

## **HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP**

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013  
Committee Room 1, Civic Centre  
Commencing at 6pm**

### **Agenda**

1. **Apologies** (Please send your apologies to Erica Fredericks – tel: 01903 737547 or e-mail: [erica.fredericks@arun.gov.uk](mailto:erica.fredericks@arun.gov.uk) )
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes and Matters Arising from the Housing & Customer Services Working Group meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012** (attached)
4. **2013 Housing Strategy – Raise The Roof Year 2 Update** – (Report & Appendix attached)
5. **Customer Services Access Strategy-** (Briefing report - sent under separate cover)
6. **Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services** (Report attached)
7. **Housing Complaints Arrangements** (Report attached)
8. **Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities & Homelessness** (Report attached)
9. **Tenancy Fraud and Photo ID** (Report attached)
10. **Work Programme 2012/13** – (Work Programme 2012/13 attached to note)
11. **Next Meeting** – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at 6pm (Please note change of venue to Bognor Regis Town Hall Council Chamber)

**Copies to: Cllrs:**  
Bicknell  
Mrs Bower  
Chapman  
Clayden  
Edwards  
Mrs Goad  
Mrs Harrison  
Haymes  
Mrs Oakley  
Oliver-Redgate  
Oppler  
Mrs Pendleton  
Squires  
Dingemans (Cabinet Member)  
Mrs Madeley (Deputy to Cabinet Member)  
Elkins (Cabinet Member)  
Gammon (Deputy to Cabinet Member)

**Officers:** Jackie Follis (Lead Officer)  
Brian Pople (Lead Officer)  
Frank Hickson  
Erica Fredericks  
Nigel Lynn

**Electronic Copies to:** Nigel Croad  
Harriet Shelley

## HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

### Minutes of a meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012 at 6pm

(to be agreed at the next meeting of the Working Group)

Present: Councillors; Clayden (Chairman), Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Bicknell, Mrs Bower, Haymes, Mrs Pendleton (from minute 38) and Squires

Also

Present: Councillor Elkins (Cabinet Member Housing), Councillor Dingemans (Cabinet Member Customer Services)

Officers: Housing Projects Manager, Democratic Services Officer, Head of Human Resources and Customer Services (Leader Officer)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ***The Housing & Customer Services Working Group recommends to the Overview Select Committee that:***

- 1) It notes the progress made to date with implementing and/or developing actions to address the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities.
- 2) No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness as described in the report on Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities by Frank Hickson dated October 2012 and as attached to these minutes.

### 35 APOLOGIES

35.1 Apologies were received from Councillors; Chapman, Mrs Goad, Mrs Harrison, Mrs Oakley and Oliver-Redgate. Apologies were also received from the Head of Housing, Lead Officer to this working group.

### 36 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

36.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

### 37 MINUTES OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING MEETING ON 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012

37.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> October were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### 37.2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING WORKING GROUP ON 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012

37.3 With respect to minute 33, Council Housing Stock Expansion Opportunities, the Housing Project Manager confirmed that Cabinet had agreed the Housing & Customer Services Working Group's recommendations at the Cabinet Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012. The Cabinet Member for Housing informed the working group that Cabinet had wanted maximum flexibility for the purchase of suitable

properties or land and an initial sum of £500,000 had been recommended for this purpose in 2012/13. It was noted that a Housing Development Officer had been appointed.

## 38 CUSTOMER SERVICES ACCESS STRATEGY

38.1 The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services presented her report on the Review of the Customer Access Strategy requesting Member's feedback on the direction and focus for this strategy. It was noted that the overall aim of the Customer Access Strategy is to channel customer contact in a way that improves services to our customers whilst reducing costs for the Council. The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services stated that the Council is committed to delivering services through a variety of methods including telephone, reception (face to face), and written communication and emphasised the importance of resolving queries at first point of contact. It was explained that the Customer Access Strategy must establish a Corporate approach so that customers receive the same level of service regardless of what method of communication they use.

( Councillor Mrs Pendleton arrived at 6.20pm and gave her apologies)

38.2 The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services informed the working group that, in recent weeks, several Councillors had visited the Arun Direct Call Centre and thanked Members for their interest which had been greatly appreciated by the Manager and Staff of the Contact Centre. The Councillors discussed their visit and agreed that they had been impressed with the excellent management from the Contact Centre Manager and the efficient, self-motivated staff. Members reported that the main weaknesses they had observed was a lack of IT integration, which caused difficulties for staff, and E-Forms that have to be printed in order to process the information supplied. The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services agreed that these were areas for improvement and informed the working group that whilst the Lagan System is being upgraded there is a lot of work to do with respect to the integration of IT software across the Council. Members were also informed that the Arun Improvement Programme would be addressing the issues surrounding the use of E-Forms.

38.3 The Working Group agreed with the aims of the Customer Access Strategy outlined in section 2 of the report. The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services invited members to contact her should they have any concerns or feedback from their ward members. It was confirmed that an outline strategy should be made available at the next Housing & Customer Services Working Group meeting in February 2013.

## 39 TENANTS SCRUTINY OF HOUSING SERVICES

39.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services which provided an update to the verbal report made at the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012. Members noted that the Homes and Community Agency now have a statutory role to enforce the Regulatory Framework Standards and intervene only when there is a risk of serious harm to tenants. It was explained that this approach is known as co-regulation and aims to move the focus of decision making and performance management from the regulator towards tenants and their local needs and priorities. The Housing Projects Manager outlined the principles of Regulation, tenant scrutiny, good practice examples from other landlords and the Council's options for introducing tenant scrutiny.

- 39.2 The working group discussed the report and Members expressed concern that there may not be sufficient interest and consistent attendance from tenants. It was felt that the Council should provide a programme of development and support encouraging good representation from tenants. It was noted that the Housing Department's Budget 2012/13 included funding for role of tenant involvement in scrutiny.
- 39.3 Members identified the key challenge as encouraging tenant participation and discussed how to offer tenant scrutiny meetings at accessible locations and suitable times. It was suggested that tenants should be asked their opinions on how they would like to proceed. Members expressed their concern that the exercise could be money wasted without full tenant involvement and perhaps a system that relies on a robust complaints procedure would avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.
- 39.4 The Cabinet Member for Housing confirmed that the Council has to provide tenant scrutiny and ways must be found to engage tenants in the process. Members were informed that a meeting of the Arun District Council Tenants and Leaseholders Organisation would take place on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and officers had been requested to encourage attendance from tenants who had not previously participated. It was confirmed that expenses and travel payments had been re-established and the importance of training to equip tenants with the necessary skills would be a priority. Members were requested to inform the Housing Project Manager should they have any interested ward residents.
- 39.5 The Working Group concluded their discussion with the assertion that Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services should begin as a modest scheme, kept as simple as possible and developed over time according to its success.
- 39.6 It was agreed that a further report will be prepared for the next meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

#### 40 HOUSING COMPLAINTS ARRANGEMENTS

- 40.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Housing Complaint Arrangements setting out the requirements for change to the way in which Housing Complaints are dealt with from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. It was explained that the Local Government Ombudsman Service would no longer deal with housing matters and they would, instead, fall under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 40.2 The Housing Projects Manager proposed three options for Members to consider:
- Option 1 - The minimum required by law – identify Elected Members or Members of Parliament who could fulfill the role of the democratic filter
  - Option 2 - Establish a designated Arun Tenants Complaints Panel
  - Option 3 - Establish a Multi-Landlord Complaints Panel
- 40.3 Following discussion the Working Group favoured Option 1 to meet minimum legal requirements but aspired to Option 2 by setting up a designated Tenants Complaints Panel. Members requested that The Housing Project Manager also investigate the potential use of an Independent Person to deal with Housing complaints about the Council, until a Tenants Complaints Panel can be established.

40.4 The Housing Projects Manager confirmed that a further report would be submitted to the meeting of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 outlining how proposals could be implemented.

#### 41 JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HEALTH INEQUALITIES & HOMELESSNESS

41.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Joint Scrutiny of Health Inequalities and Homelessness updating Members on progress with the recommendations made under the last themed report on Access to Health Services for Homeless Households and providing information about access to support services.

41.2 Members noted the progress with previous recommendations and the Housing Project Manager's advice that no further work is required for recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9. It was confirmed that recommendation 3 had been progressing with the Housing Projects Manager continuing this work with Adur & Worthing Borough Council. It was proposed that recommendations 10, 11 and 12 require more work and it was agreed that a report, specifically addressing these three recommendations, be presented to the next meeting of the working group on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

41.3 There was general discussion concerning homelessness and it was pointed out that Arun District Council concentrates on preventing homelessness in a realistic way with resources focused on those that the Council has a duty to assist. The importance of signposting was mentioned so that the appropriate agencies can be readily identified by those in need of their services.

41.4 After discussing the report the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Overview Select Committee that:

- 1) It notes the progress made to date with implementing and/or developing actions to address the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities.
- 2) No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness as described in the report on Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities by Frank Hickson dated October 2012 and attached to these minutes.

#### 42 COLD WEATHER SHELTER 2012/13

42.1 The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Cold Weather Shelter 2012/13 providing details of the arrangements for Rough Sleepers/Street homeless individuals during the period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. It was explained that the Council no longer has a statutory duty to provide cold weather shelter but is obligated by the receipt of additional funding of £50,000 through the Homelessness Prevention Initiatives outlined in its Rough Sleepers Strategy.

42.2 Members were pleased that Glenlogie had been retained and is available for use as a cold weather shelter this Winter.

42.3 Although the Working Group was pleased with the arrangements in place for 2012/13, there was concern that Glenlogie is currently only available for temporary use for this purpose. It was requested that a strategy for future cold weather

shelter provision be put to Members in due course.

