

HOUSING TASK GROUP UPDATE

Executive Summary

The Housing Task Group met on Tuesday 16 November and reviewed the delivery of affordable homes, progress on bringing empty homes back into use, work to take housing services in-house, performance of New Vision Homes and an updated housing assistance policy.

Delivery of Affordable Homes

The group received the regular update on delivery of affordable homes. In total 180 affordable homes are expected to be delivered by the end of 2022, 93 by the end of the following year and 219 by the end of 2024.

Residents are beginning to move into Hale End Court in Old Woking which has 48 sheltered / supported flats, including extra care units. Waterman House in Chertsey Road, provides 22 flats for temporary accommodation and was handed to the Council in November. The Broadoaks site at West Byfleet, has 54 affordable homes, which should be completed by the end of the year.

In 2022 4 apartments are to be delivered in Rydens Way, Old Woking and up to 54 homes have should be delivered at the Parrington Autos site in Portugal Road, Woking.

In 2023 a garage site in Bonsey Lane, Westfield will deliver 7 homes and the Sheerwater red phase is planned to deliver a net increase of 91 new homes, including 68 flats for older residents.

Planning applications for 64 new homes at Brookwood Lye and for 29 homes on the site of Buckingham's garage in Albert Drive, Sheerwater are awaiting determination.

Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use

The task group appreciated an update on work being done to bring empty homes back into use and to learn that work in this area has been given greater focus in recent months, after resource was limited by work on the landlord registration scheme and the impact of Covid. Woking currently has 440 long term empty properties, although this includes 163 properties which are left empty for the Sheerwater redevelopment and those with Executors of wills, new build or recently refurbished. The group expressed hope that the resource allocated will help add to local housing stock by bringing empty homes into use.

Transfer of Housing Services In-house

Progress is continuing to bring housing services back in-house in April 2022. Council staff are working constructively with New Vision Homes with a key focus to ensure tenant services continue to be delivered until the end of the contract.

Staff are busy procuring a wide range of services to replace those previously provided by w a Vision Homes. The task group were pleased to see that past resident concerns' on first time fixes, speed of repairs, confirmed appointment times and the overall repairs system were being addressed in tender specifications and that in future there will be a new emphasis on estate inspections involving all local service providers and elected representatives. The group also stressed the importance of having a tenant participation group as part of new structures and heard that the Council's new engagement system is likely to be used to facilitate this.

Housing Assistance Policy

An updated Housing Assistance Policy was reviewed by the task group. The assistance policy aims to help residents to adapt, repair or improve their homes. The revised policy supports the 5 key priorities of the Council's recently adopted Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The new policy allows for works to be done to support dementia sufferers, enables support to improve the home environment to improve health and well-being and to provide alternatives, for example an alternative to a stair lift where installation is not appropriate. Technological assistance is now also proposed to be provided, for example an electronic tablet to allow a resident to keep in touch with friends and relatives. The group was supportive of a range of health and well-being professionals, beyond occupational therapists, being able to recommend appropriate adaptations.

Future meetings

The task group is looking to hear from Native, who are responsible for the letting of Victoria Place apartments, at its first meeting in 2022.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE that the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
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