

Select Committee Agenda



Communities Select Committee Tuesday, 17th January, 2017

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Communities Select Committee**, which will be held at:

**Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping
on Tuesday, 17th January, 2017
at 7.00 pm .**

**Glen Chipp
Chief Executive**

**Democratic Services
Officer**

Adrian Hendry
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Members:

Councillors Y Knight (Chairman), G Shiell (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, A Beales, K Chana, R Gadsby, L Girling, S Heap, L Hughes, S Jones, S Murray, A Mitchell, B Rolfe, B Surtees and H Whitbread

SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE:

6:00 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)

(Director of Governance) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

3. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 5 - 18)

To agree the notes of the meeting of the Select Committee held on 21 November 2016.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Director of Governance). To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a pecuniary or a non-pecuniary interest under the

Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked pay particular attention to paragraph 9 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a non-pecuniary interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 9 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 19 - 28)

(Chairman / Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed the Terms of Reference of this Committee. This is attached along with an ongoing work programme. Members are asked at each meeting to review both documents.

6. PRESENTATION BY THE EPPING FOREST CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (Pages 29 - 30)

(Director of Communities) To receive a presentation by Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau, please see the attached report.

7. EXTENSION OF THE FUNDING OF 2 EPPING FOREST CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU DEBT ADVISORS (Pages 31 - 32)

(Director of Communities) To consider the attached report.

8. REALITY ROADSHOW (Pages 33 - 36)

(Director of Communities) to consider the attached report.

9. HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVES (Pages 37 - 46)

(Director of Communities) to consider the attached report.

10. COUNCIL RENT INCREASE 2017/18 - BRIEFING (Pages 47 - 48)

(Director of Communities) to consider the attached report.

11. HOUSING STRATEGY KEY ACTION PLAN 2016 - 12 MONTH PROGRESS (Pages 49 - 60)

(Director of Communities) to consider the attached report.

12. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

To consider which reports are ready to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the next meeting of this Select Committee will be held on 14 March 2017.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2016
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 10.04 PM**

Members Present: Y Knight (Chairman), G Shiell (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, A Beales, K Chana, L Girling, S Heap, L Hughes, S Murray, A Mitchell, H Whitbread and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)

Other members present: R Brookes, J Lea and S Stavrou

Apologies for Absence: R Gadsby, S Jones and B Rolfe

Officers Present A Hall (Director of Communities), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Housing Operations)), D Pegler (Housing Manager (Older Peoples Services)) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

37. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitutions made for the meeting.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5, review of Epping Forest Careline Services, due to his mother being a user of this service. He considered that his interest was not prejudicial and he would stay for the consideration of the item.

39. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

(a) Terms of Reference

The Select Committee's Terms of Reference were noted.

(b) Work Programme

The Select Committee's Work Programme was noted.

40. REVIEW OF EPPING FOREST CARELINE ALARM MONITORING SERVICE

The Assistant Director Housing Operations, Mr Wilson, introduced the report setting out options for the future of the Council's Careline Monitoring Centre, based at Parsonage Court, Loughton. The service was introduced in June 1984 and offers a twenty-four hour, 365 days per year, emergency alarm monitoring service to older and disabled people living within the District. The Service was also offered to other vulnerable groups including victims of domestic violence and younger people with disabilities. There were currently 2,572 properties (representing around 3,500 people) in the District linked to the centre in this way.

Around 1,380 of the connections were private sector dwellings, which were connected via a dispersed alarm, which has an associated neck worn radio trigger. A

range of various sensors were offered such as on line smoke alarms, fall and flood detectors. The user paid an annual rental to the Council for the service; in 2015/2016 the Council received a total income of around £185,000, inclusive of associated sensors. The Council worked in partnership with Essex County Council which funds the first 12 weeks rental for the user.

The charges made by the Council were very competitive compared to other authorities in Essex.

Careline has a Disaster Recovery Plan which is an essential back up system. In the event of the systems being faulty at the Careline Monitoring Centre, all calls could be diverted and handled at the equipment manufacturer's own control centre in Yorkshire until the service was restored, where clients' information is securely stored and was regularly updated should this alternative system be needed.

It was noted that as the Careline Monitoring Centre had expanded in terms of the number of private sector connections and the advances in technology, the management and operational aspects of the service had become more complex. In addition, there have been difficulties in recruiting staff due to the nature of the work and the salary level. This had led to additional pressures on existing staff that have had to cover, not only vacant posts, but also annual leave and sickness absences. Also, all new staff completes an 8 week training programme prior to commencing full duties, which adds to the burden of covering shifts.

In 2011 the Careline Monitoring Service became Telecare Services Association (TSA) accredited. TSA was a nationally recognised standards body for the delivery of technology enabled care and support services in the UK. The Council's Careline Service has to date met all of the Audit requirements.

Importantly, the TSA have recently brought to the attention of the Council and authorities nationally the British Standard (BS8591), extracts of which currently states:

"There should be a minimum of two operators in an ARC [control centre] at all times, capable of carrying out all operational procedures, at least one of whom should be at their workstation at all times".

TSA have also confirmed that the above standard was under review and should be brought in line with the European Standard. Although 2 Operators on duty at all times was expected to be desired, this would result in Centres who do not have 2 Operators on duty at all times being required to put contingency measures in place should more than one emergency call be received at any one time.

Although the Council was complimented on its service at the last Audit, it was explained that authorities who did not comply with the Standard would not pass any TSA annual Audits when the Standard had been reviewed.

Although the service currently provided an excellent and reliable service to residents, due to the reasons above it was considered important that this review was undertaken to ensure the future resilience of the service. There appeared to be the following four options for the future delivery of the Careline service:

Option one – that the Careline Monitoring Service continues to be provided by the Council under the current arrangements;

Option two – the Council provides an enhanced Careline Monitoring service;

Option three – monitor the service through another provider 24/7; and

Option four – monitoring the service through another service provider overnight.

Option one – *that the Careline Monitoring Service continues to be provided by the Council under the current arrangements* - the Council was making a small surplus on the service by around £13,122 per annum. But it was not meeting the British Standard and was at a high risk should any call not be dealt with correctly by any Careline Operator where a user's well-being was put at risk and a challenge was brought against the Council. There were also the difficulties of recruiting and retaining Careline staff, maintaining cover for staff absences and the inability to expand the service. However, the Committee noted that the Service was currently a reliable and excellent service but it was important that this Review was undertaken to ensure its future resilience. Due to these disadvantages it was felt that the Council could no longer continue to provide the service under the current arrangements and that option one should not be recommended to the Cabinet.

Councillor Murray noted the difficulties in recruiting staff and asked when was the last time that the salary levels had been reviewed. Mr Wilson said that it was about 12 to 18 months ago when they had increased the pay grade from a grade 3 to a grade 4. Councillor Murray thought this was a low salary when compared to other jobs; Mr Wilson explained that it had been through the job evaluation panel. Other problems with recruiting to these posts was that people did not realise just how complicated this job was until during their training.

Councillor Brookes asked what the scale 4 span was and on average how long did the staff stay. She was told that it was between £18 to £19k pa. (full time). Plus there was night allowance and overtime. The current staff were very long serving and dedicated to the work, but this may not be the case in the future. Councillor Brookes noted that as we were currently making a small profit on this scheme, could we not just pay more? Councillor H Whitbread asked if they worked with the local schools and colleges to recruit staff and did they offer part time working and/or apprenticeships. Mr Wilson said that they had not tried the schools and colleges as yet, it was a possibility; they also offered the posts as part time jobs, but it was difficult to recruit to; although there was a career path.

Councillor Murray noted that the British Standard is for two officers on at all times, would this change. Mr Wilson replied that this was unlikely to change and may well be compounded further under the European Standard. Although not a statutory requirement, it is good practice that we would be expected to comply with. Councillor Murray continued that if it was more about good practice it would not leave the Council in a good position on appeal, would it be something we could insure against. Mr Wilson replied we could insure ourselves against not meeting good practice.

The Chairman said if we must have two people on at one time would we also need someone on standby. Mr Wilson reiterated that they were looking to rule out Option 1 and having only one person on duty. If someone called in sick they would have to phone around other officers to arrange cover. The Chairman asked how long it took to train the new staff. Mr Wilson said about 8 weeks, it varied from person to person. After the 8 weeks they had to prove that they could do the job and would be tested by the Housing Manager, Older People Services. When they start the job they are, initially on duty during the day when there were other staff there to offer advice.

Councillor Baldwin asked if jobs would be lost. Mr Wilson reminded the meeting that they were presently only considering not continuing as they were. Councillor Baldwin then asked if they could meet the British Standard and still retain option 1. Mr Wilson

replied that they could not do both. Councillor Baldwin asked if two calls were received at once could one of them be rerouted. He was told that would be a high risk option.

Councillor Mitchell said that they worked unusual hours and at the weekends. Was there a lot of sick leave? She was told that officers had a very good attendance record.

Councillor Murray asked if they could have an option 1½. Could we keep option 1 and use technology to reroute a second call. Mr Wilson replied that they would have to have someone paid, off site, to take that second call. They would then need to relay to us the information on what had happened. This would be the same as having two staff on duty and also there would be two members of staff working separately and alone.

Councillor Beales said that it was difficult to rule this option out completely without first assessing the other options. Mr Wilson replied that options 2, 3 and 4 could be made to work, but option 1 could not.

Councillor Stavrou commented that officers had given this a lot of consideration and consulted UNISON and staff members. Neither wanted to have option 1, as it was untenable.

The Chairman then asked that members decided on option 1 before they went on to discuss options 2, 3 & 4. A vote was taken and the majority were not in favour of supporting Option 1.

AGREED: that Option one not be supported and recommended by this Committee.

Option two - *the Council provides an enhanced Careline Monitoring service* – Mr Wilson explained Option 2, that an enhanced service would include employing 5 extra members of staff in order to meet with the British Standard. There would not be sufficient work for the five additional officers which would cost the Council a further £166,300 pa. and would result in a further 58% increase in charges to users. Also, as recruitment, retention and cover difficulties would double officers were not recommending this option.

Councillor Murray said that he was keen on this option and asked if we could get the extra money from the HRA. Mr Hall said that it would be difficult as the HRA was a large account but we have been asked to reduce council rents by 1% for 4 years. This would result in a reduced amount of investment in Council stock and make it difficult if the HRA were to bear all the costs. We could also pass this extra cost on to users. Councillor Murray said that if we were to pass on the costs to users (we were the third lowest in Essex) we could raise it by a considerable degree. What room was there to increase this cost. And what was the possibility of providing this service to other providers and charging for it. Mr Wilson answered that we could raise the charge to private users to £177pa. This would not make us the highest charger and was “doable” but may make us anti competitive. There were other companies that offered this service nationally. But the reason why we were here was due to the operational difficulties and not about the charges or potential savings. Mr Hall added that the costings in this report were based on current levels of ECC Housing related support funding. We have been told that ECC may cease all funding for Careline Services across the County at a loss of around £81k pa.

Mr Wilson said that they had, over the years, looked at expanding and taking over other call-centres. It was an extremely complex area of work in terms of meeting contracts and conditions etc. and we would need extra staff to meet the expectations and a dedicated, full time Control Care Manager. We concluded that it was too much for us, as a District Council.

Mr Marshall, Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation said that tenants would oppose any increase in charges.

This Option was not recommended by the Committee.

Option three - *monitor the service through another provider 24/7* – under this option, the Careline alarm monitoring service would be outsourced to an external provider, in order to offer basic monitoring services to the Council's 2,572 properties currently linked into Careline on a 24-hour basis; following soft market testing, it was expected that a third party alarm monitoring service provider would charge approximately £80,000 pa. subject to any competitive tendering exercise.

Outsourcing the monitoring service would resolve the difficulties with staff recruitment and retention, removing the need for an in-house service to meet the British Standard and there would be no need to have a disaster recovery plan which would result in an annual saving of £5,750.

From an officer's point of view this was never about making savings it was about the future resilience of the service. But there were savings to be made under this option which could be used elsewhere.

There would however, be some difficulties in providing our Careline Service during the time it would take to procure a new provider. We may need to re-programme all existing equipment. There was also the risk that the new provider would not be as good as our service. However, Mr Wilson had spoken to one of the existing providers and noted that they monitored 250,000 connections and had eight controllers on at night for example to provide this specialist service.

Councillor Heap commented that if we chose one, we could not go back. Mr Wilson replied that the service would be governed by our contract specifications. There would be 'get out' clauses. He was not saying that there would be no risks but it would be covered by the specification. Councillor Heap added that it would still have been taken from the Council's control and just moved to another service provider.

Mr Marshall commented that there were already five other local authorities using an out sourced provider in Essex so they would have had this experience. Mr Wilson agreed saying that he had visited Harlow Council who had out sourced their service and they said "it was the best thing we ever did".

Councillor H Whitbread asked how private companies compared with our service. It was explained that there were many competent companies who provided monitoring services. Mr Wilson clarified that although the monitoring service would be outsourced under this option we would not be closing the Careline Service, this would continue but the calls would be answered elsewhere. We would retain the part of the service that would do the day to day work, as our everyday service was second to none.

Councillor Baldwin commented that it made sense to do this. Who were the external providers for this service and were they reliable? Mr Wilson replied that all this came about when officers became aware of the British Standard in February this year. Another trigger was the recruitment and retention problems. Officers are aware of providers who had been providing this service for a long time and were reliable. Any potential suppliers will have to go through our procurement process and meet the required standards.

Councillor Baldwin then asked about job retention for the Careline staff. He was told management were in discussions with them and with Human Resources.

Councillor Lea commented that a lot of call centres were based abroad, which may result in language problems. She would like us to retain the good service that we have at present. Mr Wilson said that the users must be able to engage with the call centre we used. Also, not all our users spoke English or sometimes they did not speak at all when activating the system. We had the processes to deal with such calls and such procedures will be included in the specifications.

Councillor Girling asked that, under option 3, if we out sourced the service would our staff be TUPE'd over. Mr Wilson said that he was not a TUPE expert. If it was agreed to outsource then we would have a meeting with the staff and a TUPE expert.

Councillor Knight asked if we outsourced this service and were subsequently unhappy with the new providers, how easy would it be to find a new provider and move to them. Mr Marshall said that generally notice to terminate the contract would have to be given which would give the Council time to find a new provider. Mr Wilson said that members were right to consider this risk in such circumstances officers would speak to other providers to replace any substandard provider. We would have very tight specifications for the contract which would allow us to switch providers if necessary. We would focus on quality of service when selecting a new provider.

Councillor Stavrou said that we were here today not because our Careline had failed; she had visited our centre and was very impressed with our service. But, we have to look at the progress made by private care services providers. It was hard to recommend that we do this as we have such good Careline operators. Also the HRA was not the cash cow it once was, although money was not the driver for this report. We had to make sure that we have long term stability in our Careline service.

This Option was recommended to the Committee.

Option four - monitoring the service through another service provider overnight - Under this Option, the Careline alarm monitoring service would be outsourced to an external provider but only at night between the hours of 8:00 pm to 8:00 am. Existing Careline Operators (5.5 FTE) would monitor the service during the day with 2 on duty. This would meet with the British Standard without the need to employ further staff.

However, if the Council were to outsource the service overnight it would result in an increased cost to the Council of around £50,778. Therefore in order for the service to break even it would be necessary to increase charges to users by around 20%. There was also the case that we would have to re-programme our equipment to make it compatible with the system the overnight provider used. And the Council would still have its problems with recruitment and retention of Careline staff.

Mr Marshall noted that operators now worked 3 shifts of 8 hours, would this reduce to 2 shifts? Mr Wilson said that it would, they would have to change the work rota and the existing officers would be paid less as they would lose their night allowance.

This would also be a missed opportunity to undertake a restructure of Older Peoples Services and an inability to free up office accommodation. Also all existing alarm equipment may need to be re-programmed; the service contract and disaster recovery arrangements would remain the same; there may be insufficient work to ensure that both operators would be fully utilised during daytime hours. The Council would also have to make alternative arrangements to cover associated monitoring services. They would also still have to tender services; would still need a specification; still have their recruitment and retention problems and cover difficulties; and current staff would still lose their night allowances. Due to these disadvantages this option was not recommended by the Committee.

Risk Management – Mr Wilson then went on to cover the risks involved. If the Careline Service was put out to tender there was a risk that during the transitional period the Careline operators may find alternative employment. As the Council retained its duty to monitor alarms for the older and vulnerable people in the District during any transition, the following two steps would be taken:

- 1) Management Board have agreed that if the Cabinet agree that the Careline Alarm Monitoring Service be outsourced, then Careline operators would be made an ex-gratia retention payment subject to certain conditions, of 20% (pro rata) of their annual salary (as recommended by UNISON) in order to retain staff until the service was handed over to the new provider.
- 2) Officers were seeking a quotation from Tunstall Telecom Ltd for monitoring calls at night during the transition period, should it necessary to switch over at any time due to staff shortages.

Since writing the report the current PNC5 system went down and officers had to switch to the disaster recovery service. The service engineer who came out to repair the equipment said that it was getting old and would need upgrading very soon (within months). So this would have to be done regardless of what option was chosen. Officers have had discussions with the supplier Tunstall Telecom about the cost of upgrading to a PNC7 system. This will now be purchased under emergency budget procedures at a cost of £44k, guaranteed for a year so there would a saving on service charges in the first year. It was also noted that the voice recording system need not be replaced straight away and so this would also save some money.

The Committee agreed to a recommendation that budget provision was made of £70k in 2017/18 and £70k in 2018/19 in order to fund the transitional arrangements. If it was agreed to outsource 24/7, the payback period would be around 9 months.

Councillor Knight asked if the new PNC7 system would last until the transfer had taken place. Mr Wilson clarified that the equipment itself would last many years. Councillor Knight asked if it could be sold on and we could regain some of our costs. She was told that this could be considered at the time.

Councillor Knight said that she had noted the £215k savings mentioned in the report but had learned today that the ECC contribution of £81k was to be withdrawn. Had this been included in the proposed savings? Mr Wilson said that no, it had not been taken into account.

Consultation undertaken – Mr Wilson went through the outcome of the various consultations undertaken on the report both with the Careline operators and with Unison and the officers response to their concerns.

Careline Operators:

It was noted that the Careline operators had favoured option two but were mindful of the cost implications for this option. They had accepted that option one could not be considered as an option and the service could not continue under the current arrangements.

They did not agree with Option three because of the perceived implications for job losses and the adverse effect this change would have for all service users. In addition alternative arrangements would need to be made for tasks currently undertaken by the Careline team.

Careline staff wanted Option four to be presented in more detail in the report as they thought it had not been given enough thought. As a result the report had been amended as they had requested. They requested that this option be given serious consideration as it would mean that jobs would not be under threat.

The Careline team were proud of the service they provided and believed it was a credit to EFDC and believed that an outsourced service would have detrimental effect in terms of quality and response times.

UNISON:

Unison having fully considered options 1 to 4 discarded Option one which they felt was clearly untenable and Option two which was clearly too expensive.

On considering Option three they were unsure about its value to the Council as they thought, amongst other concerns, that there were no costings for the removal of the current equipment, the Council would lose a degree of autonomy over the service, the scheme managers would lose the support of the staff and the service, redundancy costs will need to be built into the tenders and the Council would need to deal with the problems associated with keeping the service running through to the start of the transfer to an external provider.

Option four appeared to be in the best interests of both the Council and the employees and they asked that it be explored further. Reasons being that the Council would retain a high degree of autonomy over the service and the cost of providing it, they would also retain the in-house support and expertise for Scheme managers, the Council would save a considerable sum in terms of potential redundancy costs, and would probably eliminate recruitment and retention problems by removing the need for a night shift.

Tenants and Leaseholders Federation:

The Chairman of the Federation reported that they agreed with the officer's recommendation for Option Three that the Careline Monitoring Service be outsourced to an external provider.

They would also like to commend the exceptional work that Careline staff has put in over the years.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Communities Select Committee recommends Option Three to the Cabinet, that the Council's Careline Monitoring Service be outsourced to an external provider through a competitive tendering exercise; and

(2) That further reports are submitted on:

- (a) A restructure of Housing Older Peoples Services following the Careline Service being outsourced; and
- (b) Future charges to users based on the cost of the outsourced service.

41. HRA FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17 - SIX MONTH REVIEW

The Director of Communities, Mr A Hall, introduced the six monthly review of the HRA Financial Plan for 2016/17, part of the HRA Business Plan. The Cabinet had asked the Communities Select Committee to review the HRA Financial Plan twice each year. In addition, senior Housing and Finance officers also reviewed the Plan in July and January each year.

SDS Consultancy had acted as the Council's HRA Business Planning Consultants for many years and had undertaken its six month review of the current HRA Financial Plan to take account of the Council's current financial position and national and local policies and their six monthly report was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Select Committee was asked to consider this report and comment on or raise any concerns it found.

The review took account of the changes to the key assumptions and investment requirements since the February 2016 review and the annual Financial Plan. It was noted that there was currently a lot of uncertainty on the government requirements on the sale of higher value voids.

As a base principle, all income and expenditure forecasts would increase by the assumed RPI which was assumed at 2.5% throughout except where otherwise indicated. Also, in line with the Government's latest social rent policy, existing tenants would see their rent reduce by 1% each year over a four year period. This commenced in April 2016.

It was noted that the first half of 2016/17 had seen an increase in the number of Right to Buy sales. Some 23 properties had been sold already, compared to 11 for the same period last year and 16 the year before. Therefore the Right to Buy sales projection for 2016/17 had been increased to 40, from the budgeted 20, which would result in lower rental income.

Following the self-financing settlement in March 2012 loans were taken out with the Public Works Loans Board by this Council. Given that the vast majority of the loan value was fixed, officers were certain of most of the interest that would be charged to the HRA.

When self financing was introduced in March 2012, it was estimated that the Council could afford to provide an annual provision of £0.770 million for service enhancements throughout the life of the Financial Plan. Since 2012 approximately £0.2 million of improvements and service enhancements have been subsumed into the management budgets of the HRA for ongoing services.

New build acquisition expenditure had decreased from £52.569 million to £50.270 million for Phases 1 to 6 from 2015/16 onwards.

The Council also held a Self-Financing Reserve with the intention of building up balances within it, sufficient to repay the loans identified. Due to the increased levels of capital expenditure for the next few years against the backdrop of reduced revenue, SDS Consultancy had considered two options of either continuing to keep the Reserve in order to repay the loan due in Year 7 or utilise the balance in order to fund the Capital Programme over the first four years. The second option would result in an inability to repay the first loan. Members were asked if they thought it beneficial to defer the initial loan as it would be the subject of a planned review of the HRA early next year.

The Council had also received certain grants and receipts from Section 106 agreements to fund the new build programme. These had been fully accounted for in the first two years of the Plan totalling £1.744 million. There were still about £4.8 million of agreed levels of S106 financial contributions due to the Council. As and when these S106 contributions were received, it would reduce the amount of funding required from the existing Capital Programme by an equivalent amount. However, it was noted that if a development does not go ahead, or the level of S106 financial contribution was subsequently re-negotiated, this total amount would reduce accordingly.

Since the reinvigoration of the Government's Right to Buy policy, the Council has sold in excess of 155 additional properties due to the increase of discounts available. The gross receipts were then separated into different categories for their treatment, guided by policy.

W Marshall asked about the relationship between the Government's Pay to Stay policy and the sale of Council properties as he was concerned that more people would be encouraged to buy the property as a result of Pay to Stay. What were the figures in the report based on? A Hall replied that no account had been taken of the Pay to Stay policy when estimating Right to Buy sales. However, he went on to explain that, that day the Housing Minister had announced that the Government would be dropping the compulsory requirement for Pay to Stay.

Councillor Heap noted that the first loan had a variable interest base. How variable was this? Mr Hall confirmed that the interest rate could vary and explained that the loan was issued by the Public Works Loan Board, and that SDS Consultancy had made assumptions on future interest rates. Councillor Heap queried that if we deferred repayments, could we actually pay 4% interest? Mr Hall said that this was just an indicative interest rate of what could happen in the future. There was no need to make a decision at present. The other loans were fixed so we knew what to plan for.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the House Building Programme was only for high value properties. He was told that the sale of high value voids was to fund the payment of the required levy to the CLG; however, it was noted that the Minister had suggested that local authorities may be allowed to retain some of the levy, provided they used it to fund Council house building. It was noted that there was no Central Government subsidy for house building.

Councillor Stavrou said that she did not think that the Right to Buy applications would decrease in the coming years as a lot of people would see this as the only way to get on the housing ladder. She thought that the assumptions used in the report were on the optimistic side and that we now needed to wait and see what the Chancellors Autumn Statement had for Local Government but, in the meantime, this report was

the best forecast of what could happen. As for restructuring the loan this may change depending on what came out of the Autumn Statement.

Mr Hall agreed, as we did not know what was to come.

It was also noted that the Cabinet had recently implemented a temporary moratorium on the House-building Programme and that the Cabinet had already agreed to pass over some '141 Receipts' to the government. Councillor Stavrou added that the right to buy also reduced our rental income. It was a vicious circle. Mr Marshall added that with less housing available to rent there would be an increase in the housing waiting list.

RESOLVED:

That the six month review of the HRA Financial plan 2016/17 from SDS Consultancy be noted.

42. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN (2016/17) - 6 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Communities introduced the Six Month Progress Report on the Key Action Plan for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This section of the HRA Business Plan is the Key Action Plan which sets out the proposed actions the Council would be taking, primarily, over the year. It was good practice that the progress made with the stated actions was monitored by this Select Committee during the year.

The Committee went through the Key Action Plan's actions listed in the report and noted their progress or outcomes. They had no specific issues that they wanted to raise or comment on.

RESOLVED:

That the six month progress report for the Key Action Plan contained within the HRA Business Plan 2016/17 was considered and noted.

43. COMMUNITIES - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) - QUARTER 2

The Director of Communities, Mr Hall, introduced the report on the Quarter 2 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) within the Select Committee's area of responsibility.

The KPIs provide an opportunity for the Council to focus attention on how specific areas for improvement will be addressed, and how opportunities will be exploited and better outcomes delivered.

A range of 37 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2016/17 was adopted by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March 2016. The aims of the KPIs were to direct improvement effort towards services and the national priorities and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district, that are the focus of the key objectives.

The overall position for all 37 KPIs at the end of the Q2 was as follows:

- (a) 28 (76%) indicators achieved target;
- (b) 9 (24%) indicators did not achieve target, although

- (c) 2 (22%) of these indicators performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicator.
- (d) 31 (84%) of indicators are currently anticipated to achieve year-end target and a further 4 (11%) were uncertain whether they would achieve year-end target.

10 of the Key Performance Indicators fell within the Communities Select Committee's areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at Q2 for these 10 indicators was as follows:

- (a) 8 (80%) indicators achieved target;
- (b) 2 (20%) indicators did not achieve target, and
- (c) 0 (0%) of these KPI's performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicator
- (d) 9 (90%) of indicators were currently anticipated to achieve year-end target, and a further 1 (10%) was uncertain whether it would achieve year-end target.

The Committee then went through the various relevant indicators and commented as necessary.

COM002 – *on average, how many days did it take us to re-let a Council Property* – officers were hopeful that it would achieve its target by the end of the year.

COM006 – *how many of the key building components required to achieve the Modern Homes Standard were renewed* – officers were hopeful that that the target would be achieved within the next two quarters.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee reviewed and noted the Quarter 2 performance of the relevant Key Performance Indicators for 2016/17.

44. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN 2016/17 - QUARTER 2 PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Communities introduced the Quarter 2 Progress Report on the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2016/17. The Corporate Plan is the Council's key strategic planning document, setting out its priorities over the five year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20. The plan is supported by Key Objectives which provided a clear statement of the Council's overall intentions for the five years.

The Key Objectives were delivered by an Annual Action Plan, with each year building upon the progress against the achievement of the Key Objectives for previous years. The Annual Action Plans contain a range of actions designed to achieve specific outcomes and as working documents were subject to change and development to ensure the actions remain relevant and appropriate, and to identify opportunities to secure further progress or improvement.

There were 49 actions in total, for which progress updates for Q2 were as follows:

- 29 (59%) of these actions have been 'Achieved' or are 'On Target'
- 14 (28%) of these actions are 'Under Control'
- 2 (4%) are 'Behind Schedule'

- 4 (8%) are 'Pending'

16 actions fell within the areas of responsibility of the Communities Select Committee. At the end of Q2:

- 6 (38%) of these actions have been 'Achieved' or are 'On-Target'
- 7 (44%) of these actions are 'Under Control'
- 3 (19%) of these actions are 'Pending'
- 0 (0%) of these actions are 'Behind Schedule'

Mr Marshall of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation commented that it was sad to see that the relocation of the Housing Repairs Service from the Epping Depot to alternative suitable premises had been postponed yet again. Mr Hall said that the move was now not only dependent on the signing of the St John's Road contract, but also the outcome of the Strategic Accommodation Review. He further explained that, in the meantime, the possibility of a temporary depot move was being evaluated.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the Quarter Two progress of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2016/17 in relation to its area of responsibility.

45. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee thought that a short report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be given on outcome of the Careline Alarm Monitoring Report and on the monitoring of the finances of the Housing Revenue Account.

46. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted the dates for their future meetings.

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COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2016/17

Title: Communities Select Committee

Status: Select Committee

1. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of the services and functions of the Communities Directorate;
2. To develop a programme of work each year, informed by relevant service aims and member priorities, to ensure that the services and functions of the Communities Directorate are appropriate and responsive to the needs of residents, service users and others;
3. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet or a relevant Portfolio Holder, and to report and make recommendations directly to the Committee, the Cabinet or such Portfolio Holder as appropriate;
4. To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives on the services and functions of the Communities Directorate and any implications for the Council's residents, service users and others, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
5. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
6. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers, insofar as they relate to the services and functions of the Communities Directorate, to help develop appropriate policy;
7. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Communities Directorate, against adopted key performance indicators and identified areas of concern;
8. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Communities Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny, for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
9. To recommend the establishment of task and finish panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary, in order to undertake any activity within these terms of reference.

Chairman: Councillor Y Knight

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Communities Select Committee (Chairman – Cllr Yolanda Knight)

Work Programme 2016/17

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Meetings
Standard (Periodic) Items			27th June 2016 6th Sept 2016 8th Nov 2016 21st Nov 2016 17th Jan 2017 14th March 2017
(1) Performance against Housing Service Standards and Review <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	June 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed - June 2016 meeting	
(2) 6-Month Progress Report on Housing Strategy Action Plan 2016	June 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed - June 2016 meeting	
(3) Communities Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – 2015/16 Out-Turn	June 2016 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed - June 2016 meeting	
(4) Progress with Key Actions for the Corporate Plan led by the Communities Directorate – 2015/15 Out-Turn	June 2016 (Low)	<i>(All Portfolios)</i> Completed - June 2016 meeting	
(5) Summary of key housing provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 2016	June 2016 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed - June 2016 meeting	
(6) Annual Diversity Report of Housing Applicants and Lettings	September 2016 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting	

(7) Annual Report on the HomeOptions Choice Based Lettings Scheme	September 2016 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting
(8) Communities Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Quarter 1	September 2016 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting
(9) Progress with Key Actions for the Corporate Plan led by the Communities Directorate – Quarter 1	September 2016 (Low)	<i>(All Portfolios)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting
(10) Annual feedback on the success of the Crucial Crew initiative and proposals for future delivery	September 2016 (Low)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting
(11) Annual Report of the Community Safety Partnership	8 th November 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i> Completed - 8 th November 2016 meeting
(12) Annual feedback on the success of the Summer Holiday Activity Programme and learning points for the future	8 th November 2016 (Low)	<i>(Leisure and Community Service Portfolio)</i> Completed - 8 th November 2016 meeting
(13) Six-monthly Progress Report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan 2016/17	21 st November 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – 21 st November 2016 meeting
(14) Six-Month Review of the HRA Financial Plan 2016/17	21 st November 2016 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – 21 st November 2016 meeting
(15) Communities Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Quarter 2	21 st November 2016 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – 21 st November 2016 meeting

(16) Progress with Key Actions for the Corporate Plan led by the Communities Directorate – Quarter 2	21 st November 2016 (Low)	<i>(All Portfolios)</i> Completed – 21 st November 2016 meeting
(17) Annual feedback on the success of the Reality Roadshow initiative and learning points for the future	January 2017 (Low)	<i>(Leisure and Community Service Portfolio)</i> Scheduled – For January 2017 meeting
(18) Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2016 – 12 Month Progress Report	January 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Scheduled – For January 2017 meeting
(19) Briefing on the proposed Council rent increase for 2017/18	January 2017 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Scheduled – For January 2017 meeting
(20) Communities Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Quarter 3	March 2017 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
(21) Communities Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – Targets for 2017/18	March 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
(22) Progress with Key Actions for the Corporate Plan led by the Communities Directorate – Quarter 3	March 2017 (Low)	<i>(All Portfolios)</i>
(23) 12-monthly Progress Report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan 2016/17	March 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>

(24) Annual Report from representatives of the Youth Council on completed and proposed activities	March 2017 (High)	<i>(Leisure and Community Service Portfolio)</i>
(25) Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2017 <i>(Recommendations to Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	January 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> No Longer Required – A Key Action Plan will form part of the new Housing Strategy to be considered by the Select Committee at its March meeting.
(26) Housing service improvements and service enhancements – 2017/18 <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet)</i>	January 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> No Longer Required – Due to no resources being available for housing service improvements and enhancements, pending the Stage 1 Further HRA Financial Options Review
(27) HRA Business Plan 2017/18	March 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> No Longer Required – Following the decision of Cabinet members on the introduction of a new corporate approach to business planning from 2017/18.
Special (Planned) Items		
(28) Presentation on Disabled Facilities Grants and current demand and expenditure	September 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting
(29) Approach to promotion and marketing of support and financial incentives for under-occupying tenants wanting to transfer	September 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting

(30) Attendance by Essex Police District Commander at next meeting - Discussion on issues to raise	September 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i> Completed – September 2016 meeting
(31) Presentation from Essex Police's District Commander on current policing and crime issues in the District	8 th November 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i> Completed - 8 th November 2016 meeting
(32) Review of the Council's Careline Service <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet)</i>	21 st November 2016 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Completed – 21 st November 2016 meeting
(33) Presentation by Epping Forest CAB on its use of EFDC funding	21st November 2016 January 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Scheduled – For January 2017 meeting
(34) Extension of funding to the CAB for two Debt Advisors	21st November 2016 January 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Scheduled – For January 2017 meeting
(35) Consultation on the <i>Stage 1</i> Further HRA Financial Options Review – prior to consideration by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee <i>(Recommendations to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee)</i>	November 2016 March 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Deferred – Due to the Govt. not yet publishing its proposed arrangements for the required sale of higher value empty Council properties. The Housing Portfolio Holder has now agreed to undertake the Financial Options Review in two stages, to enable decisions to be made on key financial issues in advance of considering the effects of the sale of higher value empty Council properties
(36) Housing Strategy 2017 – 2022 <i>(Recommendations to the Cabinet and Full Council)</i>	March 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>

(37) Review of the future use of sheltered/grouped housing scheme sites <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet / Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	January 2017 July 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Deferred – Pending the outcome of the Stage 1 Further HRA Financial Options Review
Items added to Work Programme during the year		
(38) Approach to decommissioning CCTV systems	8 th November 2016 (Medium)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i> Completed - 8 th November 2016 meeting
(39) The homelessness situation in Epping Forest and potential mitigation strategies	January 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Scheduled – For January 2017 meeting
(40) Presentation on disabled adaptations to Council properties	January 2017 March 2017 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i> Deferred – Due to the amount of business on the agenda for the January 2017 meeting
Planned Items for Future Years		
6-month Progress Report on implementation of the Ageing Population Study Action Plan	June 2017 (Low)	<i>(Leisure and Community Services, Safer Greener Transport and Housing Portfolios)</i>
Review of the success of the pilot scheme to extend the opening hours of the Limes Centre, following 12 months' operation	July 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Leisure and Community Services and Safer Greener Transport Portfolios)</i>
12-month review of homelessness loans and tenancy deposits funded by "Invest to Save"	July 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>

Attendance by Essex Police District Commander at next meeting - Discussion on issues to raise	September 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i>
Review of Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy after 2 years operation (with any changes effective from April 2018) <i>(Recommendations to the Cabinet)</i>	September 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
Review of the approach to the Scheme Management Service to sheltered housing and properties designated for older people <i>(Recommendations to Cabinet / Housing Portfolio Holder)</i>	November 2017 (High)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
Presentation from Essex Police's District Commander on current policing and crime issues in the District	November 2017 (Medium)	<i>(Safer Greener Transport Portfolio)</i>
Review of Housing Service Strategy on Home Ownership and Leaseholder Services	January 2018 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
Review of Housing Service Strategy on Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment	March 2018 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
Review of Housing Service Strategy on Tenant Participation	March 2019 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>
Review of Housing Service Strategy on Rent Arrears and Administration	November 2019 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>

Review of Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing	September 2020 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>	
Review of Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management	September 2020 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>	
Review of Housing Service Strategy on Empty Properties in the Private Sector	March 2021 (Low)	<i>(Housing Portfolio)</i>	

Report to the Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 17 January 2017

Portfolio: Housing – Councillor Syd Stavrou

Subject: Presentation by the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau



Officer contact for further information: Roger Wilson ext. 4419

Committee Secretary: A Hendry, ext. 4246

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That, in accordance with its Work Programme, the Communities Select Committee receives a presentation from the Epping Forest District Citizens Advice Bureau.

Report:

1. The Communities Select Committee is asked to receive a presentation from the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau which, following a request by the Committee, has been included as an Item on its Work Programme.
2. All Members have been invited to attend through the Council Bulletin. The presentation will be delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureau's District Manager Rachel Poulter and one of their Debt/Money Advisors Rachel Kelly.

Reason for decision:

To receive a presentation from the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau as part of the Committee's Work Programme.

Options considered and rejected:

Not to receive a presentation from the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau.

Consultation undertaken:

No consultation necessary.

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Report to the Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 17 January 2017

Portfolio: Housing – Councillor Syd Stavrou

Subject: Extension of the funding of 2 Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau Debt Advisors



Officer contact for further information: Roger Wilson, ext. 4419

Committee Secretary: A Hendry, ext. 4246

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Communities Select Committee recommends to the Finance Cabinet Committee at its meeting on 19 January 2017, that the funding of the Citizens Advice Bureau's (CAB) two existing Debt Advisors is extended for a further year from 1 April 2017.

Report:

1. At its meeting on 17 September 2015 (Minute 19 refers) the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee agreed that, £42,000 (£37,800 funded from the HRA and £4,200 from the General Fund) be used in 2016/2017 to extend the funding of the Citizens Advice Bureau's (CAB) two existing Debt Advisors for a further year from 1 April 2016. This was agreed subject to the CAB Manager attending an appropriate meeting of the Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel.

2. The CAB made a presentation to the Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel at its meeting on 29 October 2015. It was reported at that time that, during the first 6 months of 2015/2016 the Advisors managed debts of around £713,000 and assisted 304 clients. Around 97 (32%) of these clients were Council tenants. The CAB is required under the Agreement to have one Debt Advisor based at the Limes Centre, Chigwell for one half day each week. The CAB extended this service to 2 half days each week in 2015. The CAB has reported that in the first 6 months of 2015/2016, around 120 (40%) of the clients assisted were first seen at the Limes Centre. Many of these clients make repeat visits and become regular visitors with each appointment lasting for up to an hour. There are also other drop-in clients who cannot be predicted or controlled but are seen for a much lesser period of time.

3. The Communities Select Committee under the previous Item on the Agenda received a presentation from the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau and would therefore have been made aware of the standard of service being provided this year by the Debt Advisors which will inform its decision on the whether to agree the above Recommendation .

4. Bearing in mind the expected reductions in the overall national Welfare Budget, there will be an increased need for residents to receive continued support around personal budgeting and debt advice. Such advice may reduce the risk of some households presenting to the Council as homeless, resulting in savings in costly bed and breakfast, hostel or even temporary/interim accommodation in the Council's own stock.

5. The Communities Select Committee is therefore asked to recommend (orally) to the Finance Cabinet Committee at its meeting on 19 January 2017 that the funding of the CAB's two existing Debt Advisors is extended for a further year from 1 April 2017.

Reason for decision:

For the Committee to consider recommending to the Finance Cabinet Committee the extension of the funding of the CAB's two existing Debt Advisors for a further year from 1 April 2017, in order to provide support to residents with personal budgeting and debt advice, which could reduce homelessness and rent arrears.

Options considered and rejected:

1. Not to recommend to the Finance Cabinet Committee extending the funding of the CAB's two existing Debt Advisors for a further year from 1 April 2017.
2. To recommend to the Finance Cabinet Committee only extend the funding for one CAB Debt Advisor.
3. To recommend to the Finance Cabinet Committee provide funding for more than two CAB Debt Advisors.

Consultation undertaken:

No consultation necessary.



Report to Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: January 2017

Subject: Community Services Reality Roadshow 2016

Officer contact for further information: G Gold (01992 564247)

Committee Secretary: A. Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Committee notes the success of the Reality Roadshow initiative, which is a personal safety and awareness event aimed at Year 9 pupils and is now in its seventh year of delivery.

Report:

Background

The Reality Roadshow initiative is a personal safety and health & wellbeing event that brings together a host of statutory and voluntary agencies, to deliver a full day of educational workshops to Year 9 (14 year old) pupils at secondary school in the district. It is specifically tailored to address young people's issues that have been identified as a priority concern locally.

Co-ordinated by the Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Team, each year Reality Roadshow provides over 900 pupils in the District with expert advice and guidance on making the right choices in life for good health and wellbeing.

The day starts with an interactive drama production delivered by the Arc Theatre Company which tackles the high level priority of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and the law around producing and distributing indecent images of people under the age of consent. Pupils then rotate through different classroom based workshops which are approximately 40 minutes in duration

1. Theatre Performance

The theatre production by the Arc Theatre Company is a 30 minute interactive piece performed in an assembly style setting to all Year 9 pupils. The performance focuses on the issues of staying safe whilst using social media (Snap Chat/Twitter/Facebook) as well as the grooming of young people, in particular girls. This bespoke production has been developed specifically for Epping Forest Reality Roadshow in line with emerging concerns and trends reported by schools in the area. The production explores issues relating to teenage relationships and online safety.

2. Workshop Themes

Pupils participate in either 5 or 6 workshops depending on individual school timetables and each session is specifically designed to address current issues facing local young people. The workshops delivered in 2015/16 are as follows:

- The Consequences of Crime – delivered by Essex Magistrates
- Online Internet Safety – Essex Police

- Sexual Health – Essex County Council
- Legal Highs and Substance Misuse - Alcohol & Drugs Advisory Service (ADAS)
- Alcohol Awareness - AlcoHELP
- Healthy Relationships and Domestic Abuse - Safer Places
- Gangs and peer pressure – Sparks 2 Life

3. Outcomes for Pupils

The impact of the Reality Roadshow programme on participants is significant. The messages given are clear, concise and evidence based and serve to highlight the consequences of negative behaviours or poor choices. The programme promotes the opportunity for young people to make changes in their lives and to receive support and advice from the various agencies available locally.

- Pupils are equipped with current and appropriate information and are able to make informed choices
- Pupils have the opportunity to hear and learn from the real life stories of recovering addicts and ex-offenders
- Pupils are able to ask for help and support about issues they may encounter
- Pupils are signposted to agencies that can offer further support, and how to access this
- The agencies web links are uploaded onto the pupil pages of the school's website, thereby enabling anonymous access to information covering the support services available

In addition to benefiting the pupils directly, Reality Roadshow also indirectly benefits parents and carers, through empowering the young people to be able to make the right choices in life regarding relationships, alcohol, substances and so on; their home life is therefore likely to improve, as well as their educational attainment and life chances.

4. Outcomes for school and teaching staff

With the reduction of curriculum time for personal, social and health education, Reality Roadshow covers key areas of 'general' education that many young people miss out on. The programme is tailored specifically for individual schools and aims to accommodate work programmes and provide minimum disruption to the school timetable.

- Schools select a date that is convenient for them
- The material provided informs, supports and bolsters the schools' Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
- Teachers are provided with up to date information and therefore better able to support pupils and access further help.
- Links are established between the school and specialist agencies, who can offer further support if necessary
- Schools are provided with evaluation feedback from pupils and teaching staff from the event and this can be useful evidence to support Ofsted Inspections.

5. Reality Roadshow 2017-16

Reality Roadshow was delivered to schools on the following dates -

- Davenant Foundation School – 19th April 2016
- Debden Park High School – 9th & 22nd October 2015
- Epping St Johns School – 13th July 2016
- King Harold Business and Enterprise Academy – 18th July 2016
- Roding Valley High School – 12th April 2016
- West Hatch School – 18th November 2016

The Ongar Academy will be incorporated into the Reality Roadshow annual programme during the academic year of 2017/18 once there is a Year 9 cohort in place.

6. Pupil Evaluation

In order to ensure that Reality Roadshow continues to be a successful and informative event, each participating Year 9 pupil is required to complete a feedback questionnaire which is anonymous. The questionnaire seeks to ascertain whether the young people have a better knowledge post roadshow, of the situations that may lead them into harm. The questionnaire also asks if the pupils now have a better understanding of the support agencies that are there to help them, should they be faced with any of the issues addressed during the day. Finally, the questionnaire also asks pupils to inform the Council of any issues that are facing them that they may want more information on, so that we are able to keep the roadshow relevant in terms of new and emerging topics.

The feedback from pupils that have taken part in Reality Roadshow so far this year identifies that 75% of pupils rate Reality Roadshow as excellent or very good. It has also shown that mental health, drug misuse and domestic abuse are the areas of most concern amongst the pupils that have participated.

The following quotes about Reality Roadshow were received from pupils this year:

- "I learned the importance of making the right choices in life"
- "I think every school should have Reality Roadshow"
- "Excellent day, they have to come back again!"
- "I have gained more information and each workshop was on an important topic"
- "Great workshops and good interactivity"

7. Teacher Evaluation

To monitor the expected outcomes for teachers, every teacher involved in the Roadshow throughout the day is asked to feedback on the scenario they have attended. They are asked what they feel worked and what did not work, as well as any areas of concern they may have, and what they believe could be improved for each scenario and for the whole day. Usually this feedback is very positive and teaching staff are delighted with the additional support and information that they gain from the day.

Reason for decision:

This report serves as an information item for the Community Services Select Committee.

Options considered and rejected:

N/A

Consultation undertaken:

Evaluation form is completed by teachers and pupils. Informal feedback is also obtained from workshop providers.

Service review:

Each Reality Roadshow is discussed via a team briefing and review of teacher and pupil feedback.

During the planning process for the new academic year a meeting is held to review Reality Roadshow and decide priorities for the forthcoming events. Changes to the programme are then made accordingly.

Resource implications:

Personnel:

Staff from the Council's Community Health and Wellbeing Team organise, manage and facilitate Reality Roadshow, along with partner agencies that deliver workshops.

£5400 was secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Hidden Harm Fund and this ensured that Reality Roadshow could be delivered at the schools with no cost to themselves.

The Community Health & Wellbeing Team has also recently secured three years of funding from via the Epping Forest Youth Strategy fund from Essex County Council. £4,500 has been awarded for each year to support the continued delivery of Reality Roadshow.

Land: N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference:

Corporate Plan Medium Term Aim 3

Relevant statutory powers: N/A

Background papers: N/A

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A

Key Decision reference: (if required)

N/A

Report to the Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 17 January 2017

Portfolio: Housing – Councillor Syd Stavrou

Subject: Homelessness Initiatives

Officer contact for further information:
Roger Wilson extension 4419

Committee Secretary:
Adrian Hendry extension 4246



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That, in accordance with its Work Programme, the Communities Select Committee undertakes a review of the homelessness loans and tenancy deposits scheme (funded under “Invest to Save”); considers the homelessness situation generally in the District and mitigation strategies, and recommends to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that the following bids are made for CSB Growth from April 2017/18:

(a) £32,000 per annum for the appointment of 1 FTE additional Grade 6 Homelessness Prevention Officer in order to deal with the requirements of the expected Homelessness Reduction Act and the additional workload generally due to increasing homelessness pressures;

(b) £9,000 per annum to fund an external company to undertake Homelessness Reviews; and

(c) £2,500 per annum to fund an external company to provide specialist services to rough sleepers;

(2) That the Communities Select Committee recommends to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that the existing Invest to Save Funding of £90,000 over a 3 year period now be used for providing applicants with a rental loan of up to the equivalent of 4 weeks rent to meet the costs of rent in advance when securing accommodation in the private rented sector and /or a landlord deposit in accordance with LHA rates (lodged with a third party by the landlord) with applicants being required to repay loans on an interest free basis over an increased period of 36 months, thereby re-cycling the budget to enable others to benefit from the Scheme in the future; and

(3) That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet on the feasibility of the use of “modular units” to provide temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.

Report:

Background

1. The Communities Select Committee is asked as part of their Work Programme to consider various mitigation strategies in order to deal with the current and future increasing pressures due to the rise in homelessness. The latest figures on homelessness in England reveal that nationally the total number of households in temporary accommodation has increased by 53% from 48,010 in December 2010 to 73,120 in June 2016, with 14,930 households being accepted as homeless between 1 July and 30 September 2016, Local Authorities took action to prevent a further 52,920 households becoming homeless in the same period which increased by over 2,000 compared to the previous quarter.

Homelessness Prevention Service

2. The Council has a very effective Homelessness Prevention Service, comprising 6 FTE Homelessness Prevention Officers. In 2015/2016 the service prevented homelessness in 625 cases. The number of cases being prevented during in the first six months of this year is 264 which may result in a lesser number being prevented in 2016/2017. This is due to the difficulties being experienced by the Team in being able to place applicants in the private rented sector which has resulted in the number of homelessness acceptances increasing from 52 in 2014/2015 to 71 in 2016/2016 and the numbers placed in temporary accommodation increasing from 74 in 2014/2015 to 111 in the second quarter of 2016/2017.

3. Homelessness Prevention Officers now provide a comprehensive service with a range of initiatives at their disposal to assist them with resolving the housing difficulties of clients they are seeking to serve including:

- Meeting the Council's Statutory Duty to provide Housing Advice and Assistance
- Mediation (in particular resolving parental exclusions)
- Referral to the two CAB Debt Advisors
- Resolving housing benefit problems
- Rental Loans
- Epping Forest Housing Aid Scheme (EFHAS) Deposit guarantees
- Sanctuary Schemes for victims of domestic violence
- Negotiation with private sector landlords to enable tenants to remain
- Negotiation with mortgage lenders on debt
- Housing Association Leasing Direct Scheme
- Private Lease Agreements Converting Empty Properties (PLACE)
- Placements at young parents' scheme
- Single Accommodation for Epping Forest (SAFE) Project
- Making referrals to Essex County Council's Social Care in cases where young children are homeless
- Making referrals to the Benefits Division for discretionary housing payments (DHPs)
- Rough sleeping initiatives
- Liaising with the Housing Benefits Division on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)

4. The various issues being faced by homeless applicants and the resultant problems being experienced by officers in preventing homelessness has previously been reported in the Council Bulletin and is set out below. Under each appropriate section suggested recommendations are made which the Committee is asked to consider.

Interim and Temporary Accommodation

5. The Council provides **interim** accommodation to homeless applicants whilst enquiries are undertaken and **temporary** accommodation where a full homelessness duty has been accepted and the applicant is awaiting a direct offer of permanent accommodation.

6. As at 30 September 2016 (date of the last Government statistical return) there were 111 applicants placed in both temporary and interim accommodation which has resulted in the homeless persons' hostel at Norway House, North Weald and Hemnall House, Epping being full most of the time. In order to increase the number of applicants being able to be accommodated at Norway House, officers are investigating the possibility of dividing up some of the larger rooms at the hostel to provide greater flexibility of use. Furthermore, as the chalets in the grounds of the Hostel are falling into disrepair, the option of replacing the chalets with "modular units" is being investigated which may enable the Council to increase the number of units in a more cost effective way. It may also be possible to use such accommodation in other areas.

7. In addition, the Council works with Genesis Housing Association who, under the Housing Association Leasing Direct Scheme (HALD), originally provided 20 units of accommodation for our homeless applicants. However, as private landlords are becoming increasingly reluctant to lease their properties in this way, Genesis now only has 15 units of accommodation, all of which are now occupied.

8. The Council also provides bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation for predominantly single homeless applicants and has a contract with a number of Hotels who are selected following a 3 yearly competitive tendering exercise which has taken place now on 2 occasions. The numbers placed in B&B has increased from single figures to around 20-25 applicants. Under Government Regulations, the Council should not place families in such accommodation for more than 6 weeks. Historically, families are only accommodated in this way in rare circumstances. However, in recent months due to the lack of temporary and interim accommodation, up to 5 families have been placed in B&B which is very costly.

9. The General Fund expenditure in the last 3 years on Bed and Breakfast accommodation is set out in the following table:

Year	Total B&B Expenditure (£)	Subsidy Received (£)	Net Cost to the General Fund (£)
2013/14	113,135	50,574	62,561
2014/15	126,982	73,184	53,798
2015/16	236,890	122,617	114,273

10. As at November 2016 the total expenditure for 2016/2017 to date is £120,540 representing a net cost to the General Fund of £57,860.

11. It is important to note that over recent months the Hotels used have been full due to placements being made at the Hotels by other Councils. This has left officers with no option other than to use other Hotels in accordance with the delegated authority granted to the Director of Communities.

12. Furthermore, due to the increasing pressure on homelessness, the Council currently has 14 homeless families placed in its own housing stock (very often without the applicant meeting the 5 years residency criteria under the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme) on non-secure tenancies until their cases are resolved. Although this figure is likely to increase, it is important to balance between the needs of the homeless and the needs of those on the Housing Register. This is at a time when the numbers of properties becoming available for let in each choice based lettings cycle are reducing to around between 9 and 13 properties approximately half of which are in sheltered housing and only available to older people.

Recommendations

That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet on the feasibility of the use of "modular units" to provide temporary accommodation for homeless applicants; and

That the further option of exploring the installation of collapsible partitions in some of the larger rooms at the Hostel to enable families with older children to be accommodated in one room, thereby increasing occupation levels, be noted.

Invest to Save Funding

13. At its meeting on 12 November 2015 (Minute 31 refers) the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee considered a Business Case Application for "Invest to Save Funding" in order to provide funds for the following two initiatives:

Rental Loans

14. The Rental Loan Scheme was set up in 2008/2009 following the Council receiving a grant of £10,000 from the CLG in recognition of its excellent performance in preventing homelessness. Further CLG grants of £111,000 were received with contributions of £27,000 being made from the General Fund, making a total budget of £148,000.

15. The scheme provides applicants with a rental loan to meet the costs of (or contribute towards) the first month's rent in advance when securing accommodation in the private rented sector. Applicants are required to repay the loan on an interest free basis over 24 months, thereby re-cycling the budget to enable others to benefit from the Scheme in the future.

16. The Scheme has been essential in assisting the Council to prevent homelessness for 615 applicants in 2014/2015 representing 87% of all those who presented as homeless (710) and avoided the use by some of bed and breakfast accommodation (B&B), and in other cases providing permanent Council accommodation, leaving more properties available for existing home Seekers on the Housing Register.

17. Since the Scheme commenced in 2008, when taking into account monies repaid by applicants and recycled, approximately 190 loans have been allocated. When the Council was awarded the grant funding, the Government were encouraging councils to pass on the payments to homeless applicants by way of a "gift". However, although it was accepted that recovering any debts may be difficult, the Cabinet agreed that payments would be made as a loan (repayable over 2 years) with any amounts recovered assisting more applicants. The Council has recovered around £16,000 which has enabled approximately 20 further loans to be made. This figure could well increase as further payments are made by applicants on loans granted in the last 2 years.

18. At the time of writing, 37 loans have been made in this financial year. There are sufficient funds available to provide only 5 further rental loans to homeless applicants.

19. Making more funds available for rental loans through the already agreed Invest to Save funding would result in further keeping down the numbers in B&B resulting in a saving to the Council. It would also assist in reducing the number of homeless applicants being placed in other interim and temporary accommodation including Norway House and Hemnall House which are currently both full. It would also reduce the amount of the Council's own housing stock being used for homeless applicants who very often do not meet the residency criteria under the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme. In order to make the repayments more affordable for applicants it is suggested that the repayment period is increased from 24 to 36 months.

Landlord Deposits

20. In addition to meeting the cost of the first month's rent, applicants also must pay a landlord's deposit. The cost of the deposit is in accordance with Housing Benefit Local Housing Allowance rates (being the maximum housing benefit a person can claim towards their rent), which ranges from £296 to £1,359 per month depending upon the rent, size and location of the property. It should be noted that the LHA has been frozen between 2015/16 and 2019/20 resulting in the allowance not bearing a relation to market rents with many people now struggling to find affordable accommodation.

21. It was suggested to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that £30,000 per annum for three years be allocated from Invest to Save funding for further rental loans and landlord deposits to homeless applicants to assist the Council in trying to secure private rented accommodation in these cases.

22. However, on the recommendation of the Committee, the Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 3 December 2015 that the Invest to Save funding would be provided, but only for landlord deposits held by a third party as these were more likely to be recovered and that the Scheme be reviewed within three years.

23. The Cabinet further agreed at its meeting on 4 February 2016 (Minute 135 refers) that:

- the use of the agreed budget should also be allowed for the provision of both landlord deposits and rental loans in appropriate cases for potentially homeless families with dependent children;
- both rental loans and landlord deposit loans be granted in appropriate cases to disabled people and applicants with extreme medical needs;
- that amounts repaid by applicants should be re-cycled to provide further landlord deposit and rental loans (or both to families with dependent children) to further potentially homeless households; and
- the Communities Select Committee be requested to undertake a review of the Scheme

24. Officers have investigated how the use of landlord deposits held by a third party would have to operate. If the Council agrees to provide a deposit a three-way agreement would need to be signed between the Tenant, the landlord and the Council. The landlord must also state on their Tenancy Agreement that the deposit is being provided by the Council. The Council must then “lodge” the deposit, pay an insurance fee of £10 and set aside a budget of £1,000. The tenant then pays the Council by installments an amount over a 2 or 3 year period until they reach £1,000 which the Council would retain and at the end of the tenancy hands back to the tenant or the landlord depending upon whether the tenant is in arrears or has caused any damage to the property. If the amount is provided back in full to the tenant, then this could be used for a deposit on a further property. Therefore, having investigated this approach in detail, it is clear that managing such a scheme would be a huge burden on an already busy Homelessness Prevention Team and therefore would be unachievable. Moreover, it is likely that landlords would not be interested in entering into such an arrangement. As a result the Invest to Save budget has not been spent.

25. It is therefore considered that the funding should now be made available for rental loans equivalent to 4 weeks rent and/or landlord deposits (lodged with a third party by the landlord) in appropriate cases with repayments being made for both loans over an increased period of 36 months in order to make it more affordable to the applicant. Although it is accepted that there is a low collection rate, it should be noted that following the appointment of a dedicated Debt Recovery Officer within the Communities Directorate it is expected that this should improve. In any event, it is considered that the Council would make huge savings placing homeless applicants in private rented accommodation with the assistance of such loans avoiding provision of costly B&B, Hostel accommodation and placements in its own stock. This would by far outweigh any potential losses through unpaid rental loans. Furthermore, this would avoid in many cases having to accept full homelessness duties.

Placements of homeless households by London Boroughs outside of London

26. Following representations from Essex councils, figures for placements across Essex have now, for the first time, been provided by around 24 of the 32 London Boroughs. It should be noted that as not all London Boroughs have provided this information, the true figures are likely to be much higher. The table below provides details of the placements in Essex, from the 24 London Boroughs who have provided this information for the last four quarters which is as follows:

	Q1 2016	Q4 2015	Q3 2015	Q2 2015	Totals
Thurrock	64	85	71	67	287
Harlow	27	30	2	8	67
Basildon	15	11	12	18	56
Epping Forest	12	12	10	13	47
Southend	8	6	3	3	20
Chelmsford	6	4	3	2	15
Tendring	4	2	2	1	9
Brentwood	8	0	0	0	8
Castle Point	2	0	1	1	4
Colchester	0	2	0	1	3
Braintree	1	0	0	0	1
Totals	147	152	104	114	517

27. We are advised that the majority of these placements include nightly paid bed and breakfast accommodation, self-contained annexes, leased accommodation and, “homelessness prevention moves”. However, some are in order for London boroughs to discharge their homelessness duties through placements in private rented accommodation, which can lead to the Council taking responsibility for such households should homelessness re-occur.

28. One of the problems that these placements cause the Council is that it makes it very difficult for our own Homelessness Prevention Service to secure accommodation in the private rented sector for homeless and potentially homeless households. This is one of the main reasons why the numbers of homeless households in EFDC’s own temporary accommodation is increasing. It should also be noted that due to reductions in housing benefit such accommodation can prove to be unaffordable.

29. Furthermore, landlords are reluctant to accept applicants from the Council due to London Boroughs paying landlords in the District generous incentives ranging between £2,500 and £6,000, in addition to rental loans and landlord deposits. Some Boroughs pay a fee to district councils to inspect private rented accommodation on their behalf with some having an officer working in other areas for this purpose. The activity by London boroughs further underlines the need for the Council to take positive action to enable us to compete and assist our own homeless applicants to be placed into private rented accommodation with the provision of a rental loan under the Invest to Save funding explained earlier in the report.

Recommendation

That the Communities Select Committee recommends to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that the existing Invest to Save Funding of £90,000 now be used for providing applicants with a rental loan of the equivalent of 4 weeks rent to meet the costs of rent in advance when securing accommodation in the private rented sector and/or a landlord deposit in accordance with LHA rates (lodged with a third party by the landlord) with applicants being required to repay the loan on an interest free basis over 36 months, thereby re-cycling the budget to enable others to benefit from the Scheme in the future.

Rough Sleeping

30. In August 2016, the two year Government funded Essex-wide Rough Sleeping Outreach service ended. This service provided visits to rough sleepers late at night and in the early hours 24/7 to offer assistance and case management until the person was able to move off the streets. When the funding ended, the Council approached the service provider to provide a stand-alone service to the council. But they were not able to assist. Although the Council only receives around one report each month of rough sleeping, there is a risk of a person becoming at risk due to rough sleeping without specialist help.

31. Officers are having discussions with other providers of specialist rough sleeping support and expect the cost of such services to be around £200 per case. This would result in a budget of £2,500 per annum funded by the General Fund to provide specialist services to rough sleepers.

Recommendation

That the Communities Select Committee makes a recommendation to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that a CSB Growth Bid is submitted of £2,500 per annum from 2017/2018 to fund an external company to provide specialist services to rough sleepers.

Homelessness Reduction Bill

32. The Homelessness Reduction Bill is proceeding through Parliament, and at the time of writing passed its second reading and is expected to become law later this year. Under the Bill there will be considerable additional duties placed upon authorities nationally to prevent and reduce homelessness.

33. The Government recognises that the provisions in the Bill will make a significant call on the resources of local authorities. The Government is considering providing financial support to help meet with the consequences of the new duties and say they should ensure that the costs of the new burdens are fully taken into account in future funding and in arrangements for the 100% retention of business rates by local authorities.

34. The main proposed additional duties are (in summary) as follows:

- The period that a person can be considered to be threatened with homelessness and if it is likely that they will become homeless (when the Council's new duties start) is extended from 28 days to 56 days
- An applicant seeking homeless support would automatically be judged to be homeless once the period specified in a Section 21 Notice expired (which is the standard notice period provided by private landlords to tenants and is recognised as the single biggest cause of homelessness), preventing councils to advise applicants to remain in occupation beyond expiry
- Placing an emphasis on services preventing homelessness from occurring strengthening the duties on local authorities to provide advice, securing accommodation and other help available
- Ensuring services meet the needs of groups at particular risk to reflect their complex needs and vulnerabilities
- Complying with a new Code of Practice (not yet published) that specifies how homelessness services should be run and desired outcomes
- A duty to carry out an assessment of an applicant's case notifying the applicant of the assessment and the provision of a personal housing plan, including a summary of the applicant's case in order to provide effective support
- The applicant's right to a Review of their assessment (referred to above)
- The ending of the homelessness duty if the applicant "is unreasonably refusing to co-operate" and is working against and not with the authority and their expectations are realistic
- The requirement to secure accommodation for at least 12 months for all applicants who the authority is satisfied are eligible for assistance regardless of priority need

35. When the Homelessness Reduction Bill comes into force, this will therefore place substantial additional work on an already stretched Homelessness Prevention Team.

Recommendation

That the Communities Select Committee makes a recommendation to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that a CSB growth bid is made for funding of £32,000 for the appointment of 1 FTE additional Grade 6 Homelessness Prevention Officer in order to deal with the requirements of the expected Homelessness Reduction Act and the additional workload generally due to the increasing homelessness pressures.

Statutory Homelessness Reviews

36. At its meeting on 26 April 2016 (Minute 12 (6) refers), Council agreed, on the recommendation of the Constitution and Member Services Panel, that the Housing Appeals and Reviews Panel (HARP) be discontinued with immediate effect. This was mainly due to the amount of time being spent by both Members and officers on the process. During 2015/2016 the Panel considered 7 cases, 6 of which were whether a homeless applicant was intentionally homeless in accordance with the legislation and the associated Code of Guidance. All of the 6 homeless cases were dismissed.

37. Officers advised the Constitution and Member Services Panel at the time that a report would be submitted to the Housing Portfolio Holder in due course for consideration to be given to the appointment of an external company specialising in statutory Homelessness Reviews to undertake Reviews currently undertaken by officers.

38 The Housing Options Manager has undertaken 30 Reviews in this calendar year with a further 15 being undertaken by the Assistant Director (Housing Operations). Reviews include intentionality, priority need and suitability of accommodation.

39. Soft market testing has established that the average cost per review by an external company would be around £200. Based on the number of reviews undertaken in the last 12 months an annual budget of £9,000 funded from the General Fund would be required.

40. The Communities Select Committee is asked to note in view of the increasing pressures on the homelessness service, if a company was employed to undertake this work this would free up more time for senior homelessness staff to concentrate on the increasing demands of front-line homelessness prevention services.

Recommendation

That the Communities Select Committee makes a recommendation to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee that a CSB growth bid is made for £9,000 per annum from 2017/2018 to fund an external company to undertake Homelessness Reviews

Review of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme

41. The Council's Housing Allocations Scheme is due for review towards the end of next year with the revised Scheme coming into force in July 2018. When the Scheme is reviewed consideration can be given to providing homeless applicants with Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies for a term of 2 years in order to discharge the Council duty. However, there are some uncertainties around whether the Council's duties can be discharged in this way including the changes to the rules on Flexible Tenancies under the Housing and Planning Act 2016. It is expected that the Government will issue its Statutory Guidance on the new rules on Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies around autumn 2017. When the Council's revised Scheme is drafted advice will be sought from an external legal advisor on the Scheme generally and the Council's ability to discharge its statutory duty in this way.

42. Furthermore, when the Scheme is reviewed consideration can be given at that time to the Council providing placements to homeless households in private rented accommodation out of the District.

Reason for decision:

For the Communities Select Committee to give consideration to the current state of homelessness in the District and make recommendations on ways that the matter can be mitigated.

Options considered and rejected:

Not to give consideration to the current state of homelessness in the District and make recommendations on ways that the matter can be mitigated.

Consultation undertaken:

No consultation necessary.

Report to Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 17 January 2017

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr S. Stavrou

Subject: Council Rent Increase 2017/18 - Briefing



Officer contact for further information: Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry

Recommendation:

That the proposed recommendation of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee to the Cabinet on the Council Rent Increase for 2017/18 be noted.

Report:

1. At its meeting scheduled for 19th January 2017, the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee is due to consider its recommendation to the Cabinet on the proposed Council Rent Increases for 2017/18.
2. In previous years, the Select Committee responsible for the Housing Service has received a briefing on the proposed rent increase for the following year. The Director of Communities will therefore give an oral briefing on the proposed rent increase for 2017/18 at the meeting.

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Report to Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 17th January 2017

Portfolio: Housing – Cllr S. Stavrou

Subject: Housing Strategy: 12-Month Progress Report on Key Action Plan 2016

Officer contact for further information:

Alan Hall – Director of Communities (01992 564004)

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry



Recommendations:

That the 12-Month Progress Report on the Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2016, attached as an Appendix, be considered, with any comments passed to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities accordingly.

Report:

1. The Council has adopted a Housing Strategy, that assesses the District's current and future housing needs and sets out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. Annual Key Action Plans are then considered by the Select Committee and approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder. The Key Action Plans, set out the proposed actions to be taken by the Council to contribute towards the achievement of the housing objectives over the following year.
2. The latest Key Action Plan was agreed in January 2016 and the Cabinet has previously agreed that progress with the Key Action Plans should be monitored on a 6-monthly basis by the Communities Select Committee. The Select Committee considered the 6-Month Progress Report in June 2016 and the 12-Month Progress Report on the Key Action Plan for 2016 is attached as an Appendix, which the Select Committee is asked to consider and to provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Director of Communities.
3. Although the formulation of a new Housing Strategy has been delayed for a few years as a result of delays with the formulation of a new Local Plan, now that the Draft Plan has been published, an Officer Project Team has been established to produce a Draft Housing Strategy which, in the first instance, will be submitted to the Select Committee for discussion, prior to formal consultation.

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Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2016
12-Month Progress Report as at 1st January 2017

No	Category	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress Report (as at 1 st January 2017)
1	General	Review the Housing Strategy 2009-2012 and produce an updated Housing Strategy for 2016-2019, following a consultation exercise on a Draft Housing Strategy	Director of Communities	July 2016 April 2017	Back on Track – The former Housing Portfolio Holder previously determined that the new Housing Strategy should not be formulated until the Draft Local Plan (Preferred Approach) has been published (due to the dependency on the Draft Plan). However, now that the Draft Plan has been published, an Officer Project Team has been established to produce a Draft Housing Strategy which, in the first instance, will be submitted to the Select Committee for discussion, prior to formal consultation.
2	Local Plan	Agree with the Council's Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) partners how much of the Council's Objectively Assessed Housing Need will be provided in neighbouring districts.	Planning Policy Manager	Spring 2016 Mar 2017	In Progress – A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been prepared which sets out the proposed distribution across the SHMA and discussed by the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board – further discussions are required before it can be signed off. The draft MOU is available on the Council's website.
3	Local Plan	Complete Stage 2 of the District-Wide Viability Assessment to determine viable levels of affordable housing provision within future developments	Planning Policy Manager	Spring 2016 Mar 2017	In Progress – Following the consultation on the Draft Local Plan between 31 October and 12 December 2016 an inception meeting has been held with the appointed consultations to start Stage 2 of the Viability assessment. The Draft MOU was used as the basis for the proposed housing requirement in the Draft Local Plan. The Housing White Paper due to be published in January 2017 will provide more details on starter homes and affordable housing.

4	Local Plan	Agree a Draft Local Plan (Preferred Approach) and undertake the appropriate Sustainability Appraisal	Planning Policy Manager	Spring Oct 2016	Achieved - The Draft Local Plan was approved by Cabinet and Full Council in October 2016 for consultation under Regulation 18. An interim Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken alongside the Draft Local Plan and is available on the Council's website
5	Local Plan	Undertake a Consultation Exercise on the Draft Local Plan (Preferred Approach)	Planning Policy Manager	July Nov 2016	Achieved – The Consultation Exercise on the Draft Local Plan was undertaken between 31 October and 12 December 2016. The responses are currently being analysed.
6	Local Plan	Submit the Final Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for an Examination in Public	Planning Policy Manager	Sept Dec 2017	In progress – Following the recent consultation the Council will now be preparing the pre-submission publication version of the Local Plan. It is expected that the publication of the Local Plan will be in late 2017 with submission for examination shortly after.
7	Local Plan	Include appropriate provision within the Local Plan to meet the Government's requirements to ensure the provision of a set percentage, or number, of starter homes on all development sites over a certain threshold, to meet the proposed requirements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.	Planning Policy Manager	Spring 2016 Oct 2017	In Progress – The provision for starter homes did not form part of the Draft Local Plan as the regulations on the operation of starter homes were delayed. It is anticipated that details will be announced in the Housing White Paper due to be published in January 2017.
8	Local Plan	Include appropriate provision within the Local Plan to meet the Government's requirements to meet the expressed needs for local people wanting to build their own homes registered on the Self-build and Custom-build Register, to meet the proposed requirements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.	Planning Policy Manager	Spring 2016 Oct 2017	On target – The approach was included in the Draft Local Plan published for consultation on 31 October 2016.

9	Regeneration	Work in partnership with Essex County Council, Epping Town Council and a development partner to exchange legal contracts for a regeneration scheme for the St Johns Area of Epping, in accordance with the Design and Development Brief, which includes an appropriate amount of market and affordable housing	Director of Neighbourhoods	Feb April 2017	In Progress – The Council has now purchased the land relating to Epping Primary School from Essex CC. The next stage is to enter into legal agreements with the Town Council and the preferred developer regarding the development proposals.
10	Affordable Housing Provision	Consider the possibility of the proposed development of new affordable rented flats at the Council-owned difficult-to-let garage site at Vere Road, Loughton being undertaken by the Council, through the Council Housebuilding Programme, instead of by a housing association	Director of Communities	Mar Sept 2016	No longer being pursued - Following discussions with Higgins Homes, the developer of the adjacent site of the former Sir Winston Churchill PH, the Cabinet has agreed that this difficult-to-let garage site should, instead, be provided to Higgins Homes for car parking for their private residents.
11	Affordable Housing Provision	Work with housing associations and developers to complete the development of 118 new affordable homes, with planning permission, for rent and shared ownership at the following non-Council owned sites: (a) Knoll's Nursery, Waltham Abbey – 63 new homes (b) Fyfield Research Park, Ongar – 44 new homes (c) Netherhouse Farm, Sewardstone – 8 new homes (d) Barnfield, Roydon – 3 new homes (e) Esperanza Nursery, Stapleford Abbots – 1 new home	Director of Communities	Dec 2017 Apr 2018	In Progress – Development has commenced at Knolly's Nursery. The developer for the Barnfield, Roydon development has contracted with B3Living to provide the 3 shared ownership homes, as part of the agreed development approach with the Council (see No.12 below). Progress by the developers of the other sites is unknown.

12	Affordable Housing Provision	Enter into a development agreement with the developer for the development at Barnfield, Roydon for the Council to purchase the 8 affordable rented homes required to be provided as part of the scheme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Feb 2016	Achieved – Following receipt of planning permission for a revised scheme, the developer has entered into a Development Agreement with the Council to provide the 8 affordable rented homes for the development, which is due to be commenced shortly.
13	Affordable Housing Provision	Obtain planning permission for residential development at the Council's Pyrles Lane Nursery site, Loughton, including the provision of at least 40% affordable housing	Director of Neighbourhoods	Feb 2016	Achieved – The development has now received planning permission, including the provision of 40% affordable housing.
14	Affordable Housing Provision	Subject to the receipt of planning permission for the proposed development at the Pyrles Lane, Loughton, if the Cabinet decides to sell the site on the open market, sell the land subject to a requirement that the required affordable housing element to be sold to the Council on practical completion, on agreed terms.	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Oct April 2017	On Target - A report will be considered by Cabinet in due course on the most appropriate approach to marketing the sale of the Pyrles Lane development site, as well as the delivery of the affordable housing.
15	Affordable Housing Provision	Consider the provision of guidance to planning applicants on the required approach by developers to the undertaking of viability assessments for developments involving affordable housing	Director of Communities	Apr July 2017	In Progress – The Guidance has been drafted and will be considered by the Governance Select Committee in April 2017. A formal consultation process will then be undertaken, following which the Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder will be asked to formally adopt the Guidance
16	Affordable Housing Provision	Revise the Council's Shared Ownership Policy, to take account of current requirements and the potential effect of the provision of starter homes as affordable homes on the supply of affordable rented housing	Director of Communities	Feb 2016 April 2017	Delayed – Officers have been awaiting the outcome of the DCLG's consultation on the proposed detailed planning arrangements for the introduction of starter homes, which is still awaited. It is now proposed to incorporate the Shared Ownership Policy within the Council's new Housing Strategy (see (1) above).