42.4 The Working Group noted the arrangements for Cold Weather Shelter during the period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

43 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Work Programme 2012/13 was noted. Following request by the Housing Project Manager an additional item was allocated to the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 on Combating Tenancy Fraud – photo identification upon tenancy agreement.

44 NEXT MEETING- 27 February 2013

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP –  
11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2012

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Decision Paper

Subject : Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness

Report by : Frank Hickson

Report date: October 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report updates the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on progress with the Recommendations made under the last themed Report on Access to Health Services for Homeless Households and focusses on the second agreed theme, Information about and access to support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to recommend to the Overview Select Committee that:

- 1) It notes the progress made to-date with implementing and/or developing actions to address the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities.
- 2) No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 from the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness.

1.0 UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 At the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012, the Working Group recommend (to the Overview Select Committee) to:

Agree that a further communication be sent to the Secretary of State for Health, the Registrar of the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group to seek a response to the letters sent in March 2012. Any or all responses to be circulated to the Working Group and further actions reported to the Working Group for approval.

Agree that arrangements are made for the Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership and Arun and West Sussex Local Strategic Partnerships to consider the Report of the Joint Scrutiny Review.

- 1.2 In respect of the further communications, a letter was received from Dr. Katie Armstrong of the Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (previously circulated to Members of the Working Group) explaining she had passed copies of the correspondence to Primary Care Commissioning at NHS West Sussex and West Sussex Local Medical Committee. I wrote to Dr. Armstrong asking her to identify the name and title of the individuals at these organisations she has copied the correspondence to so that I can pursue them if no response is received.
- 1.2.1 Letters have also been received from the Department of Health (on behalf of the The Secretary of State), NHS Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMC's). The latter two were in response to Dr. Armstrong's letter which was copied to them. These have been circulated to the Working Group as previously agreed.
- 1.2.2 The letter from the Department of Health states that a reply was previously sent to the Cabinet Members of Adur, Arun and Worthing Council's in June 2012 and enclose a copy of that reply. The letter was addressed to all three Councillors at Worthing Town Hall so it is likely that it was never sent on to Councillor Elkins by Worthing Borough Council.
- 1.2.3 The letter clarifies that it is not necessary to have a permanent address to register as a patient with a G.P. Practice and that some practices register homeless people by using the practice's address or the address of a hostel which appropriate. It also states that G.P. Practices are not required to check, record or take copies of any supporting documentary evidence of their identity. It does however also state that it is not unreasonable for a G.P. Practice to request supporting documentary evidence at the time of application to join its N.H.S Patients List is made. However, this should be a policy for all new patients.
- 1.2.4 The letters from NHS Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMC's) also clarify various points in relation to identification required by G.P. Practices. In particular, NHS West Sussex state that identification may include current benefits or State Pension notification letter confirming rights to benefits for the current period. It was a recommendation of the Joint Scrutiny Review that identification of this nature be accepted so it is pleasing that this is acceptable.
- 1.2.5 It should also be noted that in response to the letter from Dr. Armstrong, NHS Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committees (LMC's) have agreed to register people who are homeless and do not have a permanent address by entering the G.P. Practice address on the patient's demographic system. This should assist households living in temporary accommodation such as a Hostel or Bed and Breakfast establishment to register with a local G.P. Practice.
- 1.2.6 However, whilst these changes do provide some level of improvement in existing arrangements, the change does not altogether address the requirements of the original Recommendation 3 which states "That a Protocol be agreed in agreement with the Adur/Worthing and Arun Chief Executives and with all homeless support agencies providing support for homeless people to accept alternative proof of I.D. from a list of approved providers such as DWP Giro letters to enable homeless people to identify themselves and access services". I have recently attended discussions with Officers and Members of Adur and Worthing Councils about all the Joint Scrutiny Review recommendations and a stakeholders event organized by Adur and Worthing Councils to see how Recommendation 3 can be taken forward. At the Stakeholders Event, a number of organizations attended and came forward with ideas to provide additional/alternative forms of ID. These ideas are being transcribed and will be circulated for further consideration. I will update the



Working Group on these two aspects of this work at the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

- 1.2.7 In view of the responses now received from the Department of Health, Primary Care Commissioning at NHS West Sussex and Surrey and Sussex Local Medical Committee it is proposed that no further work is undertaken on Recommendations 1 and 2.
- 1.3 In respect of arrangements for the Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership and Arun and West Sussex Local Strategic Partnerships to consider the Report of the Joint Scrutiny Review, I attended Arun Wellbeing and Health Partnership on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 to present a Report (Copy attached as Appendix 1 for information).
- 1.3.1 The Wellbeing and Health Partnership made the following comments:
  - 1.3.1.1 The PCT will pick up the main recommendations from the Joint Scrutiny review as many of the gaps in service need addressing through national commissioning. Wellbeing Hubs could not be expected to deliver such an Agenda but will be encouraged to support initiatives, both local and national and Arun Wellbeing Hub does work at a low level with Clients of local homeless service providers. It was agreed each Operational Partnership (i.e. Community Safety, Community Cohesion) should be expected to look at the groups of people they deal with and work out how they can help homeless people practically. The AWHP could then draw up an information pathway to ensure clear referrals and information. The Chairman will approach and collect statements in support from other partnerships together with how joint working can be better co-ordinated.
  - 1.3.1.2 The Report has been added to the Work Programme for the Arun Local Strategic Partnership but a date for its consideration has not yet been fixed. The Report will be considered by West Sussex Wellbeing and Health Partnership, following discussion with the Chief Executive of West Sussex County Council. This will be at the meetings on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

## 2.0 INFORMATION ABOUT AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

- 2.1 This is the second broad theme agreed by the Working Group to focus on the recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Review. The recommendations covered under this theme in the Report are:

### Recommendation 4

That Homelink and other service providers, acting as a co-ordinating body in conjunction with the Homelessness Forum, bring in other representatives and give energy and presence on the streets to pull all interested parties together to take the lead in education in schools and of the public in these issues.

### Recommendation 5

That the Homelessness Forums in each District be reconstituted and amalgamated to include all of the statutory and voluntary agencies in the Council areas to improve co-operation and efficiency in examining current homelessness issues; and

### Recommendation 6

That the Adur/Worthing and Arun Council Chief Executives agree a protocol to determine which Council will take the lead when clients are dual registered and go to more than one authority for services to help improve outcomes for homeless people.

#### Recommendation 7

That all Agencies involved in promoting support for homeless people be encouraged to provide additional training for their staff about the needs of homeless people. A training module be developed for all front line Council Staff who have contact with homeless people to be part of their professional development. This training needs to include guidance to help with on the spot signposting.

#### Recommendation 8

That training and support be provided in schools and further education to spread the word about homelessness issues.

#### Recommendation 9

That Councils use their media resource to educate the public on homelessness issues via press releases and poster campaigns to identify how homeless people can be helped rather than how they can be turned away, which should include a strengthening of the duty to advise and assist.

#### Recommendation 10

That all relevant agencies utilise available support to help tenants maintain their tenancies thus preventing homelessness.

#### Recommendation 11

That tenants be provided with details of available support and a dedicated telephone number provided by one of the Local Authorities or a named body to help them find help. This line should provide answers to those services such as financial help and education, information on utility companies and literacy and language.

#### Recommendation 12

To prevent social isolation, a support worker service be provided either by a Local Authority or through a Service Level Agreement to help people maintain their housing and links to existing services and opportunities. This could include appropriately trained staff, learning from existing service models, helping them to access services and be included in the wider community.

### 3.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS 4 AND 5

- 3.1 The Arun Homelessness Forum is now co-ordinated and chaired by Voluntary Action in Arun and Chichester (VAAC) which was formed in April 2012 following the merger of CVS - Arunwide and Voluntary Community Action Chichester District.

The attendees of the Arun Homelessness Forum include Homelink, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Bognor Housing Trust, Shelter, Stonepillow, CRI, Sussex Police, Surrey and Sussex Probation Service, Arun and Worthing MIND.

Its functions include:

Monitoring the implementation of Arun's Homelessness Strategy and provide support for that process;

Identify and disseminate good practice and share with the group; Discuss national and local issues that affect homeless persons and the provision of services, with a view to service development

Provide support to other members in meeting the needs of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness.

Issues of particular importance to the Homeless Forum can be raised at the Arun Local Strategic Partnership, through Hilary Spencer as its Chairman.

- 3.2 Although Officers from Arun District Council attend the Forum Meetings, the Forum is independent of the Council. It is chaired by a representative from Voluntary Action in Arun and Chichester (VAAC). Other Statutory Agencies such as Sussex Police and Surrey and Sussex Probation Service attend to give information on their activities/services. The Homeless Forum itself is the most appropriate group to act in the Arun District as a Co-ordinating body to bring together representatives of the various groups who are involved with homeless people.
- 3.3 To develop the approach outlined in Recommendation 4 of the Joint Scrutiny Review, the Homeless Forum would need to carefully consider if it wanted to or how it could evolve in a way envisaged. This would have to be a matter for the Homeless Forum to address itself, with input from its representative organizations.
- 3.4 The Forum would need to consider if there is the willingness and capacity to develop itself in the way envisaged in the Recommendation. The Forum has no direct funding, relying on administrative resources provided by the VAAC and the capacity/resources of the organisations involved in the Forum to achieve its aims and objectives. It does appear that some organisations which are identified by the VAAC as providing services to homeless people/households do not attend the Forum.
- 3.5 Equally, the proposals outlined in Recommendation 5 of the Joint Scrutiny Review in relation to reconstituting and amalgamating the Homelessness Forums, must be a matter for the Forum to consider and decide upon itself.
- 3.6 A meeting has been held with the Chief Executive of VAAC and Chair of the Homeless Forum to discuss the detail of Recommendations 4 and 5. They have expressed concern about the practicality and validity of implementing most aspects of these Recommendations.
  - 3.6.1 They advised that the Homelessness Forum has already considered its role as a co-ordinating body to improve and expand communication between the Agencies and Service Providers working with the homeless. This involved the VAAC, Homelink, CRI and Stonepillow. The Forum is now devising a co-ordinating role in this respect for Stonepillow. The Forum has established links with the education sector which it utilizes effectively to create an awareness for young people at school about homelessness. As an example, Year 8 students at Littlehampton Academy

undertook a project on homelessness, focusing mainly on issues affecting Littlehampton.

