

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 1 November 2018

Subject: Housing

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S. Stavrou

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Council House-building Programme

I am pleased to be able to report that on Wednesday 10th October the Council took handover of four new Council homes from Phase 3 of the Council house-building programme at Parklands, Coopersale, now named Verrall Close. The two new 2-bed houses and two 1-bed flats will be let to applicants on the Council's housing register.

It won't be long before three more sites will be ready to be handed over. On 5 November the Contractor is preparing to hand over three 2-bed houses and one 3-bed house at Centre Avenue, Epping, followed by two 2-bed houses and two 1-bed bungalows at Springfields, Epping on 7 November. A further single 3-bed house is scheduled to be handed over on 23 November in Centre Drive.

There has been an ongoing issue over ground cross-contamination at the site in Stewards Green Road, Epping, where the Council was expecting to receive the keys to two 2-bed houses and two 3-bed houses earlier in the summer. However, based on a combination of incorrect pre-demolition advice from a firm of specialist asbestos testing consultants and the possibility of contaminated imported made-up ground to the soft landscaping areas, samples taken failed the contamination test required to satisfy the Planning conditions. This means that further tests and investigations are required before a hand-over date can be agreed. It is hoped that these will follow in late November. The Council is seeking to pass on any additional costs to the specialist consultants who provided incorrect advice.

Since the fire in August at Burton Road, Loughton, Mulalley, who is the appointed contractor for Phase 2, is working hard to keep the hand-over of the 51 new homes on or as close to the contract completion date of early January 2019 as possible. In relation to Block D, which was the block that suffered the fire damage, I reported in September that Mulalley were considering the possibility of completing the two lower floors in line with the target completion dates, with the upper levels finishing later. However, for health and safety reasons this will not be possible. Therefore, Block D is now proposed to be handed over in July 2019. Mulalley have been made aware that the Council will be seeking to recover the loss of rent as a result of this delay, which will be collected through Liquidated and Ascertained Damages as part of the Contract.

The 24 sites making up what was known as Phases 4-6 are being evaluated by the Development Team and being prioritised based on the expiry of their planning permissions. This means the first package of sites will concentrate in Loughton at Chequers Road, Bushfields, Lower Alterton Hall and Chester Road. Tenders are expected to be sought between February 2019 and April 2019, with works starting on site in June 2019. Package two will be at Millfields and Queensway, Ongar where tenders will follow package one in April 2019 and start on site is scheduled for July 2019. In the meantime, the garages on these, and all other sites where planning permission has been granted, will be demolished and cleared to enable the Development Team to undertake detailed

ground contamination surveys. I will update Members via this update report of which sites will make up future packages as and when they are prioritised.

Oakwood Hill Estate Footpaths

I am pleased to advise Members that the joint working initiative with Essex County Council, to re-surface the footpaths on the Oakwood Hill Estate, has now been completed. This followed an extensive consultation exercise with Resident's, Ward and Town Councillors. Members may remember that this was a project funded from Service Enhancements, where £200,000 was allocated by Epping Forest District Council and was match-funded by Essex County Council.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – Duty to Refer

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a new duty, which requires specified public authorities in England to notify Local Housing Authorities (LHA) if any person using their service is homeless or is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The duty to refer is intended to help people get access to homelessness services as soon as possible so that their homelessness can be prevented or relieved in a timely manner. This duty came into effect on the 1 October 2018.

The public authorities subject to the Duty to Refer include:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Prisons | Hospitals in their function to provide inpatient care |
| Secure Training Centres | Secure Colleges |
| Youth Offending Teams | Probation Services |
| Job Centre Plus | Social Service Authorities |
| Emergency Departments | Urgent Treatment Centres |
| The Regular Forces | Youth Offending Institutions |

If a public authority considers that a service user may be homeless or threatened with homeless within 56 days, or if a service user positively discloses this information, the public authority will be required to ask the service user if they would like to be referred to a LHA for homelessness assistance and advice. Although the service user can be referred to any LHA, it is advisable for them to approach a LHA with whom they have a local connection.

If a service user consents to a referral being made under the Duty to Refer, the public authority will notify the chosen LHA of the reason for their referral and how the individual may be contacted. Referrals to this Council are to be made through our online Partner Referral form, which will be accessed through the Council's website.