

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 October 2021
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: Housing Performance Q1

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Housing and Homelessness Panel recommendations concerning the Scrutiny-commissioned report on Housing Performance Q1
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Chair of the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Diko Blackings, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless
Corporate Priority:	More Affordable Housing
Policy Framework:	Housing and Homelessness Strategy
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 02 September 2021, the Housing and Homelessness Panel considered a report it had commissioned concerning the Council's performance against its Housing targets in 2020/21 Q1.
2. The Panel would like to thank Richard Wood, Strategy and Service Development Manager, for compiling and presenting the report, and responding to questions, as well as Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, Diko Blackings, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless, and Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing for attending and answering questions.

Summary and recommendation

3. Richard Wood, Strategy and Service Development Manager, presented the report, outlining the key activities of Housing Services in the first quarter of the financial year 2021/22.
4. For the Council's activities around rough sleeping the challenging context of undertaking its work in a new way - the 'everyone in' policy - was noted. Housing's current focus in this area was on getting those people who had been provided temporary accommodation moved on into longer-term accommodation. The pandemic had brought increased presentations of people as homeless. With changes such as the end of the eviction ban, the furlough scheme and the recommencement of evictions that number was liable to remain elevated. Despite the challenges, however, securing move-on accommodation was proving successful, with 252 having been moved on to date. Since the publication of the report Canterbury House had been vacated, and attention was being turned to those housed at the YHA. The Council's work was being supported by a successful bid for RSA funding from central government, which would partially be used for a private lettings pilot to trial enabling access to private lettings from former rough sleepers. Overall, number of rough sleepers was reducing, with 24 recorded at the last count, down from 62 the year before. Other KPIs about temporary accommodation and successful outcomes from homelessness prevention interventions were also being met.
5. Traditionally the Council's affordable housing targets were reported on annually. However, owing to the pace at which housing developments proceed it was deemed more appropriate to have a four year target instead, set at 1200 affordable homes. In the first quarter 49 affordable homes had been delivered, compared to 123 in the entire year prior.
6. The main focus around the Council's own housing stock in terms of KPIs was over decarbonisation and retrofitting, with the aim that fewer than 46% of homes would be rated below an EPC rating of C. Last year 54% failed to meet this standard. Prioritisation was being undertaken to ensure that the 240 homes being improved were all below the threshold, with the worst performing properties being targeted first.
7. In its response the Panel raised questions over a number of areas including:
 - Plans for move-on, particularly amongst harder to house residents currently being housed through 'everyone in'.
 - The meaning of 'successful outcomes' in terms of homeless prevention interventions
 - The level of tenant engagement in retrofitting plans
 - The suitability of different technology for retrofitting.

The Panel wishes to make one recommendations regarding Council engagement with individuals with lived experience of rough sleeping.

Lived Experience

8. Present at the meeting were a number of tenant ambassadors, who were primarily attending to contribute to the Panel's other substantive item, on Tenant Engagement. Challenge was put to the Panel and the officers concerning the suitability of move-on accommodation for temporarily housed individuals by one tenant ambassador. There was a disconnect between the success presented in the report, and the comments made by a number of people he knew concerning the suitability of accommodation offered. This disconnect was talked through, with it being explained that for the purposes of performance monitoring successfully finding move-on accommodation was a case of finding a temporarily-housed individual a secure tenancy, and one which was financially sustainable in light of benefit entitlements.

9. A wider discussion was held, however, over Council engagement with those with lived experience in the design and provision of its homelessness-related services. The Council has previously looked to work with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum to access the views of currently and recently homeless individuals to do exactly this. However, it was recognised that engagement is not a 'do and forget' activity, but an ongoing process, and whilst the Council had worked well previously to engage those with lived experience of homelessness, the huge pressures on the team caused by 'everyone in' and the additional challenges of social distancing meant such engagement had been reduced. The Panel requests, therefore, that as the abnormal workloads arising from the Covid response begin to ease, and restrictions on in-person interactions are reduced, that the Council begins again to re-engage with those with lived experience, through the Lived Experience Advisory Forum or other relevant means.

Recommendation 1: That the Council, as Covid restrictions ease, increases the breadth and depth of its engagement with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum and other similar groups in shaping Council homelessness services.

Further Consideration

10. The Housing and Homelessness Panel has requested that a quarterly dashboard of key performance metrics to form a standing item on its agenda. This dashboard is likely to replace consideration of future Housing Performance reports.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Housing and Homelessness Panel made on 02/09/2021 concerning Housing Performance Q1

Provided by the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless, Councillor Diko Blackings

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>1) That the Council, as Covid restrictions ease, increases the breadth and depth of its engagement with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum and other similar groups in shaping Council homelessness services.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Working with LEAF and others with lived experience to inform and help shape homelessness services is vitally important. The pandemic has made engagement more difficult, but has continued over the past year including: informing the specification for the new countywide rough sleeping and single homelessness service and Housing First support service, contributing to the developing Housing and Homelessness Strategy, and working with LEAF and King’s College London to put together a team of peer assessors to conduct the qualitative evaluation of the Step-down housing service which is part of the Out of Hospital project.</p> <p>We are committed to continue to build on this engagement, including involving LEAF in the next stages of the development of the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy, and they will be a key component of the new countywide service with representation in the governance arrangements, and a partner in ensuring the voice of service users are heard in the ongoing monitoring and development of the services.</p>

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