- 3.6.2 They advised that the Terms of Reference for the Homelessness Forum are regularly reviewed and are changed to reflect the priorities the Forum agreed were of local importance/priority. As part of this last review, the Forum considered disbanding as an option but decided to continue because those organizations who regularly attend wanted to continue. They believe their role as Reference Group for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Council's Homeless and Rough Sleepers Strategies is key to being affective in addressing and preventing homelessness in Arun. It is felt that the Forum actively helps to foster good relationships between all agencies/organizations working with homeless people and helps to quell antagonism that sometimes occurs towards the Council.
- 3.6.3 With regard to proposals for amalgamating the Adur and Worthing and Arun Homeless Forums, there is a real concern that this would result in some organizations who work in Arun no longer wishing to be involved because it is felt there would inevitably be a lesser focus on homelessness issues within Arun. It should be noted that Adur and Worthing Homelessness Fora have already amalgamated and this arrangement is apparently working well. It has been suggested that rather than amalgamating the three Fora, there could be an annual meeting of the three, at which issues or topics of mutual interest or concern are discussed. This option may provide a worthwhile alternative to complete amalgamation and would likely be more acceptable to the Arun Homelessness Forum.
- 3.6.4 In the light of the explanation outlined in the above, it is proposed that no further action be taken in respect of Recommendations 4 and 5 but Adur and Worthing Homelessness Forum be approached regarding setting up an annual meeting of the three Forums to consider issues or topics of mutual interest.

#### 4.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATION 6

- 4.1 Anyone seeking assistance with homelessness from a local housing authority must take the initiative and approach that local housing authority. Each local housing authority must make arrangements so that advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness is available to everyone in its District (Section 179(i) Housing Act 1996).
- 4.2 Local housing authorities are obliged to have arrangements in place so that anyone who wants to make an application for homelessness assistance can do so (Section 183(i) Housing Act 1996). People seeking accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation can apply to any local housing authority they choose, as they need not have any residence requirement or other preliminary condition.
- 4.3 On this basis, applications for homelessness assistance can be made consecutively or concurrently. The Statutory Homeless Scheme is based on the premise that the applicant will apply to the local housing authority for the area in which they wish to be accommodated. Therefore, if the local housing authority to which the homelessness application is made decides to accept the duty to house the applicant in its area, there is no redress against that decision (for the applicant) even if they would prefer to have been referred to another local housing authority to meet the homelessness duty.

- 4.4 There is no eligibility or geographic connection required to make a homeless application. The local housing authority cannot turn away homeless applicants who seem to have no local connection with its district. The proper course of action if an applicant does not appear to have a local connection is for the local housing authority to make enquiries into:
- (i) whether the applicant is eligible for services under Part 7, Housing Act 1996;
  - (ii) if so, whether any duty is owed to the applicant under Part 7 Housing Act 1996.

The scope of the latter enquiries may (but does not need to) include considering whether an applicant has a local connection with the local housing authority and, if not, whether they have a local connection elsewhere.

A local housing authority can accept a duty is owed to an applicant but refer them to another local housing authority if it is believed they have a stronger local connection with that authority's area.

- 4.5 On the basis of the legal obligations/requirements owed to homeless/potentially homeless households, it is believed that the Protocol as proposed by the Joint Scrutiny Review goes against the legal requirement for the local authority where an application is made to provide advice and assistance. It is, therefore, proposed not to take any further action on this recommendation.

## 5.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATIONS 7, 8 AND 9

- 5.1 Statutory and Voluntary Agencies involved in providing support services for homeless people have their own bespoke training programmes for their staff. These programmes reflect the agreed key development needs/priorities/targets for the individuals and the organizations as well as updates on existing elements of skills and knowledge. Some voluntary organizations/agencies involved in the homelessness in Arun have very limited resources available to cover training and as volunteer time commitments can be very limited, they prefer that volunteers focus on their work duties rather than training. It is proposed to put training on the Agenda for future Homelessness Forum to try and identify what arrangements are in place.
- 5.2 The Housing Department draws up training plans for its staff in Homelessness and Housing Options Sections on an annual basis. These training plans are devised from the annual appraisal process and reflect both personal development and Departmental priorities. These plans will cover a range of issues/topics relating to homelessness. Training is also provided for Reception, Neighbourhood Management and Housing Allocations staff on issues/topics relating to homelessness.
- 5.3 For example, in 2012/2013, the Housing Department was able to access a free training Programme delivered by National Housing Advice Service, part of the homeless charity Shelter. The topics covered included domestic violence and young homeless people. The Department also has access to test effective quality training through the joint training events with other Local Authorities in West Sussex.
- 5.4 There are a variety of sources of training programmes available which can provide detail for staff who have contact with homeless or potentially homeless households. Staff dealing with homeless enquiries are well briefed in relation to directing homeless people to a range of support or advice services. Team meetings are

utilized to provide up to date information on available services and contact/referral arrangements.

- 5.5 Training on homelessness for schools is carried out on request from individual schools. From time to time schools invite the Department to contribute to a related topic in the curriculum. In 2009 the annual Youth Council Conference concentrated on housing and homelessness issues. It has been established that the Joint Review Recommendation was particularly focused on Further Education Colleges and Adur and Worthing Councils are preparing to approach Northbrook College. In Arun, University of Chichester would be the equivalent but it could be difficult to secure interest of students at this level. A contact at Felpham Community College has been identified to discuss how or if appropriate training could be considered for Year 10 or above students at secondary schools.
- 5.6 With regard to use of media resources, in the Summer of 2012, Arun District Council ran a co-ordinated campaign to raise awareness about homelessness. The campaign involved placing posters on buses and in bus shelters, press releases, features on BBC Radio Sussex (including BBC Sussex online), Spirit FM, Splash FM and articles in the local press. Information is also available on the Council's Website. Staff in the Housing Options Section reported a 10% increase in contact calls following the campaign.
- 5.7 The Housing Department have available a variety of leaflets and information about how to secure accommodation and access support services which is given to homeless/potentially homeless people who approach for advice. It should be noted that the cost of producing additional promotional or publicity material has to be found from existing budgets and in the current financial climate this can prove to be difficult, particularly if it is at the expense of or detriment to services specifically provided for homeless/potentially homeless households.
- 5.8 It is therefore believed that the Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 are already being addressed within available resources, but Recommendation 8 could be developed further, subject to interest/involvement from secondary schools and the availability of staff time to prepare and to undertake the training. It is therefore suggested that the existing arrangements for promoting the awareness of services, training for staff are continued and no further action is taken on these recommendations.

#### 6.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATION 10, 11 AND 12

- 6.1 I have been investigating/researching how these recommendations can be progressed. There are resource implications, both financial and staffing, involved in successfully implementing them.
- 6.2 In order to provide the necessary detail to the Working Group to properly consider the implications of implementing them, further work is required and I am not able to report as planned to this meeting. I am therefore proposing that a Report specifically addressing these three Recommendations is presented to the next meeting of the Working Group on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Contact:** Frank Hickson Ext 37550

Frank.Hickson@arun.gov.uk

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

27 February 2013

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Information Paper

Subject : Raise the Roof – Year 2 progress report

Report by : Andy Elder

Report date: 11 January 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council's housing strategy Raise the Roof was approved in December 2010; this paper sets out the second years' progress with the action plan.

There have been a number of significant achievements during the second year of the strategy including the number of empty homes brought back into use and the quantity and quality of new affordable homes developed for local people.

However, the Council continues to face considerable challenges in respect of its homelessness prevention work which is demonstrated by an increase in the average length of time people are staying in temporary accommodation.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Housing is more than simply putting a roof over people's heads. A good quality home helps people live healthier, happier lives. Good homes that stand the test of time can transform communities, improve outcomes for families and individuals and promote social mobility.
- 1.2 The world is changing and the housing policy context with it, including changes to planning, housing finance, incentives for growth, social housing, welfare and the environment. The Government Housing Strategy, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Localism Act now change the way that local government and places interact with development, housing and growth.
- 1.3 Raise the Roof sets out the ways in which the Council and its partners are working towards creating a balanced housing market for the District and providing decent homes which are fit for the needs of Arun's population. Raise the Roof is designed therefore to provide the strategic context for the Council to be innovative and pragmatic in meeting local housing needs and aspirations.



## 2.0 PRIORITIES FOR RAISE THE ROOF

2.1 The following are the strategic priorities of Raise the Roof;

- 1) To develop balanced and sustainable communities in the Arun district;
- 2) To ensure through a range of housing options that everyone has somewhere to live;
- 3) To meet the housing and support needs of vulnerable people;
- 4) To improve the condition and energy efficiency of the private sector housing stock;
- 5) To manage, retain and improve the Council's own housing stock;

2.2 These priorities were agreed following a comprehensive programme of community consultation during 2010.

## 3.0 SECOND YEAR OF RAISE THE ROOF

3.1 The details of progress on the individual items in the housing strategy action plan 2010-2015 are set out in Appendix 1 of this report. The majority of the commentary in the action plan is focused on items which had a 2012 timescale for delivery.

