

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA

HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

Date: Thursday, 13 July 2023

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

Members:

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

Councillor S Ingram (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors R Bird

F Birkett

H P Davis

Mrs C L A Hockley

Mrs K K Trott

Deputies: M R Daniells



1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes (Pages 5 - 8)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 09 February 2023.

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 9 - 10)

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) Crossfell Walk Development Update (Pages 11 - 12)

(2) Draft Empty Homes Strategy (Pages 13 - 14)

(3) Fareham Housing Stock Conditions Survey (Pages 15 - 16)

(4) Fareham Housing Void Property Works and Improvements Contract
(Pages 17 - 18)

7. Opportunities Plan 2023-2027 (Pages 19 - 20)

To receive a presentation providing an overview of the Council's Opportunities Plan and how the Year 1 project proposals relate to the Housing Portfolio.

8. Affordable Housing Update (Pages 21 - 22)

To receive a presentation by the Head of Housing Delivery which updates members on progress with Fareham Housing sites and other relevant strategic Housing Matters.

9. Update on the Housing Register (Pages 23 - 30)

To receive a report by the Head of Housing Delivery on the Housing Register.

10. Housing Scrutiny Panel Priorities

To provide an opportunity for Members to consider the scrutiny priorities for the

Housing Panel.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Wannell'.

A WANNELL
Chief Executive Officer

Civic Offices
www.fareham.gov.uk
04 July 2023

For further information please contact:
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FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 9 February 2023

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

Councillor (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: R Bird, F Birkett, H P Davis, D G Foot and Mrs K K Trott

Also Present: Councillor Mrs T L Ellis (for items 7 and 10)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence made at this meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on 29 September 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

(1) Appendix B to the Fareham Housing Regeneration Strategy (Fort Fareham Housing Estate Regeneration)

There were no questions or comments for clarification in respect of this item.

(2) Fareham Borough Council Social and Affordable Housing Adaptation Policy

There were no questions or comments for clarification in respect of this item.

(3) Fareham Housing Development of Ophelia Court, Montefiore Drive, Park Gate

There were no questions or comments for clarification in respect of this item.

7. DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs T L Ellis addressed the Panel on this item.

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Housing Delivery which provided members with an overview of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy.

A correction at page 12 of the draft Strategy was noted in respect of Empty Dwelling Management Orders in that an Order can be applied for after 6 months of the property being empty not 2 years as stated in the draft Strategy.

A query was raised regarding the accuracy of the empty homes data provided at paragraph 7 of the report. The Head of Housing Delivery explained that this data has been taken directly from an external source and undertook to validate it.

Councillor Bird raised concern that the draft Strategy sets low expectations of outcomes and proposed that additions could be made to the Strategy to include a point based system to determine when action is needed, as undertaken by Rushmoor Borough Council. There was no seconder to this proposal and a vote was therefore not taken. Members did, however, request that officers investigate the possibility of incorporating something similar within the Strategy, in discussion with the Executive Member for Housing, to make it clearer how the characteristics of each empty property would be used to determine whether action is warranted.

The Panel discussed the Council's resource allocation for dealing with empty homes and noted that the Council does not have a dedicated resource for this purpose. It was suggested that there could be an opportunity to work collaboratively with other local authorities to maximise resourcing and expertise. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer agreed that this could be taken forward for further investigation.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report and has no changes to recommend to the Executive when the Draft Empty Homes Strategy is considered for adoption.

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation by the Head of Housing Delivery which informed Members of the progress with Fareham Housing Sites and other relevant strategic housing matters. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.

9. TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

The Panel received a presentation by the Head of Housing & Benefits which outlined the new way of measuring tenant satisfaction with services the Council provides. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as Appendix B.

It was agreed that, going forward, the current report on Tenancy Management Services that is presented to the Panel twice a year be replaced with an annual report and presentation based on the results of the Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures, along with any further local measures that members wish to consider.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel:

- (a) notes the content of the presentation; and

- (b) agrees that, as outlined above, the Tenancy Management Services report be replaced with an annual report and presentation on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

10. GREENER MEASURES & INSTALLATIONS ON COUNCIL OWNED HOMES

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs T L Ellis addressed the Panel on this item.

