

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 30 November 2023

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

Councillor S Ingram (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: R Bird, H P Davis, Mrs C L A Hockley, Mrs K K Trott and
M R Daniells (deputising for F Birkett)

**Also
Present:**



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor F Birkett.

2. MINUTES

Councillor Mrs K K Trott, requested an update on item 7 of the previous minutes which related to the Pilot Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey, specifically in relation to the creation of the new post. The Director of Housing advised the Panel that this would form part of the plan for early 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on 28 September 2023 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Vivid (Scoping Report/Invitation)

Members will be aware that, following our last scrutiny meeting, Officers approached VIVID with our invite and scoping report requesting their attendance at a future panel meeting. Members have already been separately advised by officers that this request was declined. Instead, VIVID have offered to attend a more informal meeting. I can confirm that such a meeting has been arranged by Officers for the 14th December, and all Councillors have been given the opportunity to attend. I would encourage Members of the Housing Scrutiny Panel to utilise this opportunity to find out more about the work that VIVID do, and to put any questions they have to senior staff from VIVID.

Appointment to Head of Service

Members of the panel will be aware that for many months there have been some senior vacancies in the Fareham Housing team. I am pleased to advise that following a recruitment process, Officers have now appointed Abi Travers to the vacant Head of Housing (Pathways and Neighbourhoods) position. Abi currently works for Runnymede Borough Council, and she will be joining Fareham Housing in January. Abi's role will be very similar to that previously held by Caroline Newman.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Officers have advised that the first official Tenant Satisfaction Survey is expected to run from the 4th December until the 12th January. All Council tenants will be invited to participate. The results of the survey will then form part of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures that need to be reported to the Regulator of Social Housing in 2024.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The Panel considered the Executive items of business which fall under the remit of the Housing Portfolio, including Executive Member decisions and Officer delegated decisions, that have taken place since the last meeting of the Panel on 28 September 2023.

(1) Affordable Housing at Welborne

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

(2) Empty Homes Strategy - Adoption

Councillor R Bird enquired as to whether there is an expectation that the Panel will have periodic reports on the progress of this strategy. The Director of Housing confirmed that, due to the relatively low numbers, there were no plans to bring further updates to the Panel on this item.

(3) Facilitating the use of the Local Authority Housing Fund

Councillor Mrs K K Trott requested an update on the progress of this proposal following the Executive decision on 9 October 2023. The Director of Housing confirmed that it is progressing well and that the Council has already had an offer accepted on a property in Stubbington, and they have identified further chain free properties in South Fareham and Portchester.

(4) Renewal of the contract for the Housing department software

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

(5) Town centre property acquisition for affordable housing provision

Councillor Mrs K K Trott asked for an update on this decision. The Director of Housing confirmed that this project is moving forward, and that a verbal agreement on the price has been reached.

7. DEPARTMENT FOR LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES VISIT

The Panel received a presentation by the Interim Consultant for Housing & Benefits which provided members with feedback on a recent visit by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to undertake a peer 'deep dive' into the Council's Housing Options and Temporary Accommodation Services. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

The Panel commented on the great progress made by the Interim Consultant for Housing & Benefits, along with all of her staff. The Panel noted the impressive progress made by the teams in addressing many of the issues that the department was impacted by. The Panel asked for a special thanks to be given to John Hornby, Housing Options Support Officer, for all of his hard work throughout this.

Members were encouraged to hear that more emphasis was being placed on re-engaging with residents and tenants, with more home visits and face to face visits.

Councillor Daniells enquired as to whether the Council has access to the apprentice levy, and if so, were we using that as a source to recruit new members of staff. The Interim Consultant for Housing & Benefits confirmed that the Council has looked into using the apprenticeship levy for some of its recruitment but at present was unable to utilise it due to restrictions within the scheme. She advised members that they will continue to look into this scheme for future recruitments.

(Councillor H Davies left the meeting at the end of this item and did not take part in the remainder of the meeting).

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

8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Panel received a presentation by the Housing Development Officer which provided members with an update on progress with the Fareham Housing sites and other relevant strategic housing matters. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

(Councillor R Bird left the meeting at the end of this item and was not present for the remainder of the meeting).

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

9. DRAFT ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Panel received a report by the Director of Housing which provided Members with a summary of the proposed changes to the existing Housing Allocations Policy.

