additional 5 people per night to access the hostel between November 2018 and March 2019. All individuals taking up this assistance during the winter months are encouraged to work with the Housing Options Team and Two Saints to find more suitable, longer-term solutions. They are supported to claim the benefits they are entitled to and to access local services such as GP's for help with physical and mental health issues. They are also supported to engage with local substance misuse services. The individuals are signposted to any other support provider as appropriate, for example it may be appropriate to refer them to specialist supported housing such as young person's housing or mental health supported accommodation. The individuals are assisted to attend key appointments such as with probation services and to apply for jobs and attend interviews where appropriate.
40. By participating in a programme of support and housing assistance, the next steps for these individuals could include:
- gaining a proper room at the hostel
  - moving to Acton Lodge
  - moving into a council owed flat on a sublet arrangement with Two Saints
  - securing private accommodation with practical and financial assistance from both organisations
  - adding the individual to the housing list for social housing.
41. The extended winter bed provision has been in operation for 2½ months at the time of writing and outcomes so far are as follows:

Offered social housing	1
Taken into custody	1
Found own privately rented accommodation	3
Offered a room at the hostel	3
Gone to stay with family/friends	4
Given financial assistance to secure privately rented accommodation	4

## **WAY FORWARD**

42. Our existing Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy was approved in 2014. Progress against the specific actions within the strategy were reviewed annually by the Housing Policy Development and Review Panel, with the final review carried out in November 2017.

43. The changes to services funded by HCC, the introduction of the HRA, the continued rollout of UC and publication of the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018 will continue to impact on the way we deliver our homeless prevention services.
44. Therefore, a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy is currently being drafted.



45. The key themes detailed above will form the strategic platform for a detailed action plan to prevent homelessness and assist those who find themselves in housing need.
46. It is proposed that a draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be ready for Member scrutiny and public consultation in the Summer.
47. One aspect we are keen to explore to supplement our existing services is the introduction of the 'Housing First' model of direct access provision for street homeless people. The principles of 'Housing First' were first developed in the USA and have since been introduced in parts of Europe. Interest in Housing First in England is starting to grow, and some organisations are already providing Housing First services but it is relatively small scale (c. 35 known projects in England). £28 million of funding for three Government-sponsored pilots in the West Midlands, Liverpool and Greater Manchester was announced in May 2018 and we await the findings of these pilots with interest.
48. The existing social inclusion services detailed previously in this report are sometimes not suitable for those with multiple and complex needs, whereas the 'Housing First' model has been shown to be effective in supporting people with a long history of street homelessness as there are no conditions around 'housing readiness' before being provided with a home. Instead, it is viewed as a stable platform from which multiple and complex needs and other key issues can be addressed through wrap-around and personalised support.

49. Generally, the transition from street homelessness to independent living for those with complex needs involves a number of steps that an individual must progress through and for those with substance misuse or mental health problems, are usually dependent on engagement with treatment services. Whilst this approach leads to independent living for some rough sleepers, for others it has been neither successful nor an attractive route out of homelessness.
50. It is reasonable to suggest that the introduction of 'Housing First' as an additional form of housing provision in Fareham will play a role in eradicating rough sleeping in the borough. However, this will require long-term funding and a steady availability of appropriate housing to ensure individuals have access to permanent accommodation and support. This can only be achieved through successful partnership with an established Housing First provider, such as Two Saints, which will be explored in more detail once the evaluation of the Government-led pilots is published.
51. Hampshire Probation Service have just two 'Approved Premises' in the county and one of those is in Fareham. Some ex-offenders spending time there preparing for their release back into the community become familiar with the area and form social and/or support networks here and as a result, wish to make Fareham or our neighbouring boroughs their permanent home. Effective joint working between the probation service and our Housing Options team generally leads to positive outcomes for these individuals however there remains a risk of rough sleeping for some. We therefore await with interest, the Government's plans to review the support provided to offenders who are at risk of rough sleeping on release from prison.

## **CONCLUSION**

52. HCC's decision to reduce their investment in Social Inclusion Services in Fareham, whilst disappointing, has been developed in partnership with officers and stakeholders. The extended contract between HCC and Two Saints, together with the proposed co-commissioned services detailed above will safeguard provision for our most vulnerable individuals who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough until March 2021.
53. The development of a new Homelessness Prevention Strategy, aligned with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, will set out our commitment and resources to meet our statutory homelessness duties and future proof the borough's homelessness services beyond March 2021.

## **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Newman (Ext 4645)