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer which provided members with an update on the greener measures undertaken on Council owned housing. This included work carried out as part of Government funding as well future initiatives.

Members were advised that the findings from the Capacity funding provided by South West Energy Hub will hopefully be more fully understood following further investigation on one of the Council's properties. It is anticipated that an update will be available later in the spring.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report.

11. HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL PRIORITIES

RESOLVED that members considered the future scrutiny priorities for the Panel and agreed that there were no changes to be made at the present time.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.34 pm).

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date 13 July 2023

Report of: Head of Housing Delivery

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

2022/23
Decision No.
2439

Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 15 May 2023

Portfolio	Housing
Subject:	Crossfell Walk Development Update
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Corporate Priority:	Providing housing choices

Purpose:

To provide an update in relation to the Crossfell Walk project; In light of rising project costs and complexities, this development will no longer be pursued.

Approval will be sought for the funding mechanisms originally outlined for the development to be allocated to affordable housing elsewhere in the borough.

The report updates the Executive on the decision to no longer pursue the redevelopment at Crossfell Walk. This project involved the demolition of the two flyover flats at Nos, 15 and 17 Crossfell Walk, replacing them with one 3 bed home.

The redevelopment was originally presented to the Executive Member for Housing for approval in June 2020. Approval was sought to use the Capital Receipt from the sale of two HRA properties for this project. This report seeks approval for the Capital Funding to now be allocated towards other affordable housing developments in the borough.

Options Considered:

As recommendation.

Decision:

RESOLVED that the Executive approves the use of the Capital Receipt to fund capital improvements to, or further delivery of, affordable housing in the borough.

Reason:

To ensure the funding mechanisms previously designated for the Crossfell Walk project can continue to be allocated towards Council owned affordable housing in the borough.

Confirmed as a true record:

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 15 May 2023

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

2022/23
Decision No.
2438

Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 15 May 2023

Portfolio	Housing
Subject:	Draft Empty Homes Strategy
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Corporate Priority:	Providing housing choices

Purpose:

To seek approval of the draft Empty Homes Strategy for a minimum six-week period of public consultation.

The draft Empty Homes Strategy provides an overview of the amount and type of empty homes in the Borough, together with two objectives relating to the Council's potential approach to empty properties. The draft Strategy acknowledges the detrimental issues that can arise with a small number of empty homes and articulates the importance of proportionate and appropriate action in addressing the issue.

Options Considered:

As recommendation

Decision:

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the draft Empty Homes Strategy (as provided in Appendix A to the report, be published for a minimum six-week period of public consultation; and
- (b) the Deputy Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the draft Empty Homes Strategy, prior to publication, provided these do not change the overall direction or emphasis and following consultation with the Executive Member for Housing.

Reason:

To undergo a period of public consultation as part of the ongoing progression of the draft Empty Homes Strategy towards adoption.

Confirmed as a true record:

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 15 May 2023

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

2022/23
Decision No.
2440

Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 15 May 2023

Portfolio	Housing
Subject:	Housing Stock Condition Survey
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Corporate Priority:	Providing housing choices

Purpose:

To seek agreement for the appointment of consultants to undertake a stock condition survey of the Council's Housing stock over a five- year period, beginning in 2023/24.

The recommended appointment will allow a stock condition survey to be undertaken on the Council's housing property portfolio. It is proposed that this work be undertaken by Rand Associates.

This work is in the interest of understanding any issues with the properties, and to inform future planned maintenance programmes.

Options Considered:

As recommendation.

Decision:

RESOLVED that the authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, following consultation with the Executive Member for Housing, to appoint Rand Associates to undertake a Stock Condition Survey of the Council's housing assets. This work to take place over a five-year period from 2023/24 to 2027/28.

Reason:

This work is in the interest of understanding any issues with properties, and to inform future planned maintenance programmes.

Confirmed as a true record:

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 15 May 2023

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

2023/24
Decision No.
2455

Record of Decision by Executive

Monday, 3 July 2023

Portfolio	Housing
Subject:	Fareham Housing Void Property Works and Improvements Contract
Report of:	Head of Housing Delivery
Corporate Priority:	Providing housing choices

Purpose:

To seek Executive approval for a 6-month extension to the existing Void Property Works and Improvement Contract with Mountjoy Ltd, with potential for a further 6-month extension should it be required.