3.2 The Council enabled the delivery of 329 affordable homes in 2011/12, and a further 96 were developed in the first 6-months of 2012/13. So at the half-way stage of our strategy to deliver 1,000 affordable homes by 2015 we have secured 621, which is an encouraging start.

3.3 As part of its Empty Homes Strategy the Council works to identify long-term empty homes, researches why they are empty and contacts owners and encourages them to bring the empty homes back into use with other organisations and agencies. This systematic approach has proven successful recently with 19 empty homes brought back into use in 2011/12.

3.4 Homelessness prevention is the main purpose of the Council's homelessness service. Arun has performed well in preventing homelessness in recent years, however homeless applications have started to rise again and the Council faces a number of significant pressures, many of which are outside of its control.

3.5 The number of applicants in temporary accommodation in Arun is already relatively high and, with a finite resource of short term accommodation, the Council continues to rely on expensive Bed and Breakfast accommodation, albeit that the quality is generally good.

3.6 Changes to Housing Benefit entitlements and welfare benefits are likely to make accessing the private rented sector even more difficult in the future. Arun has

been proactive in identifying those households who are likely to see their benefit levels fall and could lose their homes as a result. Reductions in personal incomes and unemployment may see a rise in mortgage repossessions. Over the last year mortgage funds generally have become more difficult to secure resulting in greater reliance on the private rented sector and an upward pressure on rents.

3.7 Homelessness services are funded by the Council tax payer, therefore increasing spend on temporary accommodation will have an adverse impact on the General Fund.

#### 4.0 THE CHALLENGES LOOKING FORWARD

4.1 It is a broadly acknowledged truth that the still critical obstacle to growth, affecting demand and supply, is the scarcity of capital. House builders can't borrow to build and would-be homeowners can't borrow to buy. Until and unless the world money markets begin to return to some sort of normality, we will still not see a private sector-led recovery in the housing market. Reform of the planning system can do lots of things; what it cannot do is magic money where none exists.

4.2 There is a growing demand for market rented sector (MRS) homes from poor and vulnerable households and those on middle incomes. With access to both social rented housing and the mortgage market in Arun likely to stay restricted for years to come, demand and completion for limited MRS stock can only increase. With the local MRS set to have a bigger role in more people's lives, often for many years, it needs to become accountable and flexible to meet their needs effectively. The Council can play an important role in making this happen.

4.3 We will be pressing ahead with plans to develop a new era of council homes. We will commission a Registered Partner to project manage part of the process but the new homes will be built to our specification and owned and managed by the authority.

4.4 Local authority partnerships should also form a key part of the housing solution locally going forward. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reforms should place stock holding authorities like Arun in a considerably better position to lead housing development partnerships from 2013. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimate that nationally, over the next 30 years, the potential value of new local authority investment capacity could be as much as £54 billion. How much of this money will ultimately be available for investment in existing and new stock will depend on local decisions and approaches to rent increases, debt management and cost controls.

**Background Papers:** Appendix 1 - Housing Strategy Action Plan Year 2 update

**Contact:** Andy Elder ext. 37714



# **RAISE THE ROOF ACTION PLAN**

**YEAR 2 (2011/12) UPDATE**

**HOUSING STRATEGY  
FOR THE ARUN DISTRICT 2010 - 2015**

## RAISE THE ROOF ACTION PLAN 2010 – 2015

This action plan is to be reviewed on an annual basis by the Council's Housing and Customer Services Working Group

A1 To develop balanced and sustainable communities in the Arun district			
Housing strategy objective	Action	Milestone / Target	When
To enable the delivery of 1,000 affordable homes by March 2015	To work with our social housing provider partners to enable the delivery of 1,000 new affordable homes by March 2015	Delivery of 1,000 affordable homes for rent, shared ownership and low-cost market housing	2015
		329 affordable homes delivered in 2011/12	
		621 affordable homes completed since start of strategy	
		96 affordable homes completed in the period April 2012 – September 2012	
	Complete and revise the Coastal West Sussex Local Investment Plan with the Homes and Communities Agency	Report annually on the engagement undertaken with the Homes and Communities Agency and the investment secured in the previous financial year	On-going
		Coastal Local Investment Plan revised and updated in November 2012.	

	<p>Update the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) by December 2012</p>	<p>Update of SHMA</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>Completed in September 2012</p>
<p>Making better use of the existing housing stock by bringing 60 empty homes back into use by 2015</p>	<p>Bringing 12 empty homes back into use by December 2010 and the same annually thereafter</p>	<p>12 empty homes per annum brought back into use in the life of strategy</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>19 empty homes returned to use in 2011/12 through direct intervention by the Council</p>
<p>Review the current S106 agreement for affordable housing by December 2011</p>	<p>Use the planning system to oblige private sector developers to create public facilities</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>To be included in Local Plan</p>
	<p>Promote the use of Community Land Trusts as a method of delivering new affordable housing for community ownership</p>	<p>To produce information for Parish Councils on Community Land Trusts</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>Included in Arun's Rural Housing Seminar for parish council's in October 2012</p>
	<p>Include CLT's in revised S106 agreements</p>	<p>2014</p>	<p>To be included in new Local Plan</p>	

<p>Produce a Development Plan Document to determine the level of Lifetime Homes standard dwellings and fully wheelchair accessible homes on new developments by December 2014</p>	<p>Requirements for specific types of housing embedded in planning documents. To include prescriptive percentage of housing for Lifetime Homes Standard</p>	<p>Local Plan policies</p>	<p>2014</p>	<p>Brief for Wheelchair Design Standard to be included in the Local Plan</p>
<p>Promoting affordable housing in rural areas by enabling the delivery of a minimum of 50 affordable rural homes</p>	<p>Encourage and enable rural communities to meet their housing needs by commissioning a minimum of 2 rural housing needs surveys per annum</p>	<p>Facilitate a rolling programme of village / parish housing needs surveys in partnership with Action in Rural Sussex (AIRS)</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>First housing needs survey completed at Slindon, working with the Parish Council to identify a suitable site for an affordable housing scheme</p>
		<p>Work with parish councils and local communities to assist the development process</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Commenced and on-going</p>

<p>Promote the delivery of more sustainable homes and communities by ensuring all affordable homes meet Code Level 4 by 2014 and Code level 6 by 2016</p>	<p>To co-ordinate the delivery of low and zero-carbon energy supply infrastructure for larger strategic sites developments</p>	<p>Production of Local Plan</p>	<p>2014</p>	<p>To be addressed as part of the Local Plan</p>
<p></p>	<p>Adopt a strategic approach to energy infrastructure throughout the district to include the delivery of District Heating schemes, Combined Heat and Power (CHP) schemes and solar capture and storage systems by December 2015</p>	<p>Negotiations with developers and RSL's on individual schemes</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>To be addressed as part on Local Plan Ongoing and included in Toddington Nurseries s106 agreement</p>
<p></p>	<p>New homes are cost effective to heat and have low carbon emissions by adherence to the current CfSH delivery standards</p>	<p>Ensure all new homes meet minimum of CfSH level 4</p>	<p>2015</p>	<p>To be addressed as part of the Local Plan</p>

<b>A2 Ensure through a range of housing options that everyone has somewhere to live</b>			
<b>Housing strategy</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestone / Target</b>	<b>When</b>
<b>objective</b>			<b>Update December 2012</b>
Increase the levels of homelessness prevention by the targets in the action plan	The numbers of homeless preventions in the district are achieved as per annual targets	90% of households are prevented from being homeless in each year of the housing strategy	2012 - ongoing
	Average length of stay of households in temporary accommodation	46 weeks (2011/12) 44 weeks (2012/13) 42 weeks (2013/14) 40 weeks (2014/15)	2012 2013 2014 2015
	Deliver the objectives of the new Homeless Strategy	Completion of tasks to preventing homelessness	2012 - ongoing
			49 weeks – demand is still increasing and the limited availability of temporary accommodation means households are staying longer in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
			Included in the new Homelessness Strategy



<b>A3 Meet the Housing and Support Needs of Vulnerable People</b>			
<b>Housing strategy objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestone / Target</b>	<b>When</b>
			<b>Update December 2012</b>
Promoting choice and independence for vulnerable people in the Arun District	Ensure external agencies and service users are involved in the future review of allocations policies affecting vulnerable people.	Hold consultations with relevant agencies	2012
	Research the need and viability of extra care housing schemes and specialist care provision to widen the housing and care options open to older people	Agree an acceptable model for the delivery of extra care housing	2015
Improving housing options for young people with a bespoke housing scheme for under 25's by 2015	Provide supported housing for 16 – 25 year olds	Include the delivery of supported housing for young people in the Local Investment Plan	2015
Improving housing options for Gypsies and Travellers by delivery of a permanent site by	Promote good site management and provision of appropriate facilities for all authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites	Produce a Development Plan Document for the delivery of a permanent Gypsy and Traveller site	2015
			Completed
			Arun's first extra care housing scheme opened in Rustington in December 2011
			Arun Foyer included in the Coastal West Sussex Local Investment Plan priorities
			Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment will be completed in 2013. A further sites study will be also

2015

completed in 2013. Both to be reported to Cabinet.

