

Housing & Public Protection Policy Development Advisory Group
9 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillors: Tricia Youtan (Chairman), Andrew Baldwin, Tony Bevis, Jonathan Chowen, Kate Rowbottom and Belinda Walters

Apologies: Councillors: Liz Kitchen, Jack Saheid and James Wright

Also Present: Councillor Louise Potter

4 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes from the previous meeting held on 29 June were received.

5 **DUKES SQUARE - HORSHAM DISTRICT HOMES**

The Head of Housing & Community Services briefed the group on the draft proposal to re-develop part of Dukes Square to provide affordable housing accommodation. This would involve relocating QM Studios/Music Alliance to the north of the square.

Seventeen units of accommodation would be provided to offer accommodation with the intention of improving facilities and offering a greater community focus. The intention would be for residents on the housing register to move into this accommodation.

The Head of Housing & Community Services would seek feedback from Councillors before Horsham District Homes (the affordable housing company owned by the Council) put forward a planning application as soon as practically possible. He invited members of the PDAG to ask questions or share comments on the proposals.

Adequate parking provision was discussed; Members were reassured that sufficient parking provision would be made available. It was reported that other sites had been considered but this was deemed the most appropriate for relocation of QM Studios/Music Alliance.

Overall the group were very positive regarding the proposals and looked forward to receiving more detailed information as soon as available.

6 **HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLANS**

The Head of Housing & Community Services briefed the group on developments in the Strategy Action Plan. He advised that work was being undertaken to update the housing register. Current data had

shown increasing numbers on the register and clarity needed to be gained as to the validity of this data. Therefore the Housing Team had recently sent out forms to renew applications to check if the correct people were on the register or if circumstances had changed. It was reported that data will be received by the end of December 2021.

Discussion took place regarding the housing nominations scheme for new builds and the turnover of re-lets. The Head of Housing & Community Services advised that a more tailored approach was required for the housing register to prioritise transfer cases, manage expectations, improve timeframes and to enable more tailored interventions. Further work will need to be undertaken and any recommendations of policy changes will be discussed at a future PDAG meeting.

7 **HOMELESSNESS UPDATE**

The Housing Services Manager updated the group on current homelessness numbers within the District. There had been a slight increase in rough sleepers from last year but a positive improvement from two years ago with only seven rough sleepers identified during a district-wide count undertaken last week. The Housing Team were working closely with Turning Tides with the joint goal that no one needs to sleep rough through having no other choice. Members were advised of the complex issues that led people to sleep rough and the interventions and services available, which they were encouraged to use.

The group were extremely impressed with the Housing Services Manager and Homelessness Team and thanked them for the work they were doing. The winter night shelter scheme was raised and, although a night shelter cannot be run due to Covid-19 restrictions, a small budget is available for B&B accommodation. Cases would be looked at on an individual basis with a moral responsibility to look after those in need in severe weather conditions.

8 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE HOUSING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION PORTFOLIO**

There were no current forward plans for this PDAG however it was noted that there would be some in the near future.

The meeting closed at 6.34 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN