

## **CABINET STATEMENT**

### **CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL POLICY – COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL**

The last few months have been an incredibly challenging time for the social policy team as they have worked tirelessly to support residents through the pandemic and to ensure that vital services continued to be delivered uninterrupted. Some of the highlights from this period are:

#### **Housing**

- Emergency Accommodation update
  - Throughout lockdown they provided a total of 41 households with an offer of emergency accommodation
  - At the peak they accommodated 29 households in B&B
  - As of 09/07/2020, there were 10 households accommodated in B&B with potential move on options for 4 of these households.
- The housing team were successful in getting two rough sleepers off the street and into B&B at the start of lockdown and have been providing ongoing intensive work to support them.
- They created a free phone number to help with any 'Housing Emergency' during lock down
- An upgrade to the Hampshire Home Choice system was approved by HHC board. Proposed implementation Autumn 2020. This will enable applicants to upload their own supporting documentation which will speed up the process.
- Social Inclusion contract – Two Saints have moved from a 3-bedroom shared unit to a 5-room shared unit at 250 Southampton Road increasing our housing supply for single homeless households.
- Developed and implemented a new training plan to remotely train two new Housing Case Management Officer's (CMOs) – this will continue to be used for future new starters
- Reviewing Eastleigh Scheme of Allocations to ensure the scheme offers equality for all, is accessible for the boroughs most vulnerable residents and supports to increase housing supply

The Housing CMO team have done an amazing job in delivering the service so seamlessly throughout the lockdown period. They have been absolutely outstanding in supporting homeless households to secure suitable housing despite the high caseloads, the regularly changing government guidance, the drastically limited housing options and the additional pressures brought about by working from home.

#### **Customer Service**

This team have never worked from home before and they have shown incredible flexibility and resilience in adapting to this new way of working, ensuring that customers have been consistently able to access services throughout lockdown.

- During April/May/June the team have answered 26,029 calls at home, of which 16,725 (64%) were resolved at first point of contact – they have also handled 17,988 items of digital correspondence.
- 2019/20 saw an increase of 8% in calls answered from 2018/19.
- Customer Service team members continue to be successful in their personal development goals by gaining alternative employment within the Council, allowing the organisation to retain talented individuals and creating opportunities for new staff.

### **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)/Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**

- The DFG team have used all the available technology to do virtual assessments with some clients to allow our OT to still refer on for a Disability Facilities Grant
- They helped alleviate an immediate and extreme mental health situation for a client exacerbated by the isolation of lockdown, through thinking outside the box, utilising emergency minor works pot of money and process and the skills of Darren Thornton's team in depot to provide small works that fell outside the remit of traditional DFG.
- Liz Hawkins has worked hard on Safe Systems Of Work & Risk Assessments and liaised closely with Heather Smith and Michelle Miller to get site visit aspect of our work resumed with external visits resumed from 29 June and all other types of visits resumed from 6 July. They are one of the first teams (of those that ceased visits during lockdown) to resume.
- Aaron Laver (HMO specialist) has been calling vulnerable adults to check if they need any help as part of the Local Response Centre (LRC), he has also assisted with delivering food parcels.

### **Benefits**

- The benefits team have had a huge increase in workload since May as changes in peoples' circumstances filter through the Universal Credit system. The team have coped brilliantly with the additional workload and utilised a former member of staff with benefits experience to help with the processing of applications, demonstrating the resilience in the system.
- 96% (£170,000) of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) was distributed in 19/20. This is a significant improvement in recent years and has resulted in additional funding for 20/21
- Increased level of automation within benefits resulting in a more efficient process for our claimants.