

# FOLKESTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

# BRIEFING NOTE

## F&HDC Housing Briefing Note

August 2020

To: **Councillors, Staff and the Tenant & Leaseholder Board**

### Introduction

This is the second of our Housing Service briefing notes and it brings you up to date with the huge amount of work that is underway to create a new housing management service which goes live on 1 October 2020. I know that the teams are working hard to make sure that the challenges of developing the new service are met and that the tenants, who are at the heart of what we are delivering, are kept informed of our plans.

In addition, work is underway in a number of other key areas in the Housing Service and updates on these areas are also included for your information. This briefing note includes key performance data and this will be provided every quarter going forward.

Feedback on any of the work is always welcome and can be sent to:

[housing.services@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:housing.services@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

### Councillor David Godfrey

Portfolio Holder for Housing and Transport

### Creating the new Housing Service

The focus during the last month has been on recruiting staff, developing IT systems and working with East Kent Housing to progress the compliance recovery plan.

Nearly all the positions in the new structure have been recruited to and we are fortunate to have staff with a wealth of experience joining us from East Kent Housing on 1 October. In addition we have made appointments from the public and private sectors and these staff will be joining us over the next six weeks (for more information see next item).

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We are extremely grateful to Elaine Bostock, chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Board, who has provided invaluable input to the interview panels for key posts within the structure.

The new Housing Service is based around a neighbourhood management approach. The neighbourhood patches have been shared with the Tenant and Leaseholder Board and are now being discussed with contractors and incoming staff for their input into how they will best operate.

Other preparation work includes building relationships with contractors and new colleagues, reviewing policies, writing new procedures, establishing IT systems and developing the tenant newsletter and the tenant handbook.

## Housing Service recruitment update

Creating a great team of people to deliver the new first-class housing service has involved the mammoth task of recruiting to 73 posts.

Staff transferring to F&HDC from East Kent Housing have filled 42 of the posts and seven have been offered to staff within the council. A further 13 roles have been offered to external candidates.

Recruitment is continuing but many of the key roles will be filled by 1 October. Helen Sudbury is joining as Housing Operations Lead Specialist from Golding Homes and Roy Catling is coming from Gravesham Borough Council to be the Assets & Development Lead Specialist. They will be working alongside the council's Adrian Hammond who is the Housing Services Lead Specialist. The three will form the housing management team supporting John Holman as the Assistant Director for Housing.

Due to COVID-19 the usual approach of face to face interviews had to be adapted to online interviews using Skype. This has been new to most of the managers involved in the selection process and also to many of the candidates being interviewed. As a result, with the exception of a couple of technical glitches, it has all run very smoothly and the HR team and interviewing staff have worked extremely hard to make the interviews feel accessible and welcoming.

## Performance update

### Statutory compliance inspections

East Kent Housing's (EKH) progress in completing the statutory compliance inspections of the 3700 homes that EKH manages for Folkestone & Hythe District Council is detailed in the tables below.

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Any 'action points' arising from these inspections are included in works programmes for completion within appropriate timescales, according to the level of risk that they represent.

A two year electrical testing project designed to ensure that all homes have been tested within the last five years started in May 2020.

## Statutory Compliance inspections or testing in blocks of flats

Element	Activity	No of blocks requiring inspection or testing	No of compliance inspection or tests carried out	% compliant
Gas	Annual servicing	11	11	100%
Electric	Testing	147	147	100%
	Fire alarms	123	119	96.74%
	Emergency lighting	139	139	100%
Fire	Risk Assessments	180	180	100%
Water	Legionella testing	32	32	100%
Asbestos	Testing	116	116	100%
Lifts	Annual servicing	14	14	100%

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## Statutory Compliance inspections or testing in individual homes:

Element	No of homes requiring tests	No of tests completed	% compliant
Gas servicing	2834	2822	99.58%
Electrical testing	3401	1023	30.08%*

\*This is a new programme and is on target.

## Households in temporary accommodation and rough sleepers accommodated

Number of people in temporary accommodation	33
Number of rough sleepers accommodated	17

## Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP)

Folkestone & Hythe District Council has bid for funding from a government initiative to encourage rough sleepers into permanent accommodation.

The bid is a joint one with Dover District Council and is promoted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to further support those rough sleepers who were given accommodation under the national *Everybody In* emergency COVID-19 response.

A particular focus of the £1 million bid had to be on the successful resettlement and recovery of those who have a long or repeated history of rough sleeping. The bid identifies a need for 16/18 housing-led, intensively supported, self-contained units and interest in providing these has already been shown by partner agencies.

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The bid, which had to be submitted by 20 August 2020, also addresses funding for provision of emergency accommodation during the winter months.

## Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025

A draft of the strategy has now been published following the homelessness review which took place last winter. Comments are invited on the strategy which can be found [here](#) on the council website.

## Journey to net zero carbon homes

The new build team has been busy researching the changes required to design and build homes which substantially reduce carbon emissions when occupied. This is part of the council's commitment to reach the target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Here are updates on two of our current housing schemes.

**Highview, Moat Farm Road, Folkestone** - a particular challenge of this site is that it is sloping but it is planned that the homes will overlook, as much as possible, open space and the landscaping will be child-friendly.

With the drive towards zero carbon, the new build team is developing procurement strategies to find the best knowledge and expertise possible in low carbon homes. It is hoped that the technical design will produce more efficient homes that lower the use of carbon and also reduce fuel costs without significantly increasing the cost of construction.

**Kitewell Lane, Lydd** - the exact details of the scheme are still being worked out but the council-owned land was listed in the local housing plan for 14 homes.

The advantage of it being in the early design stage is that the latest zero carbon design principles, being studied by the team, can be applied from the outset and will help inform and further develop the F&HDC Housing Asset Management Strategy and New Build and Acquisition Strategy. The aim is that the orientation of the two and three-bedroom homes being built will capture as much heat energy from the sun as possible.