

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 1 November 2017

Subject: Housing

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Stavrou

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Outsourcing of the Careline Alarm Monitoring Service - update

1. At its meeting on 2 February 2017 (Minute 121 refers), the Cabinet agreed that the Careline Alarm Monitoring Service be outsourced to an external provider. The procurement process was managed by the procurement arm of the North Housing Consortium (NHC). I agreed that the highest scoring tenderer Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Limited be appointed as the provider of the monitoring of the Council's Careline Service. As part of the Due Diligence process, officers visited their Control Centre in Doncaster, interviewed their management team and were more than satisfied that they can meet with the requirements of the Council's detailed specification. The service will be handed over to the new provider on 20 November 2017.

Attendance by Essex Police District Commander

2. Members are reminded that on 7 November 2017, Essex Police District Commander will be attending the meeting of the Communities Select Committee starting at 7pm in the Council Chamber. All Members are welcome and are able to submit questions in advance of the meeting to Adrian Hendry, Democratic Services by email at democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

C.A.R.E. (Caring and Repairing in Epping Forest)

3. C.A.R.E. the Home Improvement Agency run by Epping Forest District Council helps older homeowners and private tenants remain at home in greater comfort, warmth and security with a range of services. This year external funding has been successfully achieved for individual clients who are unable to access funds through EFDC Housing Assistance streams.

The funding is to provide central heating, window repairs and wheelchair access have been secured from SSAFA (Soldiers Sailors Airman and Families Association), Nightingale Cancer Charity and the Health through Warmth Crisis Fund and a further successful bid for £5000 from the Gas Safe Charity to assist vulnerable persons in need of care and support and is now also in place. In the last 3 years C.A.R.E. has received over £14,000 in external charitable funding to support and aid vulnerable persons.

Empty Property Loan scheme

4. Owners of long term empty properties can make an application to the Council for funding of up to £10,000 for works to be undertaken at their empty property to make

it habitable. The type of works this the loan covers range from new windows, central heating, electrical upgrades, new kitchens and new bathrooms.

To be eligible to apply, the property must have been empty for at least 6 months prior to making an application; the owner must occupy the property on completion of the works and repay the loan upon the sale or transfer of the property. With the assistance of this funding, building works have recently been completed on a 3 bed house in North Weald which had previously stood empty for over 18 months with a family to move in shortly and in Hastingwood a 1 bed flat which had been empty for just under a year will shortly be occupied by a single person.

Official Opening of John Scott Court

5. The Council hosted an official opening ceremony on 6 October 2017 to welcome the first tenants into John Scott Court in Waltham Abbey. Around 50 guests gathered for the ceremony, an event which marked the completion of Phase One of the Council's House-building Programme to provide 23 new affordable rented homes in Waltham Abbey.

Guests, including John Scott, MP Eleanor Laing and local councillors, joined council officers, contractors and tenants to open the nine newly built homes at John Scott Court, all of which are being let to local residents in housing need.

It has been over 30 years since the last council home was built in the Epping Forest District, so it is a real achievement for the Council to be building again and adding to their existing housing stock of around 6,500 properties.

Photos and a short video of the ceremony can be found on the Council's website and other social media.

Development Agents East Thames end their relationship with the Council

6. In 2013 the Council appointed East Thames as its Development Agents to assist the Council with its Council House-building Programme. After 4-years, and following a merger with London & Quadrant, East Thames has served notice in accordance with the contract to end their relationship as Development Agents.

A 6-month hand-over period has been agreed to allow the Council to quickly act and put in place alternative contractual arrangements to continue with one of its key objectives and build new Council owned affordable housing in the district.

Relocation of the Housing Repairs Service to Oakwood Hill

7. Following the Cabinet's decision to relocate the Housing Repairs Service to the Oakwood Hill Depot, a call-in was registered relating specifically to the proposed staff parking arrangements on greenspace on Oakwood Hill Estate, which was contained within the decisions.

In line with Call-in procedures, a meeting was arranged with myself, Councillor Sartin, Councillor C C Pond and Councillor D Roberts as well as Officers, where agreement was reached whereby all other alternative staff parking options would be considered before any planning application is submitted for parking on the greenspace, and that an independent parking study be commissioned to explore these options. The call-in was subsequently withdrawn in light of my agreement.