17	Council Housebuilding Programme	Complete the development of 23 new affordable homes for rent at Waltham Abbey, under Phase 1 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Apr Sept 2017	Delayed, but now in progress – Due to insufficient progress being made by the contractor to build the new homes, the Council terminated its construction contract with the contractor at the beginning of June 2016. A new contractor has now been appointed to complete the required works.
18	Council Housebuilding Programme	Start on site with the development of 51 new affordable homes for rent at Burton Road, Loughton, under Phase 2 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	April June 2016	Achieved – The contractor has taken possession of the site and will be starting works on site shortly.
19	Council Housebuilding Programme	Start on site with the development of 34 new affordable homes for rent at North Weald, Ongar, Epping and Coopersale, under Phase 3 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Sept 2016 Feb 2017	In Progress – Tenders were agreed by the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee in December 2016, and works are due to start in February 2017.
20	Council Housebuilding Programme	Seek planning permission for the development of new affordable homes for rent in Loughton, under Phase 4 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	March 2016	Achieved – 11 sites within the proposed Phase 4 have received planning permission; 4 sites have been refused planning permission. However, Phase 4 has not been progressed any further due to the Moritorium placed on the Council Housebuilding Programme by the Cabinet.
21	Council Housebuilding Programme	Seek planning permission for the development of new affordable homes for rent in Ongar and Buckhurst Hill, under Phase 5 of the Council's Housebuilding Programme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	July 2016 March 2017	On Target – 5 sites within the proposed Phase 5 have received planning permission; 2 sites have been deferred pending further consideration. However, Phase 5 has not been progressed any further due to the Moritorium placed on the Council Housebuilding Programme by the Cabinet.

22	Council Housebuilding Programme	Consider the creation of a new post of Housing Development Manager, to support the Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.) and provide additional capacity in order to deliver the Council Housebuilding Programme	Director of Communities	Feb 2016	Achieved – The Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee agreed to the creation of two new posts of Housing Development Manager and Housing Development Officer, both on 3-year fixed term contracts. A Housing Development Manager was appointed, but left after a short while. Following an unsuccessful recruitment campaign, a temporary Housing Development Officer has been appointed from a recruitment agency.
23	Council Housebuilding Programme	Complete the 12 remaining development and financial appraisals for the identified potential development sites and formulate a Pipeline Programme of developments for Phases 6 onwards of the Housebuilding Programme	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Feb 2016	Achieved – Development and Financial Appraisals for all of the identified potential development sites have been completed and considered by the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee.
24	Council and Housing Association Accommodation	Complete the new District-wide Nominations Agreements with each of the Council's Preferred Housing Association Partners for new rented housing developments - to take account of the new Affordable Rents Framework and to update the provisions for nominations of shared ownership properties.	Director of Communities	Jan 2016	Achieved – A new District-wide Nominations Agreement has now been signed with all of the Council's Preferred Housing Association Partners.
25	Council Housing Accommodation	Revise the Council's Tenancy Policy to implement the introduction of 5-year fixed term tenancies for all new tenants (including transferring, downsizing and sheltered tenants), to meet the proposed requirements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.	Asst. Director (Housing Operations)	Nov 2016 April 2017	Under Review : awaiting Government Guidance – Through the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Government has introduced a requirement for all social landlords to introduce fixed-term tenancies for up to 5 years, or up to 10 years for those with a disability, or up to 19 years for those with children (up to nine years of age). The Council currently offers fixed term tenancies of 10 years to all new tenants, so the

					detailed arrangements are awaited from the DCLG in order to assess whether or not the Council needs to review its approach.
26	Council Housing Accommodation	Provide up to 1 x 1 bedroom and 1 x 2 bedroom flats each year for 4 years to Syrian refugees, on non-secure tenancies, to assist the Government's commitment to accommodate 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK over a 4-year period.	Asst. Director (Housing Operations)	Dec 2016 Mar 2017	In Progress – 1 X 2 bedroom flat was provided in 2016, although the family shortly vacated to move to another part of the country.
27	Council Housing Accommodation	Prepare for the introduction of the Government's "Pay to Stay" scheme, to charge higher rents for Council tenants with household incomes above £30,000 p/a, to meet the proposed requirements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.	Asst. Director (Private Sector and Communities Support)	Apr 2017	No longer required – The Government announced in November 2016 that the proposed requirement for councils to charge increased rents, up to market rents, to higher income tenants would no longer be pursued.
28	Council Housing Accommodation	Prepare for the sale of "high value" Council properties to fund the expected required levy to the Government, to meet the proposed requirements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016.	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Apr Sept 2017	Awaiting Government Guidance – The requirement for stock-owning councils to pay a levy to the Government, based on: an assumption that councils will sell all void properties over Government-specified value thresholds (to be determined); and a Government estimate for each council of the number and value of such properties arising each year has been included in the Housing and Planning Act 2016. However, no information has yet been provided by the DCLG on what the value thresholds will be for different parts of the country, nor how the levy will be calculated or what the levy will be for each local authority. The DCLG has recently advised that no levy will be charged in 2017/18. It is therefore not possible to plan to sell higher value properties, or to pay the levy, until the detailed arrangements are clear.

29	Homelessness	Consider the feasibility of replacing the mobile homes in the grounds of the Council's Homeless Persons' Hostel at Norway House, North Weald with new temporary accommodation for homeless families, that will be fit for the future	Asst. Director (Housing Property & Devt.)	Mar 2016 Apr 2017	Delayed – Although an initial feasibility study has been received from the Council's consultants, it needs detailed consideration - which has not been possible due to officers' focus on progressing the Council's Housebuilding Programme and the lack of staffing capacity. However, the Leader and Housing Portfolio Holder have asked officers to investigate the possibility of undertaking a pilot scheme for the supply and installation of modular accommodation for single homeless people, for which a report will come forward to Cabinet in March 2017.
30	Homelessness	Introduce a new scheme to fund the provision of returnable tenancy deposits, through tenancy deposit agents, to assist potentially homeless applicants to be accommodated in the private rented sector	Asst. Director (Housing Operations)	Apr 2016 Apr 2017	In Progress – The introduction of this scheme has not proved possible, due to tenancy deposit agents being unreceptive. However, the report on homelessness to the January meeting of the Select Committee proposes a different way forward.
31	Homelessness	Consider the provision of further rental loans, in addition to the provision of returnable tenancy deposits, to assist potentially homeless families to be accommodated in the private rented sector	Asst. Director (Housing Operations)	Feb 2016	Achieved - The Cabinet agreed to the provision of additional funding for further rental loans, through the Council's "Invest to Save" Scheme.
32	Homelessness	Seek to obtain the Government's Gold Standard Award for the provision of homelessness services, following the peer review by other Essex local authorities and the delivery of the resultant Action Plan	Housing Options Manager	April 2017	In Progress – The required Peer Review has been undertaken and an Action Plan agreed, which must be completed before the Gold Standard Award can be received.

33	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Review the Council's sheltered housing assets, and formulate a strategy for the determining the future use of each sheltered housing site (including retention, remodelling, refurbishment, redevelopment and sale), to ensure that the Council's sheltered housing provision is fit for the future.	Director of Communities	July 2016 Sept 2017	In Progress – An officer Project Team has been established to consider this issue in detail, and has formulated a number of draft recommendations. However, it is not possible to progress the project any further, until the outcome of the Stage 1 Further HRA Financial Options Review has been completed and the future of the Council Housebuilding Programme is known. In due course, it is envisaged that the outcome and recommendations of the review will be reported to the Communities Select Committee in the first instance.
34	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Work in partnership with Essex County Council to provide a supported housing scheme at Lindsay House, Epping.	Director of Communities	Mar 2017	No longer being pursued – This proposal originally formed part of the discussions with Essex County Council and other partners on the proposed terms of the legal arrangements for the development of the St. Johns area of Epping. However, it was subsequently agreed to take Lindsay House out of the discussions. It is now proposed that Lindsay House will be sold on the open market.
35	Supported Housing – Older and Other Vulnerable People	Include a requirement in the Draft Local Plan that an increased number of homes within new housing developments in the District should meet the Lifetime Homes Standard than presently required	Planning Policy Manager	Spring 2016	Achieved - This has been included within the Draft Local Plan
36	Affordable Housing Provision	Work with Essex County Council to consider the feasibility and viability of providing a new Independent Living (extra care) scheme for older people, as part of the proposed Leisure and Community Hub at Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey, as part of the Masterplanning Exercise for the area	Director of Communities	June August 2016	Achieved – Following the formulation of a Masterplan for Hillhouse, Outline Planning Permission was granted in November 2016 for the Hillhouse development, which includes the inclusion of a new Independent Living Scheme.

37	Empty Homes	Review and revise the Council's Housing Service Strategy on Empty Properties	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	Mar 2016	Achieved – This was considered and endorsed by the former Housing Select Committee in March 2016.
38	Rural Housing	Continue to work with Hastoe Housing Association and Parish Councils to investigate the development potential for rural housing schemes in villages, through the Council's Rural Planning Exceptions Policy	Director of Communities	Mar 2017	Limited progress – There have been no opportunities identified for rural housing schemes in villages, through the Council's Rural Planning Exceptions Policy, since the formulation of the Action Plan.
39	Decent Homes – Private Sector	Deliver the Action Plan formulated by the Nursery Workers Accommodation Working Party and consider and adopt a corporate protocol for dealing with unsuitable living conditions within agricultural and nursery accommodation, from a housing, planning, legal and economic development perspective	Private Housing Manager (Technical)	Dec 2016 July 2017	In Progress – An Action Plan has been formulated. This includes consultation on a draft accommodation standard. However, the National Union of Farmers (NFU) advised nursery owners not to co-operate with the Council. Subsequently, a meeting has been held with the NFU and growers to discuss the way forward on a number of matters relating to nurseries in the Lee Valley, including the provision of improved accommodation for workers.
40	CARE Agency	Prepare for, and meet, the requirements for the new contract with Essex County Council for funding the Council's in-house Caring and Repairing in Epping Forest (CARE) Agency	Private Housing Manager (Grants and CARE)	July 2016 Jan 2017	No longer required – In December 2016, Essex County Council announced its intention to cease the provision of any funding for CARE, or any other home improvement agencies across Essex. Therefore, there is no need to enter into any new contract.