The Housing Manager (Accommodations and Allocations) informed the Panel that some minor changes to the draft policy had been made since its publication on the Housing Scrutiny Panel agenda and that these would be reflected in the published Executive report.

Councillor Daniells enquired about whether the policy would now take into account gender reassignment. The Housing Manager (Accommodations and Allocations) informed the Panel that whilst the Policy doesn't specifically cover this, all cases are considered against individual needs and requirements, and

that any rules that the Council set within the Allocations Policy will not be rigid and there will be some flexibility where this is necessary.

RESOLVED that: -

(a) the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report; and

(b) the Executive note that the Panel has no comments to make on the proposed new draft Allocations Policy.

10. INTERIM PROCESS ON DAMP AND MOULD

The Panel received a presentation by the Director of Housing which provided members with information in respect of the new damp and mould interim process document for the Council’s Housing portfolio. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

(Councillor Mrs K K Trott left the meeting at the end of this item and did not take part in the remainder of the meeting).

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the content of the presentation.

11. HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL PRIORITIES

Members considered the scrutiny priorities for the Housing Scrutiny Panel.

The Director of Housing addressed the Panel on this item and informed them that an item updating members on Staffing is likely to be coming to the February meeting.

There were no further suggestions put forward for the Scrutiny Priorities.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm).

..... Chairman

..... Date



Housing Options and Accommodation Peer Review Recommendations Briefing to Housing Scrutiny

November 2023



Peer Review Process

- Offered for free to all Housing Authorities
- We used to ratify our own analysis and national performance dashboard
- Published dashboard 6 months behind as standard
- Scope of review agreed – The ‘Front Door’
- Engaged CEx and Exec Member
- DLUHC Review in person in Fareham meeting with staff and partners
- Formal feedback September 2023
- But didn’t wait until then to make improvements!
- Programme structure and governance established

Focus of the Review

1. Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2. Funding, Leadership and Corporate Support
3. Use of HPG
4. Embedding the HRA & Preventing Homelessness
5. Staffing Structure & Service Delivery
6. HCLIC & Performance Management
7. Access to accommodation
8. Management of Temporary Accommodation
9. Preventing Single Homelessness & Ending Rough Sleeping
10. Partnership Arrangements

Main Recommendations

- **Revisit the spirit of the HRA:** Lockdown and pressures of Everyone In contributed to withdrawal to crisis response, staff need to be motivated to 'get back out there' with home visits, active prevention
- **Review messaging around homelessness:** to service users, stakeholders and partners
- **Re-shape the customer journey so that Part 6 and Part 7 applications** are dealt with distinctly
- **Re-invigorate partnership and stakeholder relationships:** including a multi-agency forum to deliver the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Action plan
- **Review the arrangements for the management of TA voids**
- **Increase access to social housing** for homeless people through a review of the Allocation Policy

Improvement Approach

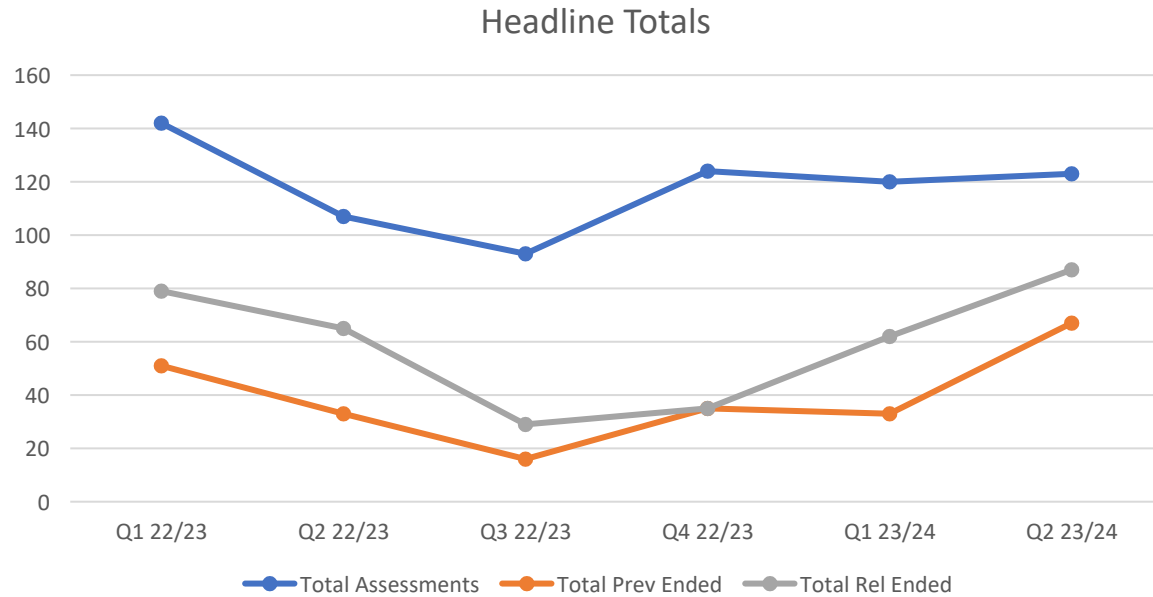
6 Workstreams:

- Workforce
- Front Door
- Resident Satisfaction
- Sufficiency
- Performance
- Policy

Aligning Improvement to outcomes;

Review the disproportionate level of “not homeless” decisions being made	5
Ensure that the causes of homelessness are recorded correctly, particularly in relief	5
Ensure HCLIC returns are returned within the deadlines set, and are accurate and comprehensive. This data is used to determine homelessness funding as well as related funding from other government departments such as DHSC, DfE and MoJ.	5
Use demand data to design prevention interventions against causes of homelessness (loss of AST/parental & friend eviction)	5/6
Consider a Partnership Event to increase the profile of Duty to Refer and possible opportunities for early prevention	2
Ensure that all HPG and other funding submission outcomes are accurately captured and recorded as separate areas of spend, which is required moving forward in monitoring returns	5
Ensure that homelessness remains a priority in the new Corporate Strategy from 2023	6
Benchmark and set out a robust set of KPIs that track performance across the service	5
Complete service restructure in order to build resilience, improve performance and drive the service forward	1/2
Update and review the Strategy Action Plan to ensure that it is SMART, that resources are clearly identified and actions fully attributed	6
Include homelessness stakeholders to monitor/review the Homelessness Strategy Action plan on a quarterly/regular basis – this can promote partnership working, maximise opportunities to early prevention of homelessness, record and monitor emerging challenges and to reflect upon and record successes	2/5/6
Revisit the spirit of the HRA with a strong emphasis on prevention	6
Develop a “prevention toolkit” for use by Officers	6
Enable staff to be creative by using a spend to save approach	6
Develop a clear process for the management of part 6 and part 7 applications.	6
Consider how more home visits could be undertaken in the prevention space – a Visiting Officer?	2
Provide training on the HRA2017 legislation	1/5/6
Relaunch the new procedures that have been written to ensure that staff are clear on their responsibilities	1/6

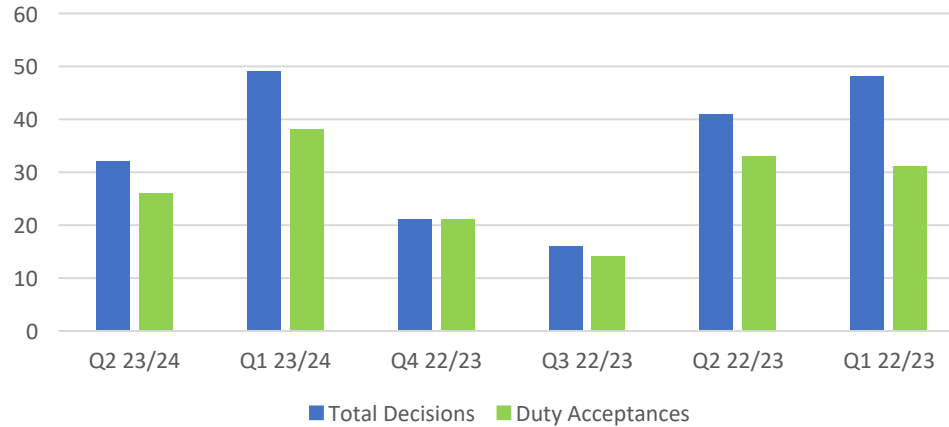
Headlines of progress to date



FBC H-CLIC QA Return	Jul - Sep 2023		Jul - Sep 2022
Assessments		Last Yr	
Total Assessments	123	+15%	107
Owed a Prevention Duty	47	+74%	27
Owed a Relief Duty	71	115%	33