<b>A4 Improve the condition and energy efficiency of the private sector housing stock</b>				
<b>Housing strategy objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestone / Target</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Update December 2012</b>
Improving energy efficiency of homes by ensuring 500 dwellings each year receive at least one measure which improves their energy efficiency	Decent homes in the private sector	Produce action plan from 2010 Stock Condition Survey	2010	Information from the stock condition survey has been used to set priorities for the Housing Strategy, Energy Efficiency/Fuel Poverty Strategies and Empty Homes Strategy
Reduce the number of dwellings in poor repair with the most serious hazards through a combination of encouragement, assistance and enforcement		214 dwellings per annum brought up to the Decent Homes Standard	On-going	2011/12 – 57 properties made decent
Improving the energy efficiency of homes, particularly those occupied by vulnerable and disadvantaged residents experiencing fuel poverty		500 dwellings each year to receive at least one measure which improves their energy efficiency	On-going	2011/2012 – 1503 dwellings
Improving safety of older owner occupiers		Regular partnership working	On-going	Regular meetings with Occupational Therapists at WSCC and partnership working in the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants - on going

<p>Helping elderly people to maintain their homes, ensuring they are satisfactory for the occupier in order that they can maintain their independence</p>	<p>Promote the use and availability of assisted technology to help people remain living independently</p>	<p>Increase by 15% the number of private rented or owner occupied homes with assisted technology installed</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>2011/2012 124 Disabled Facilities Grants completed. A decrease from the previous year due to a change in the assessment process by the Occupational Therapist team and therefore low level of referrals received.</p>
<p>Review the assistance available to help people stay warm in their homes by 2013</p>	<p>Promote the various sources of subsidies, loans and grants available to individuals</p>	<p>Commit at least 95% of the annual adaptations budget and meet performance targets</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>47% of the 2011/12 budget spent due to the decrease in referrals. Work has been undertaken to improve target time scales by engaging with housing associations and improving communications.</p>
<p>Review the assistance available to help people stay warm in their homes by 2013</p>	<p>Promote the various sources of subsidies, loans and grants available to individuals</p>	<p>Review the opportunities for alternative funding sources</p>	<p>2013</p>	<p>547 properties in Arun received warm West Sussex Home Energy visits in 2011/12.</p>

<b>A5 Manage, retain and improve the Council's own housing stock</b>			
<b>Housing strategy objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestone / Target</b>	<b>When</b>
			<b>Update December 2012</b>
Better use of the Council housing stock	Decommission unsuitable sheltered housing for use as general needs housing or redevelopment initiatives to attempt funding to modernise or replace remaining sheltered housing stock	Install Tunstall overlay for all existing sheltered housing schemes	2013  Being progressed
Improving housing services to service users and residents by conducting satisfaction surveys	Commission the development of an initial programme of 20 new council homes	Appoint a Housing Development Project Officer	2012  Completed Officer started January 2013
		Appoint a Register Partner to develop new homes for the council	2013  Specification and tender documents being produced
	Conduct regular service user and resident surveys to understand their opinions on our services	Undertake questionnaires and equality and diversity audits for frontline housing services	On-going  Equality Impact Assessments completed for the Allocations Scheme and Homelessness Strategy

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP –  
27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013

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Decision Paper

Subject : Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services

Report by : Frank Hickson

Report date: January 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report sets out an initial framework for Tenant Scrutiny of Housing Services within the Council and outlines proposals for developing and implementing the framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group:-

1. Notes the initial framework for developing Tenant Scrutiny of Housing Services within the Council and the proposals for its implementation.
2. Notes that a further report will be submitted to the next meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013 on the development and implementation of the Tenant's Scrutiny framework.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 At the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012, it was agreed that a modest and simple scheme for Tenant Scrutiny be drawn up which can be developed over time, reflecting on its success. The previous report outlined possible options for developing Tenant Scrutiny arrangements and this report sets out a basic framework for Tenant Scrutiny for consideration in this respect, focussing on Tenant Panels as the best way of delivering the framework.
- 1.2 Scrutiny is carried out in many different ways by landlords, Governing bodies (Boards in Housing Associations and Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO's)) and Cabinets or Scrutiny Committees in local government scrutinising the way that Policies are developed and implemented. Often Sub-Committees or Sub-Groups scrutinise particular aspects of services and/or performance information. Tenant Panels can be involved in many of these activities.

1.3 The activities of Tenant Panels can be categorised in the broadest sense, into four areas.

- Decision making
- Shaping services
- Monitoring and/or scrutinising services and performance
- Complaints

Effective Tenant Panels involved in decision making should

- Be about partnership working with the Landlord
- Have a means of being accountable to other tenants
- Have the direction to influence decision making and services (quality and type of service).
- Be about practical issues that are important to tenants.

1.4 The various tenant panel models already in operation in a variety of housing organisations reflect the diversity of approaches in place.

1.4.1 Co-governance: Some Tenant Panels involved in decision making have been defined or established to have a specific role in governance. They can be described as “Co-governance” Panels, working alongside Housing Association or Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Boards or Council Cabinet or Scrutiny Committees.

1.4.2 Joint Management: This is an arrangement where tenants are involved as part of a body or structure that includes other parties such as Senior Management, Cabinet Members or other Councillors.

1.4.3 Advisory Panels: This type of Panel oversees all aspects the management of tenants’ homes, with direct relationships or links with the Board (Housing Association or ALMO), Cabinet (Local Authority) and Senior Management.

1.4.4 Area and Specific Panels: Some housing organisations (Housing Associations and Local Authorities) have area based or service focussed Tenant Panels that either operate in specific geographical areas, or represent demographic groups, such as older or young people or focus on particular service areas such as repairs and maintenance, resident involvement or communication.

## 2.0 **TENANT SCRUTINY PROCESS**

2.1 Some of the issues that need to be considered in developing and establishing a Tenant Scrutiny Panel include:

Choosing Scrutiny Areas - How will Tenants, Staff and Members be involved in deciding what areas are scrutinised and what evidence will inform their decisions?

Make up of the Scrutiny Panel - How will Tenants be recruited to the Panel and how will conflicts of interest be dealt with? How will tenants be supported and trained to develop knowledge and understanding.

Evidence in Scrutiny Process - What evidence/information is needed to support the scrutiny process e.g. Tenant, Staff and Members views, statistical information.

Consideration of Reports - What format will Scrutiny Reports be in and how will reports and recommendations be considered by Cabinet or Overview Select Committee?

Communicating Outcomes - How will outcomes of Scrutiny recommendations be implemented and fed back to Tenants generally?

2.2 Tenant Scrutiny Panels are by definition, not decision making bodies. They should make recommendations through the organisation's governance arrangement, based on the evidence they scrutinise. If this is well organised and managed, governing bodies are more likely to support and approve recommendations.

## 3.0 **INITIAL TENANT SCRUTINY FRAMEWORK**

3.1 The Council is currently reviewing and revising its Performance Management arrangements, and this potentially offers an opportunity to incorporate Tenant Scrutiny into housing performance monitoring and reporting arrangements in the future.

3.2 A Tenants Scrutiny Panel would report to the Overview Select Committee. To prepare for this tenant's scrutiny role, the Arun Tenant and Leaseholder Organisation (AT & LO) could receive regular reports on a series of agreed Performance Indicators focussed on services important to tenants, as a means of

beginning to build knowledge, understanding and expertise in scrutinising performance. Alongside this, recruitment and development of a separate independent Tenant's Scrutiny Panel could begin.

- 3.3 There is already an element of AT&LO involvement in some service development aspects in Housing. For example, Contract Procurement and monitoring of Contractors performance, and consultation as part of the development of Housing Policies and Strategies. However, this involvement is varied and limited. If the Council really wants tenants and leaseholders to play a leading role in managing, monitoring and developing their housing services, then a formalised plan of how this is done will help to assure tenants and leaseholders that it is committed to doing this.
- 3.5 An initial framework for tenant scrutiny has been devised and is attached to this report as Appendix 1. The initial framework has four elements, covering Performance Monitoring, the Local Offer, Service Development and Procurement.
- Performance Monitoring would focus on key performance indicators agreed with tenants including budget preparation and monitoring and service standards.
  - The Local Offer is a requirement of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing and focuses on tenants priorities and service requirements which form a local service offer to tenants and leaseholders.
  - Service Development would focus on operational and high level policies and strategies which are fundamental in the housing service. These would include items such as The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, The Housing ASB Policy, The Housing Allocations Policy, The Housing Strategy and The Homelessness Strategy as well as operational policies such as void and lettings standards, rent arrears recovery, estate inspections and customer satisfaction.
  - Procurement would focus on the tendering and awarding of housing service contracts such as reactive repairs, gas servicing, decent homes and grounds maintenance. Tenants would be involved in preparing service specifications, evaluating tenders and awarding contracts.
- 3.6 In terms of an overall structure for Tenant Involvement, the role of the Arun Tenant and Leaseholder Organisation (AT & LO) would be the main focus for consultation and information briefings on a regular basis. Attendees of the AT & LO meetings would also be able to apply to join the Tenants Scrutiny Panel or could be involved separately in the Local Offer or Procurement. The Tenants Scrutiny Panel would examine more closely aspects of performance, reviewing the achievements of the Local Offer, monitoring plans for change or improvement and service developments.



- 3.7 The Tenants Scrutiny Panel could report to Overview Select Committee with any recommendations following its investigations. It would also provide regular information reports to the AT & LO and details of the learning from the Panel's work would be included in Tenants Newsletters and the Annual Report to Tenants so that all Tenants and Leaseholders are aware of what the Panel is doing.
- 3.8 These outline proposals have been shared with the Arun Tenants and Leaseholders Organisation at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Attendees were generally very supportive of the concept and positive about the benefits that they could bring for Tenants and Leaseholders. The AT & LO also recognise that the Scrutiny Framework offers the opportunity to widen and strengthen attendance at their meetings as well as formalising recognition of the AT & LO as an integral part of the Council's Resident Involvement Structure in the future.
- 3.9 It must be recognised that this Initial Framework will take time to develop and initiate and will require investment in terms of staff and financial resources. Some financial provision has already been made in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to cover the initial costs and this will need to be reviewed and revised as progress is made.
- 4.0 **BUILDING ON THE INITIAL FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING TENANT SCRUTINY**
- 4.1 Subject to views of Members of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group, further work needs to be done to develop the Initial Framework to a point where it can begin to be implemented. This work will include:
- developing structures for the operation of the Initial Framework;
  - preparing for the recruitment to the Tenants Scrutiny Panel
  - preparing training and development plans for tenants and leaseholders recruited to the Tenants Scrutiny Panel
  - developing a work programme for the four elements of the Framework.
- 4.2 This work should be undertaken in conjunction with regular reporting to the Housing and Customer Services Working Group and the Arun Tenants and Leaseholder Organisation to monitor, progress and agree key elements at the appropriate stage. A further report will be made to the next meeting of the Working Group.