Mountjoy Ltd. are the contractor currently employed to undertake void works to Council homes, as well as some other planned improvement works such as kitchen and bathroom replacement.

The original contract was entered into on 01 May 2019 and the current arrangement will expire on 30 April 2024.

During 2023 there have been many changes to the social housing landscape. This includes new amendments to the Social Housing Regulation Bill (also referred to as Awaab's Law), increasing focus by the Regulator of Social Housing relating to matters of repair, and the ongoing implications of cost increases coupled with the introduction of 7% rent cap.

In May 2023 an internal review commenced to look at the existing void process. The review is aimed at ensuring an appropriate standard of void works takes place alongside good quality customer service, whilst also improving efficiency and identifying opportunities to reduce the financial impacts of the void process.

As part of the ongoing review there is already recognition that elements of the existing contract approach will need to change. This together with the lead in times required for a new contract mean it is not practical to complete a new tender, contract appointment and mobilisation before 30 April 2024.

A limited time extension to the existing arrangement with Mountjoy is sought to ensure this essential function of the Council's Housing service can continue, whilst allowing for improvements to the void process (and any associated cost savings) to be properly considered and incorporated as part of a new contract arrangement.

Options Considered:

As recommendation.

Decision:

RESOLVED that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, following consultation with the Executive Member for Housing, to enter into an extension of the existing Void Property Works and Improvements Contract with Mountjoy Limited for a period of 6 months, with authority delegated for a further 6 month extension should it be required.

Reason:

To ensure void repair works are delivered to the lettable standard effectively and efficiently, and to continue to provide improvements and disabled adaptations to occupied Council homes whilst a new tender pack and procurement exercise is concurrently prepared (incorporating any changes required following the internal review) so that a new contract can apply from 31 October 2024, or by 30 April 2025 at the latest.

Confirmed as a true record:

Councillor SDT Woodward (Executive Leader)

Monday, 3 July 2023

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Presentation to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13 July 2023

Report of: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Subject: OPPORTUNITIES PLAN 2023-2027

SUMMARY

The Executive Leader delivered the Budget presentation for 2023/2024 at the full Council meeting on 24 February 2023. During the presentation it was acknowledged that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy forecast a future funding gap of £2.4m by 2026/27.

Since this time, there has been considerable activity to develop a new Opportunities Plan of projects to close the gap.

This presentation provides an overview of the way in which the Opportunities Plan has been developed and the significant Year 1 project proposals that relate to the Scrutiny Panel area.

An update on the full Opportunities Plan and finalised Year 1 project proposals will be presented at the Executive on 4 September 2023 for their agreement.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are invited to note the contents of the presentation and make any comments or further proposals for consideration as part of the Opportunities Plan.

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Presentation to The Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date: 13 July 2023

Report of: Head of Housing Delivery

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 13 July 2023

Report of: Head of Housing Delivery

Subject: Update on the Housing Register

SUMMARY

This report provides information to Members regarding the Council's housing register, its recent review, and ongoing monitoring of new affordable housing delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel considers the contents of this report and comment or raise any points for further clarification.

INTRODUCTION

1. In 2020 the Housing team began the implementation of Civica. This new software would bring together all the areas of the department; the housing register being a key element of this. During the early stages of the project plan, it was identified that the register had applicants listed that had not been in contact for several years. Gaps in information were also noted. To ensure the new system only held relevant and accurate records the team began a review of the register.
2. This report details the method and outcome of the review, including up to date statistics which help inform the Council's own affordable housing delivery projects, and what officers ask of developers through the planning system.

THE APPLICANT'S HOUSING JOURNEY

3. Before detailing the review of the register, it is important to understand how it sits within the customer's journey to affordable housing. When households or individuals first find themselves (or are at risk of) becoming homeless they contact the Housing Options team. They have an informal session where they discuss their current circumstances, affordability and needs to understand what options are available to them.
4. Depending on what is discussed, the customer is given one of several options. They may be guided towards alternative accommodation, given assistance to stay in their current home, placed in temporary accommodation, or added to the housing register. As the different outcomes are complex, this report will only focus on the housing register route.
5. Applicants are prioritised on the waiting list based on their needs. If they need rehoming immediately then they may be placed as 'urgent', otherwise they are placed in a 'high', 'medium' or 'low' category. There are multiple reasons why a household may be placed in each band and each of these are based on legislation and detailed in the Council's adopted Allocations Policy.
6. As properties become available, the Allocations Officer will offer it to the highest priority and most suitable applicant. When customers join the housing register, part of the information collected also includes preference on area, number of bedrooms required and additional requirements such as disabled adaptations. Civica matches the details of the property against these bespoke needs so officers can identify the most suitable applicant. Further discussion and progress will then take place to enable the customer to move into the home.