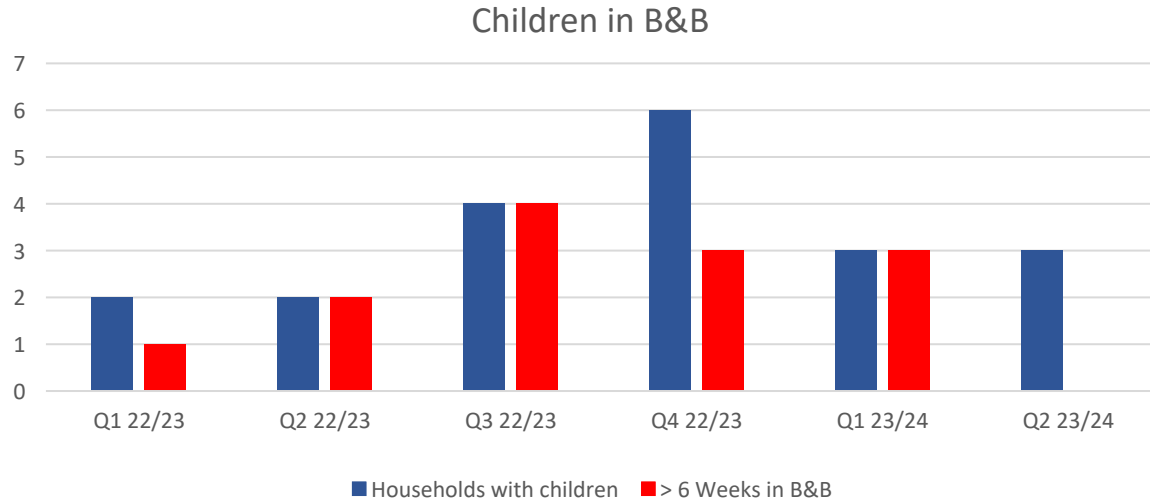
Headlines of progress to date

Main Duty Decisions



FBC H-CLIC QA Return	Jul - Sep 2023		Jul - Sep 2022
Main Duties			
Total Main Duty Decisions	48	-2%	49
Main Duty Acceptances	31	-18%	38
Main Duty Cases Ended	44	+175%	16
Ended Where Social Housing Secured	20	+233%	6
Ended Where PRS Housing Secured	8	+300%	2

Headlines of progress to date



FBC H-CLIC QA Return	Jul - Sep 2023		Jul - Sep 2022
Temporary Accommodation			
Total Households in TA	154	+57%	98
Households With Children	69	+77%	39
Total Children in TA	143	+91%	75
Households With Children in B&B	3	+50%	2
Households With Children in B&B > 6 Wks	0	-200%	2
16-17 Year Old Main Applicants in B&B	0	0	0

Other progress

- Permanent staffing team
 - Focus on support and coaching
 - Bespoke training
 - Workplace culture
 - Quality Assurance Framework; Quality, consistencies and standards
 - Allocations Policy
 - Tenants to resident satisfaction
 - Governance ; ie Families in B&B
 - Long term B&B
 - High-cost placements
- Work in progress but foundations in place**



Affordable Housing Update *(Item 8)*

November 2023



Site Updates – Shared Ownership

Ophelia Court



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- 9 No. 1&2 bed flats
- SOS November 2023
- 75% of Homes England grant to be received December 2023
- Estimated completion Winter 2024

Capella Close



- 10 homes occupied
- Last home remarketed (2bh)
- November/ December - viewings

Site Updates – Assheton Court

60No. Sheltered flats

November 2023:

- Demolition complete
- Section 73 planning application submitted – Air Source Heat Pumps
- Stage 1 tender process and evaluation complete – 5 contractors invited to stage 2 (January 2024)
- Compiling evidence for grant funding bid early 2024

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Assheton Court – Proposed External materials

Brick



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Cladding

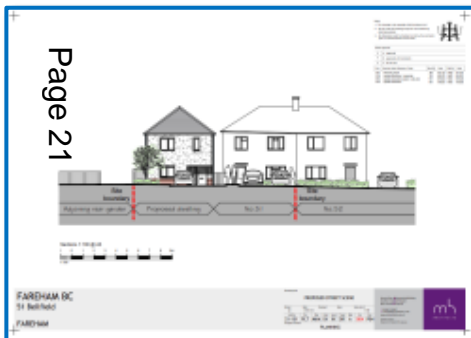


Future development updates

51 Bellfield

1No. 3 bed house

- Daintree Developments Ltd
- SOS March 2024
- Completion Winter 2024



Town Centre acquisition

- Potential for 20-25 residential units above retail frontage
- Regeneration benefits
- Emergency/ temporary accommodation – more suitable than B&B
- Positive discussions to acquire the property

Affordable Housing SPD

- Last Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (AH SPD) 2005
- Fareham Local Plan 2037 adopted 2023 – new AH SPD to explain in greater detail AH policies/ requirements
- SPD will be a key document for enabling affordable housing
- New way of calculating off site affordable housing contributions to reflect cost of providing on-site

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Draft SPD timetable:

Date	Task
December 2023	Draft SPD for officer comments
January 2024	Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel - Housing Scrutiny Panel Members invited
February 2024	Executive
February – March 2024	Consultation

PCC purchase of Clarion stock

- Portsmouth City Council is purchasing Clarion stock, known as lot 1A, 818 homes
- 71 of these units are within Fareham Borough
- Long term investment decision
- Management likely to be from Paulsgrove office
- PCC report states intention to let empty homes swiftly
- Does not impact existing FBC nomination rights for properties

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Date	Task
November 2023	Start of Clarion formal resident consultation
December 2023	PCC Full Council and Clarion Board approval. Resident meet and greet with PCC
January 2024	End of Clarion's formal resident consultation –Board approval to complete and feed back to residents
February 2024	Completion

Any Questions

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Damp and Mould Process Document (Item 10)

November 2023



Definitions

- **Damp** – an excess of moisture in the home that cannot escape.
- **Penetrating damp** – water enters the house for an extended period
- **Rising damp** – water that has been absorbed through the ground and rises through the structure of the building.
- **Traumatic damp** – Caused by leaking water and may also originate from outside the property.
- **Condensation** – when moisture in the air meets a cold surface
- **Mould** – A microscopic fungus, with spores that are found everywhere. Mould grows where there is persistent damp.

Our case categories

The Council will categorise cases as:

- **Mild** – includes excessive condensation on windows, small amounts of mould within the mastic sealants on bathroom tiles or small amounts of mould in one room, such as in the corner.
- **Moderate** – where mould has appeared in one or more rooms, bathrooms where excessive condensation has caused black mould, leaks from the structure / roof causing brown staining, efflorescence, or mould over a large area.
- **Severe** - includes where black mould is present in most rooms, major leaks from the structure causing damp, mould, major rising damp, major water ingress through cavity insulation or major flooding causing structure damage.

Our cases

- 121 cases received last year
 - Mild = 42
 - Moderate = 32
 - Severe = 18



Damp & mould can affect both the physical and mental health of customers

- People of certain ages, or with certain health conditions, are at greater risk

Wider background

Legislation & Guidance

- Various legal requirements incl. Renters (Reform) Bill and Social Housing Regulation Act
- Guidance – ‘Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home’ (gov’t)

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Key Messages

- Stop blaming tenants for ‘lifestyle choices’
- Get to the root cause of the issue (ventilation, inadequate heating, etc)
- Build a holistic understanding of the issue



Interim document - Aims

Aims:

- To have a clear and proactive approach to damp, condensation and mould issues in our housing stock
- To provide clarity ahead of a more formal policy being developed
- To ensure a consistent and effective approach
- To allow cases to be prioritised based on the extent of the issue and any prevailing risks for our customers
- To articulate our responsibilities, and those of our customers



Interim document - overview

- Detail the Council's and the tenant's responsibilities
- How to contact us
- What the process is
 1. Customer contacts the Council
 2. Initial category/priority given
 3. Officer visit – includes a risk assessment
 4. Personalised action plan created
 5. Ongoing case monitoring
- That further risk assessment will be undertaken on moderate and severe cases
- Outline the timescales for action

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Any Questions

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