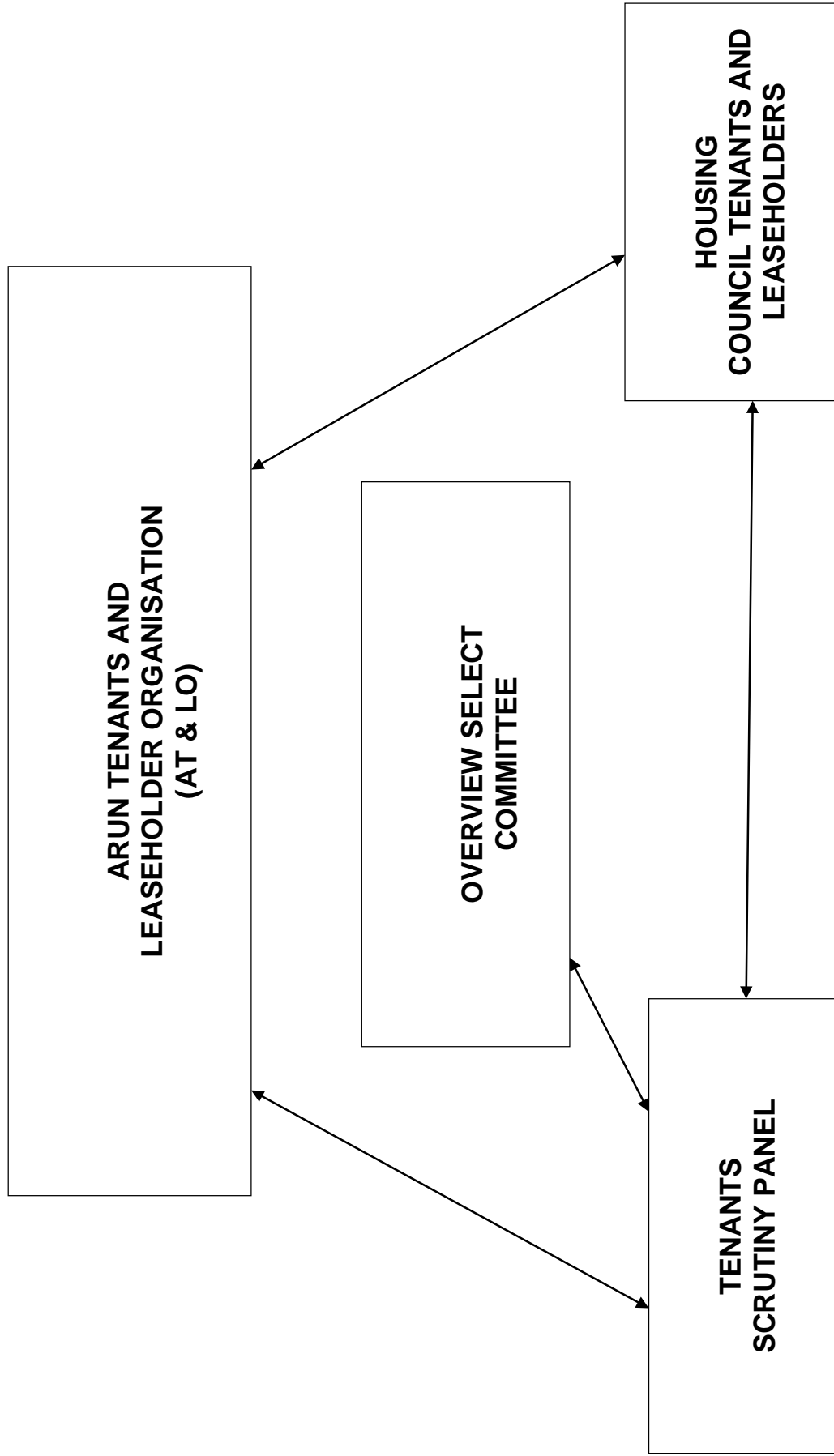
**Background Papers:** None

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**APPENDIX 1**

<b>PERFORMANCE MONITORING</b>	<b>LOCAL OFFER</b>	<b>SERVICE DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>PROCUREMENT</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Agree performance information to be reported.</li> <li>* Regular quarterly reporting of agreed performance information.</li> <li>* Agree plans for change or improvement</li> <li>* Monitor and review plans for change or improvement.</li> <li>* Reports on service contractor monitor meetings.</li> <li>* Development and monitoring of housing service standards.</li> <li>* Housing budget preparation and monitoring (including annual rent increase).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Prepare Local Offer.</li> <li>* Regular reporting of progress with Local Offer.</li> <li>* Annual review of Local Offer.</li> <li>* Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Review operational housing policies.</li> <li>* Review high level housing plans, policies and strategies (i.e. HRA Business Plan, Tenancy Policy, Housing Strategy, ASB Policy, Allocations Policy).</li> <li>* Communications with Tenants - newsletters, scrutiny reviews, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Involvement in preparation of Housing Service Contract specifications.</li> <li>* Involvement in evaluation of Housing Service Contract tenders.</li> <li>* Involvement in reviews of Housing Service Contracts before retendering.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX 1**



ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP –  
27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013

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Recommendation Paper

Subject : Housing Complaints Arrangements

Report by : Frank Hickson

Report date: January 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Changes to arrangements for dealing with Housing Complaints were introduced by the Localism Act 2011. This report describes the role of the Designated Person to refer complaints to the Housing Ombudsman and sets out proposals for identifying Members of the Council to act as the Designated Person from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. It also outlines proposals to develop a designated Tenants Panel to takeover involvement in complaints from Members of the Council at a later date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group recommends to Cabinet that

- 1) From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the Cabinet Member for Housing, in consultation with the Assistant Director Customer Services, act as the Designated Person for Housing Complaints. In the event that the Complainant is a Constituent of the Cabinet Member for Housing or is unavailable, the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council will deputise.
- 2) Arrangements are put in place to recruit Council tenants to form a Designated Tenants Panel to take over the Designated Person role from the Cabinet Member for Housing at the appropriate time.
- 3) The Council's Complaints Procedure is amended to identify the Cabinet Member for Housing as the Designated Person for Housing complaints, with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council deputising.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012, the Housing and Customer Services Working Group agreed that a further Report be prepared outlining proposals to identify options for Members of this Council to act as Designated Person for Housing Complaints and to develop a Designated Tenants Panel to take over this responsibility from Members in due course.

1.2 The report considered at the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012, outlined the changes to arrangements for dealing with Housing Complaints introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The Designated Person must be a local Councillor (of the Local Housing Authority), or MP or Tenant Panel designated by the Council to serve in such a role. The expectation is that the Designated Person or Designated Tenants Panel will work with the Local Authority and the Complainant, as appropriate, after the Authority's complaints process has been exhausted, to attempt to resolve the complaint. If no further resolution can be achieved, the Designated Person or Tenants Panel would then refer to the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

1.3 The Council's Complaints Procedure has two stages:

Stage 1 involves the complaint being investigated by a senior member of staff from the service area concerned.

Stage 2 involves a formal investigation by a senior member of staff from a different service area. When this investigation is completed, the response is passed to either the Chief Executive, Resources Director and Deputy Chief Executive or an Assistant Director, who then reviews and signs off the response.

1.4 The requirement for a complaint to be made via the Designated Person does not apply where either

- The Complainant has exhausted the Council's Complaints Procedures and 8 weeks have elapsed since the procedures were exhausted.
- The Housing Ombudsman is satisfied that the Designated Person has refused to refer the complaint.
- The Designated Person has agreed that the Complainant can complain directly to the Housing Ombudsman without referral.

## 2.0 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED PERSON

2.1 As mentioned previously, Designated Persons are defined in the Localism Act 2011 as an MP, a local Councillor of the Local Housing Authority or a Designated Tenants Panel. The formal and only legally defined role of Designated Persons, as set out in the Localism Act 2011, is to refer complaints from social housing tenants or applicants for housing to the Housing Ombudsman.

2.2 The general role of the Designated Person is to assist in resolving Housing Complaints. In doing so, they may also contribute to the learning gathered from complaints to help improve services.

2.3 Potentially, there could be a number of ways in which the Designated Person could carry out this role and different approaches will suit different local circumstances or arrangements. Primarily, the role is to provide a fresh and independent insight on Housing Complaints from a Councillors, tenants or MPs perspective, playing a critical friend role by suggesting views and approaches that may not have been considered by staff investigating and responding to the original complaint.

- 2.4 Where the Designated Person considers that they are unable to resolve a complaint locally and the Complainant wishes and authorises them to refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman, they have the option to do so, once the Council's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted.
- 2.5 The Designated Person does not have authority over the Council's Policies and Procedures, but they may suggest ways they could be improved, where appropriate. The Designated Person would not be expected to make a formal judgment about the merits of a complaint, but if they identify alternative or additional remedies which could resolve the complaint, these should be considered. The Designated Person should not be viewed as an additional bureaucratic stage to the Council's existing complaints procedure.
- 2.6 The Designated Person will need to have strong negotiating, persuasive and conciliation skills and abilities. Their role is envisaged being bespoke and designed to achieve consensus, including assisting to resolve complaints locally. It may involve providing advice to Complainants, advocating on their behalf (where appropriate) and discussing issues with the Housing Department.
- 2.7 A complaint can only be referred to the Housing Ombudsman by the Designated Person with the approval of the Complainant. The Localism Act 2011 requires that the complaint is forwarded to the Housing Ombudsman in writing, and this could be done via their website. Once a complaint has been referred to the Housing Ombudsman by the Designated Person, the Ombudsman will check that
- the complaint falls within their jurisdiction
  - the complainant referral has been approved by the Complainant
  - the Council's Complaints Procedure has been exhausted
- 2.8 The Council will need to provide information to its tenants on the role of the Designated Person. This information will also need to be included in the Council's Complaints Procedure. As mentioned earlier, it is not anticipated that the Designated Person is an additional stage in the Council's Complaints Procedure.
- 2.9 Complainants can approach MPs and Councillors whenever they want to regarding a housing complaint, and this will apply to the Designated Person, in their role as an Arun Councillor.
- 2.10 County and Parish Councillors cannot be Designated Persons. The Localism Act 2011 only permits Councillors from the Local Housing Authority (District Council) to be a Designated Person.
- 3.0 OPTIONS FOR IDENTIFYING THE DESIGNATED PERSON FOR HOUSING COMPLAINTS
- 3.1 The Localism Act 2011 identifies that the Designated Person should be a Councillor, (from the Local Housing Authority), ADMP or Tenants Panel. In the

overall complaints process, it would be inappropriate for Councillors not to be in a position to represent their Constituents. The Designated Person's role is not intended to make judgments about the merits of individual complaints. The Council's Code of Conduct sets how Councillors should deal with any conflicts of interest that may arise.

- 3.2 If the Designated Person role for Housing Complaints were allocated to every Ward Councillor, this could lead to a position where the Ward Councillor could support, advise or advocate on behalf of their Constituent but then attempt to find a consensus between the Council and the Complainant before passing the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman. It is felt this situation would lead to a conflict of interests which would compromise the Ward Councillor's role in supporting or representing a Constituent.
- 3.3 It is therefore proposed that the Cabinet Member for Housing be identified as the Designated Person for Housing Complaints, with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council deputising in the event that a Complainant is a Constituent of the Cabinet Member for Housing or is he unavailable. To assist and support the Cabinet Member it is proposed that the Assistant Director Customer Services be involved.
- 3.4 It is felt this arrangement will provide consistency, avoid complications over selection of a Ward Councillor to fulfill the whole role there is more than one Councillor for a Ward and enable development in terms of training, building knowledge expertise etc., to be more readily/easily enabled by focusing on only three Councillors fulfilling this role.
- 3.5 Discussions have taken place with the Head of Legal and Administration in her role as Monitoring Officer on this proposed approach and she is content that this option provides the appropriate degree of independence and probity to the role of Designated Person.
- 3.6 The Council's complaints procedure and constitution will need to be changed to identify the Cabinet Member for Housing as the Designated Person, with the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council Deputising.
- 3.7 Preliminary discussions are planned with the Arun Tenants and Leaseholders Organisation (AT&LO) regarding this proposal at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and feedback will be shared with Members at the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

#### 4.0 PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPING A TENANTS COMPLAINTS PANEL

- 4.1 There are a number of issues which need to be addressed in developing a Tenants Complaints Panel. It is for the Council and its tenants to agree if and how a Tenants Complaints Panel should be established to fulfill the role of Designated Person. It is a Regulatory Requirement (Involvement and Empowerment Standard) that landlords support the formation and activities of Tenant Panels where they are supported by tenants.

4.2 Issues to be addressed in developing a Tenants Complaints Panel are

- Consultation with tenants and leaseholders
- Recruitment and selection process, including adverts, job/role description, person specification and training requirements
- Policy for assessment of complaints (e.g. as per the Members Standards Committee)
- Formal recognition arrangements for the Tenants Complaints Panel (under the Council's constitution)
- Data protection, confidentiality professional indemnity and public liability insurance requirements
- Support (administrative and professional) and training requirements
- Maintaining and sustaining the independence of a Tenants Complaints Panel

4.3 These issues require more detailed investigation and research and it is proposed that a further report is presented to the Housing and Customer Services Working Group at the next meeting.

**Background Papers:** None.

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP –  
27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013

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Decision Paper

Subject : Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness

Report by : Frank Hickson

Report date: January 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report focuses on the Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 in the Joint Scrutiny Review Report, which were deferred from the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012 under the second agreed theme, Information about and access to support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group:

Notes the arrangements outlined in the Report that are already in place to address Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness.

Recommends to the Overview Select Committee that no further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 At the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012, the Working Group agreed that the Report on these Recommendations be delayed until 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

1.2 The initial investigation/research into these Recommendations had identified financial and staff resource implications and further work was required to address them.

1.3 As a reminder these Recommendations are:

Recommendation 10

That all relevant agencies utilise available support to help tenants maintain their tenancies, thus preventing homelessness.

#### Recommendation 11

That tenants be provided with details of available support and a dedicated telephone number provided by one of the Local Authorities or a named body to help them find help. This line should provide answers to those services such as financial help and education, information on utility companies and literacy and language.

#### Recommendation 12

To prevent social isolation, a support worker service be provided either by a Local Authority or through a Service Level Agreement to help people maintain their housing and links to existing services and opportunities. This could include appropriately trained staff, learning from existing service models, helping them to access services and be included in the wider community.

### 2.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATION 10

- 2.1 The various Statutory and Voluntary Agencies and Organisations that work with homeless households are generally aware of the wide range of advice, information and support services available for clients and utilise the relevant services and support services. There are however, inevitably some limitations in respect of available funding or qualifying criteria for some support services, which mean that not all people facing homelessness can be assisted or supported in exactly the same. Support Services are generally focused on the most vulnerable groups.
- 2.2 The focus of advice, information and support services for homeless/potentially homeless households is always to prevent homelessness. It must be recognised that in some instances, homelessness cannot always be prevented and where the Council has a statutory duty to homeless households, then alternative accommodation is provided. For example, voluntary organisations such as Littlehampton Homelink and Stonepillow provide support services for some non-priority homeless/potentially homeless people, sometimes through funding from charities, contracts with other statutory Agencies, Central Government one-off project funding or their own resources.
- 2.3 The scale of Recommendation 10 is extensive in that “all relevant agencies” could be construed to cover organisations whose roles and responsibilities may have involvement with people in some way affected by homelessness to varying degrees. It is unclear from the Joint Scrutiny Review Report which Agencies were the focus of the Recommendation. In general terms, it is accepted that

Agencies whose core business or organisational aims and objectives focus on homelessness and its prevention, would utilise “available support” to help tenants maintain their tenancies, thus preventing homelessness.

- 2.4 The Council’s Homelessness Strategy 2012 - 2016, adopted in March 2012, identified a key theme as “preventing people from becoming homeless and dealing with homelessness when it does occur”. The Arun Homelessness Forum functions include discussing national and local issues that affect homeless persons and the provision of services, with a view to service development. This ensures organisations working with homeless people in the Arun District have the opportunity to discuss with their peers, issues affecting homelessness, including the provision of services.
- 2.5 West Sussex County Council contracts with specialist Housing Support Providers to deliver advice, support and information services for homeless and potentially homeless people in all Districts and Boroughs in West Sussex. These specialist organisations often provide services for other client groups such as people with substance abuse or mental health problems or learning disabilities but would expect to utilise available support services to help prevent homelessness where they are involved in such services.
- 2.6 West Sussex County Council, Adur District Council, Worthing Borough Council and Sussex Health Authority jointly fund the post of Housing, Health and Social Care Co-ordinator post, whose role includes:
- Developing robust links at all levels between Housing, Adult Social Care (WSSCC) and Health to deliver joint priorities;
  - Develop protocols for housing and homelessness issues for older people and people coming out of hospital;
  - To act as specialist consultant on housing, homelessness and environmental issues across District/Borough Councils, PCT, Adults’ Services.
  - To work with relevant key agencies in developing bespoke solutions for individuals who have complex needs and are in housing crisis.

The nature of this role inevitably involves individuals who live in or have connections with the Arun District and require advice, assistance or information to address housing or homelessness problems.

- 2.7 In view of the undefined and broad nature of the Recommendation and the arrangements to provide support and information already in place, as described in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.6 above, it is proposed that no further action is taken in respect of Recommendation 10.

### 3.0 ACTIONS ON RECOMMENDATION 11

- 3.1 There is already a wide range of advice, support and information services available/provided for homeless or potentially homeless households, in Arun and across West Sussex. Tenants and other households facing or threatened with eviction are able to contact the Council's Housing Options Service for advice and assistance to try to help resolve their housing situation. Shelter also provides a Housing Advice Service from the CAB offices in Bognor Regis and a Court Advice Service at Chichester County Court on two days a week. Stonepillow have been awarded funding through the Government's "No Second Night Out" programme for street homeless/rough sleepers to provide advice, support and accommodation services in Arun and Chichester.
- 3.2 The Expanding Communities Team, based within Voluntary Action Arun and Chichester (VAAC), provide housing advice to households whose first language is not English, with some guidance from the Council's Housing Options Section, Shelter and other sources.
- 3.3 As mentioned in Section 3 of this Report, West Sussex County Council has contracted with a number of specialist Housing Support Providers across West Sussex to deliver support and advice services for homeless or potentially homeless households. Some of these services focus on specific client groups such as young people, older looked after children, people with mental health or substance abuse problems but others are aimed at general client groups.
- 3.4 Until April 2013, the WSCC Homelessness Advice and Support service contract is delivered by Stonham. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, Southdown Housing Society will take over this service and discussions are taking place between the Housing Department and Southdown to finalise the details of the service to be delivered in Arun. The Contract is for a three year period, with an option to extend for a further two years.
- 3.5 In the case of all these various advice and support services, contact details for "drop-ins", planned appointments and telephone advice are included in the promotional material developed specifically for these services, and which is widely circulated. The organisations involved in providing the services cover the statutory, independent and voluntary sectors. The services provided are well utilised by clients who are referred to them or made aware of them or become aware independently of their availability.
- 3.6 The various organisations providing support and information services are, in some cases, able to provide other services such as Debt Counselling or Welfare Benefits advice and basic household budgeting (not financial advice as they are not registered Financial Advisers). Information on utility companies can be obtained from a number of sources, for example Citizen's Advice Bureau, Websites and other promotional material which is available and accessible from a range of sources. West Sussex County Council provides a range of information and training to raise standards on literacy, language and numeracy

(including Family Finance) for adults and children. Details are available in schools, libraries and from the West Sussex County Council Website. Most libraries provide computers for individuals to use to access the internet.