THE REVIEW

7. Having up to date and precise records ensures that the matches are accurate. It also prevents time being wasted for both customers and officers. The capabilities of Civica compared to the previous register are also much more powerful; moving to this new software means that officers can collect relevant information leading to better housing matches.
8. It also means that the risk of out-of-date information being held is reduced. Previously, officers found that households' circumstances had changed, but the Council was not informed. The time and resources needed to undertake an annual review is immense. Unfortunately, the day-to-day tasks and other projects had to take priority (particularly during the Covid pandemic). The implementation of Civica provided the opportunity to

review the housing register and update missing or inaccurate information. Migrating inaccurate data would prove to be more time consuming than undertaking a review. It also gave households the opportunity to 'check in' with officers and to discuss their changing needs.

9. Due to the sensitive nature of the review, it was important that it was undertaken carefully and considerately. We did not want to simply remove applicants because we had not heard from them. The process was broken down into several steps:
 - a) An initial letter was sent inviting online applicants to complete an online form. If they did not have internet access, a phone number was included to allow the applicant to contact the team to complete the questions.
 - b) If there was no response, the team double checked the contact details against the Council's records. A second letter was then sent to non-responders.
 - c) If there was still no response, officers phoned the applicant (making multiple attempts).
 - d) If the team were still unable to contact the applicant, a letter was sent to advise they had been removed from the housing register.
10. The team chose an online form because of the volume of applicants on the housing register – 1165 at that time. It would have been a resource intensive task to call every household. By writing to applicants initially officers could focus on individuals who needed more support and/or had no access to the internet.
11. After the initial contact, 332 applicants required a second letter. The number of final phone calls that needed to be made were 48.
12. At the start of the review, there were 1165 applicants on the housing register. Once the review had concluded, this had reduced to 513.
13. Another outcome of this project was the implementation of a rolling evaluation of the housing register. Civica is able to generate a review based on the date the applicant was added. This means that officers can produce reviews as they are due, rather than having to find resources annually.

KEY FINDINGS

14. Based on analysis of the current housing register (circa 500 customers), Appendix A shows the indicative areas of demand that are used to inform new developments. This is used for both Council schemes and the affordable housing mix on planning applications from private developers¹. The basic data used is the areas households prefer to live in. A deeper dive into the data looks at the number of bedrooms required, the need for sheltered schemes, adaptations required, and how long households have been waiting.
15. The data from the Housing Register has informed all of the Council's recent developments. For example, Queens Road provided the opportunity to build bespoke homes for those requiring wheelchair access. The properties at Capella Close are shared ownership as the findings show that Hill Head is a lower need area for Social/Affordable Rent homes. The team will continue to use this information to ensure

¹The data used is on the Council's website at: https://www.fareham.gov.uk/housing/looking_for_a_home/affordablehousingneed.aspx

appropriate developments occur.

16. The following graph shows the most recent analysis of the Housing Register. The totals are shown as a percentage as applicants are able to choose more than one area of preference. Sheltered housing is excluded as this will be detailed in the emerging Sheltered Housing Strategy.

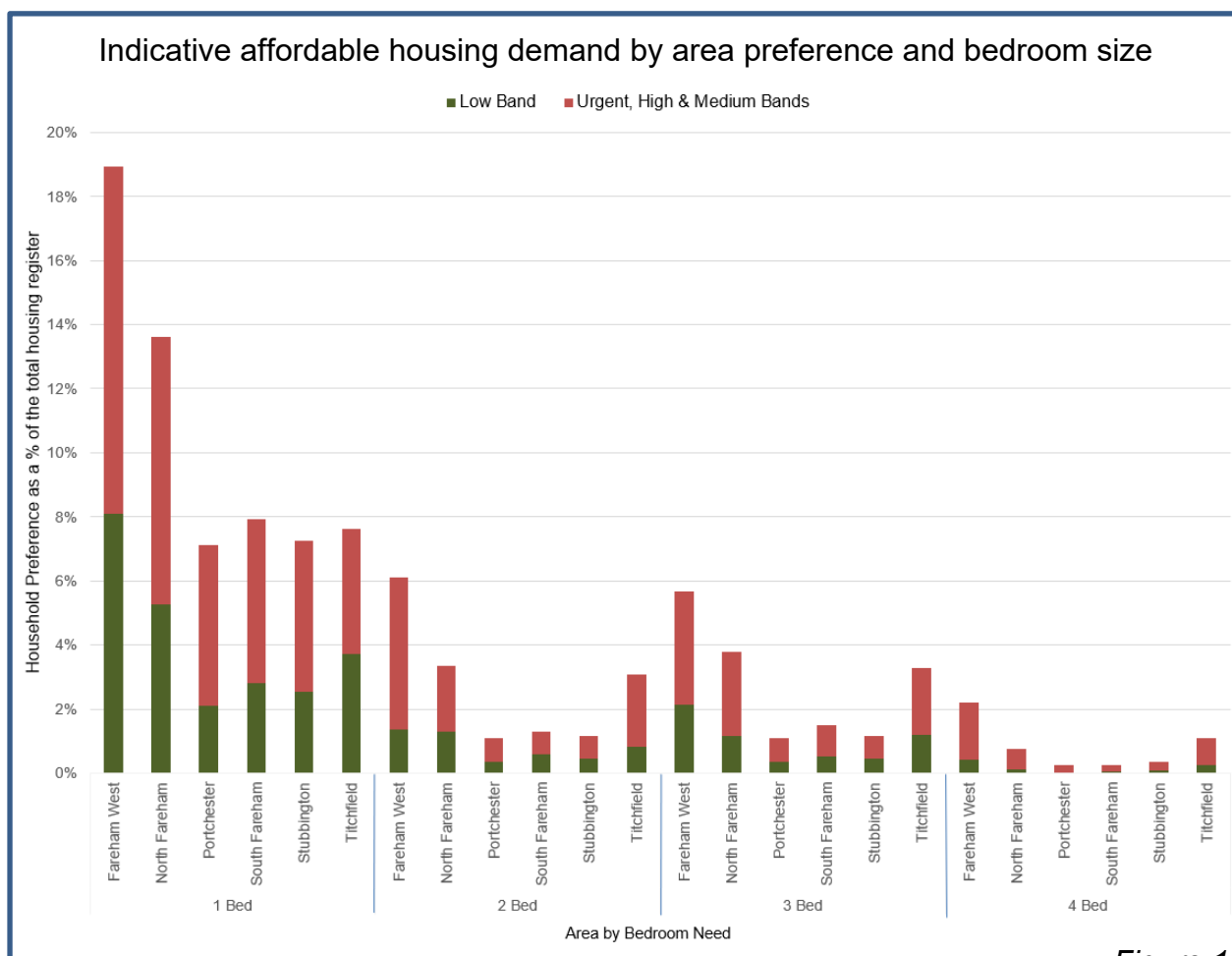


Figure 1

17. The graph shows that the most popular area of need is in Fareham West for one-bedroom properties. This is very different to previous statistics, but the change can be partly attributed to the housing register review. In addition, Fareham West is a larger area compared to Portchester, for example, and differs in its urbanity.
18. It is clear that the greatest need is focused on 1-bedroom properties. However, we know that households are also waiting longer for larger, family sized accommodation. Taking all this information into account, officers check the detail of the statistics thoroughly before commenting on any proposed new developments, thereby employing a qualitative as well as quantitative understanding of the need. The graph shown here is a simple example of what the data indicates.
19. Welborne will also be added to the areas applicants can choose from in the coming weeks.

FORTHCOMING AFFORDABLE HOME DELIVERY

20. In addition to developing an in-depth understanding of the affordable housing need in the Borough, officers also collect data and information about the new affordable

housing which is expected to get built in the Borough in the years ahead. This information is collected from planning approvals/applications and the anticipated completion on site.