- 3.7 The focus of Recommendation 11 is very much on the availability of information and telephone contact. Contact details for the range of organisations including Local Authorities, which provide housing and related advice and support services, are widely available and is utilised when dealing with client enquiries.
- 3.8 To provide a further single dedicated telephone number for tenants with details of available support and resource such an arrangement, would be both a duplication of many existing service arrangements and incur additional costs for the Councils. The wide ranging nature of the information and support to be provided, as outlined in the Recommendation, would be challenging to sustain and justify and require a regular review of capability and capacity to monitor its effectiveness and value for money.
- 3.9 Additional funding for this arrangement would have to be found, either from existing budgets, by securing additional funding from an external source or by reducing other related service budgets to meet the cost. Furthermore, there is a danger of confusing clients by providing another advice, support and information service rather than promoting the existing arrangements.
- 3.10 On this basis, it is therefore, proposed that no further action is taken on this Recommendation.

#### 4.0 ACTION ON RECOMMENDATION 12

- 4.1 In Sections 3 and 4 above, details of various existing advice, support and information services for households who are homeless or potentially homeless have been set out. Of particular relevance to this Recommendation are the services contracted and funded by West Sussex County Council through specialist housing support organisations, including Stonepillow's "No Second Night Out" Service.
- 4.2 In the context of the original Joint Scrutiny Review and the information which was provided at that time by contributors, it is perhaps understandable how Members came to the view that there may be a need for this type of service. However, it is clear from research undertaken for this report that there are now organisations providing the kind of service envisaged by the Joint Scrutiny Review and there is therefore no immediate requirement to consider providing another similar service.
- 4.3 On this basis, it is therefore, proposed that no further action is taken on this Recommendation.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 There are a range of agencies and organisations who provide or fund information, advice and support services for tenants to maintain their homes and prevent homelessness. Some of these Agencies and Organisations have roles and responsibilities which do not directly focus on homelessness. Some, such as Arun District Council, have statutory responsibilities in respect of homelessness prevention.
- 5.2 There are a range of information advice and support services already available within the Arun District and for a variety of clients, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. Information is provided in a variety of ways, including face to face meetings, telephone, printed matter and through websites. The availability of this information is widely promoted.
- 5.3 There are a range of existing information, advice and support services already provided for homeless households across the District and introduction of another support service is not justifiable on the grounds of cost and effectiveness in the current financial situation faced by the Council.

**Background Papers:** None.

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ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING PARTY – 27<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013

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Information Paper

Subject : Tenancy Fraud Prevention – Introducing Photographic ID for all Council Tenancy Holders

Report by : Brian Pople

Report date: February 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report advises Members of proposals to introduce photographic ID for all Council tenancy holders and seeks approval to undertake a pilot project for one year, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is proposed that the Council introduces photographic ID for all named tenancy holders from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. This will coincide with the implementation of the Allocations Policy and Tenancy/Strategy Policy and the introduction of Flexible Tenancies which became live on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

This recommendation should be considered as a way of tackling tenancy fraud.

Members are asked to approve the proposal to undertake the pilot project for one year, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public housing is a valuable asset and there is a great demand for this form of housing. It is unacceptable that some people abuse their tenancy and profit from it by unlawfully sub-letting their property to someone else. The Audit Commission estimate that as many as 50,000 social homes across the country may be occupied fraudulently.

Over the past few months the Communities and Local Government (CLG) department have been running a campaign to crackdown on tenancy fraud and have recently published a good practice guide which includes a recommendation to hold photographs of tenants.

2.0 WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO COMBAT TENANCY FRAUD?

Neighbourhood Housing Officers sign-up all new tenants, so meet with them at the point of signing their tenancy agreements.

Regular property inspections are carried out to all our new tenants in the first year to ensure they are residing in their properties.

The Housing department works closely with our Housing Benefit Department to share information.

Regular estate inspections, including residents, take place.

Residents Associations operate in some areas across the District, Neighbourhood Housing Officers are involved in these groups.

### 3.0 GOOD PRACTICE

Research has been completed in considering what other Authorities and Registered Social Landlords do with regard to photographing new tenants. It was found that some Authorities photocopy documents such as driving licences and passports whilst others take photographs of tenants at the time of signing their new tenancy. Both actions are considered to be good practice, although research has shown that using photocopies of documents is not as up to date as taking photographs at the time of signing the tenancy agreement as documents often contain out of date or unclear photographs.

### 4.0 BENEFITS OF PILOT SCHEME

One step towards protecting the public purse.

Officers of the Council will have access to photographs, not just Neighbourhood Housing Officers who have met the tenants at the point of sign-up so wider scope for catching fraudulent tenants.

With flexible tenancies and checks soon to be required by Housing Officers prior to any additional tenancy being granted, it is important to have photographic documents to confirm all the current household's eligibility to remain in the property.

### 5.0 PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A pilot project be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, to support the introduction of flexible tenancies introduced in January 2013. It is proposed that:

- Photographs of all new tenants (excluding children) will be taken at the time of sign-up or as soon as reasonably practical thereafter using the Councils digital camera. This process will ensure up to date photographs are obtained (often documentation contains out of date photographs). Where possible photographs will show the date on which they were taken.
- New tenants will be advised at the time of the offer of accommodation that we intend to take photographs of them and hold them on the system (consideration for Data Protection should be included).
- Photographs will be uploaded onto our EDRMS system for Officers to view and will be securely kept.



- Where a sole tenancy changes to a joint tenancy, or there is an assignment or succession of tenancy, the photograph of the new joint tenant/successor will be taken.
- Photographs will not be shared with any third party unless we are required to do so by law.
- Pilot system to be reviewed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

**Background Papers:** None

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Housing & Customer Services Working Group - WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13										
Working Group Meeting Date:	13-Jun-12	15-Aug-12	11-Oct-12	11-Dec-12	27-Feb-13	18-Apr-13				
Agenda Prep Meeting on:	23-May-12	26-Jul-12	17-Sep-12	19-Nov-12	04-Feb-13	25-Mar-13				
Final reports to IPS by 11am:	29-May-12	30-Jul-12	24-Sep-12	26-Nov-12	11-Feb-13	01-Apr-13				
Agendas to post room by Thursday 2 pm:	31-May-12	02-Aug-12	27-Sep-12	29-Nov-12	14-Feb-13	04-Apr-13				
Reports to OSC meeting on:	24-Jul-12	20-Sep-12	20-Nov-12	22-Jan-13	19-Mar-13	TBC				
Reports to Cabinet meeting on:	18-Jun-12	10-Sep-12	12-Nov-12	14-Jan-13	11-Mar-13	TBC				
Reports to Full Council meeting on:	11-Jul-12	05-Sep-12	07-Nov-12	11-Mar-13	20-Mar-13	15-May-13				
Item	Lead	Origin								COMMENTS
Consider WG's Terms of Reference	PA	ToR								
Work programme - set and review	PA									
Quarterly Portfolio performance reports	PA			11-Dec-12						
Feedback from Site Visit of Council Garage Sites, Council Housing Stock and land that may be appropriate for new Council builds.	FH	WG								Site Visit on 23rd April
Council Housing Stock development & Expansion opportunities	FH	FH		11-Dec-12						
Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities & Homelessness	PA	FH		11-Dec-12	27-Feb-13					Agreed at meeting on 21.3.12 for this item to be on the first agenda of H&P WG for the 2012/13
Planning Policy for Traveller Sites	KR	KR								
Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme	FH	SZ		15-Aug-12						
Tenancy Strategy & Policy	FH			15-Aug-12						Extra WG meet held on 3/5/2012
Review of Enforcement Service	KR	KR								
Review of Planning Performance Indicators and Targets	KR	KR								

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Reports to Cabinet meeting on:		18-Jun-12	10-Sep-12	12-Nov-12	14-Jan-13	11-Mar-13	TBC
Reports to Full Council meeting on:		11-Jul-12	05-Sep-12	07-Nov-12	11-Mar-13	20-Mar-13	15-May-13
Item	Lead	Origin					COMMENTS
Coastal West Sussex Local Investment Plan	AE	AE		11-Oct-12			
Report back on Tenants Scrutiny Workshop in September 2012.	FH	FH		11-Oct-12			
Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services	FH	FH			11-Dec-12	27-Feb-13	
Housing Tenants Complaints Arrangements	FH	FH			11-Dec-12	27-Feb-13	
Cold Weather Shelter Provision					11-Dec-12		
Review of Customer Services - Customer Access Strategy	JF				11-Dec-12	27-Feb-13	18-Apr-13 From OSC
2013 'Housing Strategy Year 2 Update'	AE					27-Feb-13	AE added item for Feb
Review of Housing Contractor Mears	BP						18-Apr-13 From OSC
Combating Tenancy Fraud- photo id on tenancy agreement	FH					27-Feb-13	Additional item recommended by the WG at the meeting on 11th Dec 2012