21. This information allows officers to monitor how new affordable home delivery integrates with the need on the Housing Register.
22. New affordable home delivery across the Borough had been low for several years, with matters such as nitrate neutrality previously impacting the number of new dwellings permitted through the planning system in a significant way. As officers had predicted, we are now in the early stages of seeing an upward trend in the number of new affordable homes provided across the Borough, as articulated in Figure 2 below.
23. The below graph includes all affordable homes delivered or anticipated to be delivered. A proportion of these affordable homes will therefore be Shared Ownership properties (which are not for customers on the housing waiting list).

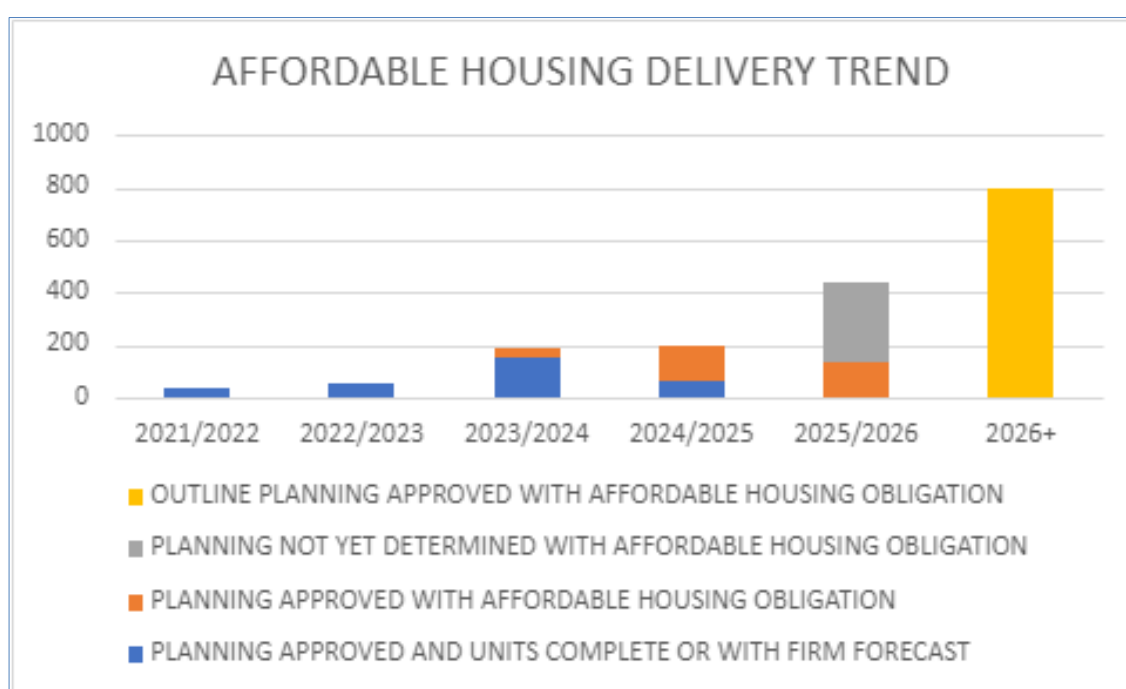


Figure 2

24. Officers will continue to monitor and look at how the need aligns with supply; this will include further analysis of the anticipated new affordable homes by area of the Borough. At this stage the increasing supply is hugely positive as we seek to provide homes for the customers on the housing register, and with awareness of potential increasing customer need for affordable housing due to wider landscape changes principally connected with the cost-of-living crisis.

RISK ASSESSMENT

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

CONCLUSION

26. The review of the Housing Register has enabled significant improvements to helping vulnerable households into affordable housing. By capturing accurate and detailed information, officers can understand the most appropriate housing route for applicants.

27. The Civica system will further aid officers in ensuring details are up to date. By having a review based on the annual acceptance to the register for each applicant, officers are not burdened by an overwhelming, resource intensive task each year.

28. Officers will continue to monitor the data on affordable housing need and projected delivery of affordable homes to ensure that we can help best meet the needs of customers.

Appendices: **A:** Indicative areas of demand for Social/Affordable Rent housing need

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Fleur Allaway (01329 824304).

Indicative areas of demand for Social/Affordable Rent housing need:

