

# Public Document Pack

## FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 26 June 2019**

#### **20.1 Responses to supplementary questions**

Please note this document did not form part of the meeting.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION RESPONSES

### Public question

#### 4. From Mr O'Hara to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects

My question concerns poor living accommodation sometimes called "rabbit hutch" housing. How many licences for landlords of houses of multiple occupation (HMO) have been granted or refused in the District in the past 4 years?

#### ANSWER:

The Council has licensed 41 HMOs (25 new and 16 renewals) in the past 4 years and all of these meet the necessary space standards set down by the Government.

With regard to new build homes, the council has developed a new policy (Policy HB3) for the Places and Policies Local Plan, which sets out space standards for internal and external spaces. This will apply to new houses and apartments and is based on national standards developed by government. The local plan is being examined by an independent planning Inspector. If the policy is approved by the Inspector, it can then be adopted by the council and used to decide planning applications for residential developments.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

What monitoring and enforcement of licences of HMO landlords does the council do? For instance, how many times has the council issued any proceedings against licensed or unlicensed landlords of properties being used as HMOs, such as fines, informal or formal notices, withdrawal of licences or other proceedings for failure to meet licensing of legal requirements. points you raised

#### ANSWER:

The council is satisfied that HMO's do meet space requirements. A written response will be provided to the other. The HMO licenses are issued for a period of five years and in that five year period an inspection to identify any deficiencies which may cause hazards is carried out and any remedial works required are requested of the landlord. Most landlords comply with an informal request and remedial works are carried out. The Private Sector Housing Team have to date never had to revoke a licence. The conditions of the licence include having to maintain good management standards and if a breach of the standards are reported to us, we will respond and investigate.

However, the team is preparing a case concerning one licensed HMO at present and if the prosecution is successful, this will result in the licence being revoked, because the landlord would then be deemed not to be a "fit and

proper person". Any landlord found not to have an HMO licence when they should have is in the first instance invited to apply for a licence. If they fail to do so, then they can be prosecuted. In all cases where unlicensed HMOs are found, we have accepted an application from the landlord and subsequently licensed the property. The team take pride in building good working relationships with landlords and educate and advise in the first instance. Enforcement powers are only used when necessary.

### **Councillor question**

5. **From Councillor McConville to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**

An item in report C/19/01 states, Homelessness- The increase in income relates to the recovery of income relating to self-contained nightly lets, which produces a higher rate of contributions than the bed and breakfast costs. What are these self-contained nightly lets and where may I see a breakdown of the costs?

#### **ANSWER:**

In terms of subsidy arrangements for Housing Benefit, these apply where the local authority provides accommodation to discharge a homelessness function or prevent homelessness. The types of accommodation are:

- Board and lodging (also known as B&B) or non-self-contained licensed accommodation; or
- Short-term leased or self-contained licensed accommodation

Self-contained accommodation is where none of the following are shared with another household:

- a kitchen,
- a toilet,
- a bathroom

**For B&B cases** (non self-contained) the Council can claim full subsidy for expenditure up to of the one bedroom self-contained LHA rate as at January 2011. For Folkestone-Dover LHA area this is £96.92 per week. Any amount over this is not reclaimed via subsidy.

**For short term leased cases** (self contained) where the LA is the landlord the Council can claim full subsidy for expenditure up to 90% of the appropriate LHA rate for the size of the property (based on the number of bedrooms) as at January 2011.

In terms of the breakdown of actual costs this will depend on the nature of the case, the size of the property and the individual circumstances of the people involved. I would be happy to have a further conversation with Councillor McConville to discuss the type and breakdown of costs so that I can ensure he is provided, as far as is possible, with the information he is seeking.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

I would like to know the make-up of people and families using the nightly lets, and where they are from?

**ANSWER:**

I would suggest you raise this with me separately after the meeting, and I can seek the information you require from the relevant officer.

The make-up of people using nightly lets (temporary accommodation) as of today 27/06/19 is as follows:

Singles: 10

Couples: 2

Families: 12

6. **From Councillor Dorrell to Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for Communities**

With the rates of child poverty hitting 46% in East ward and 48% after housing costs in Harbour ward. This should be a top priority for our council to address, as the next generations prospects and their future opportunities can be significantly reduced by the effects of living within poverty. And now with the introduction of Universal Credit being rolled out, have the cabinet considered any plans on reliving the pressure claimants will face, as the minimum 5 week waiting period will find some of our more vulnerable household going into rent arrears with greater risks of homelessness or deprivation resulting in others needing to visit a food banks just in order to get by. What, if any are the councils proposals for helping to reduce the alarming rates of child poverty within and across our district?

**ANSWER:**

Folkestone & Hythe District Council is currently delivering Community Led Local Development Programme, which aims to help local people access jobs, and to support local businesses by delivering the Folkestone Local Development Strategy (LDS) in the most deprived areas of Folkestone. The funding stream recognises the importance of paid work in increasing the stability of people's lives, including families and reducing their reliance on benefits. The programme will run until 2022, and with match funding will invest £4.9 million into Folkestone's most deprived areas.

The European Social Fund (ESF) strand is focused on Folkestone Local Development Strategy Objective 1: Enhancing work- readiness and well-being. This objective has four actions:

**Action 1:** Work experience and job preparation for young people

**Action 2:** Getting people back into work

**Action 3:** Promoting emotional and physical well-being

**Action 4:** Promoting financial wellbeing

The Council has secured £975,000 of ESF funding which with match funding from the delivery organisations will result in £1,950,000 being invested into achieving outcomes under Objective 1.

Following a call for projects in 2018 to deliver these actions and the associated outputs and results, five projects were awarded funding. One projects subsequently decided to withdraw due to a change in their circumstances. Four projects are currently delivering services:

**Money Matters– ESF funding allocated £49,049**

Lead organisation: Rotary Club of Folkestone in partnership with Citizens Advice and Kent Coastal Volunteering

This project recognizes the barrier indebtedness is to well-being of the whole household and has created a new integrated service to provide support and advice to working-age residents, who are job seekers, unemployed or economically inactive. It combines the financial expertise of Citizens Advice with professional mentoring coordinated by Kent Coast Volunteering.

The service aims:

- To provide an efficient, empathetic service of mentoring and support to those in debt;
- To offer free, independent and practical financial advice;
- To empower individuals to gain greater financial stability and progress towards a debt-free future;
- To guide individuals through the maze of financial burden leading to greater physical and mental wellbeing and thus improve self-worth and self-confidence.

Money Advisers from CA will work to provide a robust and individual Money Action Plan (MAP), which a mentor will then work to implement in collaboration with scheme participants. This vital outreach service will be provided at venues such as FoodBank, Folkestone Rainbow Centre and Mind.

For further information regarding the project:

Email: [adviser@citizensadviceshepway.org.uk](mailto:adviser@citizensadviceshepway.org.uk)

**Working Together ESF funding allocated £230,895**

Lead organisation: Social Enterprise Kent

This project recognizes that multiple factors impact on residents' ability to be enter the job market or undertake training or education. This new service supports residents who want to enter the job market but need support to become job ready and find suitable work; or helps residents realize their aspirations to start a training course or return to education. The project offers tailored one to one support from a skilled advisor who guides/coaches/mentors the resident on their personal journey.

The advisor develops with each client a Personal Development Plan which identifies objectives that the resident will be supported to work towards alongside a clear action plan of tasks and activities to help them achieve a positive outcome. This can include creating a CV, using effective job searching techniques, developing interview skills and becoming more confident by addressing underlying issues by helping them access debt services, housing support, benefit advice and much more.

For further information regarding the project:

Email: [e.woodward@sekgroup.org.uk](mailto:e.woodward@sekgroup.org.uk)

Website: [www.sekgroup.org.uk/](http://www.sekgroup.org.uk/)

**Moving Forward Together** ESF funding allocated £299,080

Lead organisation: Shepway Sports Trust

This project recognizes the benefit of physical activity and sport to people's well-being. The new service offers a two tier programme of access to regular sport and physical activity combined with national accredited training.

The first tier engages residents in team sports such as football, table tennis, basketball to build confidence, develop physical fitness and build interpersonal skills. Alongside these sessions, participants will participate in sessions such as CV writing, first aid training that have been agreed and co-designed to assist them to move towards their goals – job search, employment, training or education.

The second tier is the YMCA level 1 and 2 Introduction to Lifestyle Management and Community Activator accredited training. These accredited courses will enable participants to gain qualifications that gives them practical and social skills to improve their lives and will help them move into employment especially in the leisure industry.

For further information regarding the project:

Email: [e.ghassempour@shepwaysportstrust.org](mailto:e.ghassempour@shepwaysportstrust.org)

**Passport to Employability** ESF funding allocated £98,152

Lead organisation: Kent Coastal Volunteering

This project recognizes the importance of volunteering as a gateway to improved well-being and employment. Kent Coast Volunteering through its Folkestone & Hythe Hub is providing a programme of training and support for unemployed and economically inactive residents to help them gain skills and experiences that will help them on their journey into work.

The new service enables participants to be supported by skilled staff and volunteer mentors with 1:1 support and tailored training to improve skills and confidence before being provided with a volunteer placement. Core training sessions include introduction to volunteering, customer service, confidence building and skills for volunteers. Each participants will have an agreed personal development plan with mentors accompanying them to placements

to assist with the adjustment and the establishment of a routine they can live with. The support continues beyond the volunteer placement into job searching and employment.

Email: [mark.connorton@kcv.org.uk](mailto:mark.connorton@kcv.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.kcv.org.uk/passport-to-employability>

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

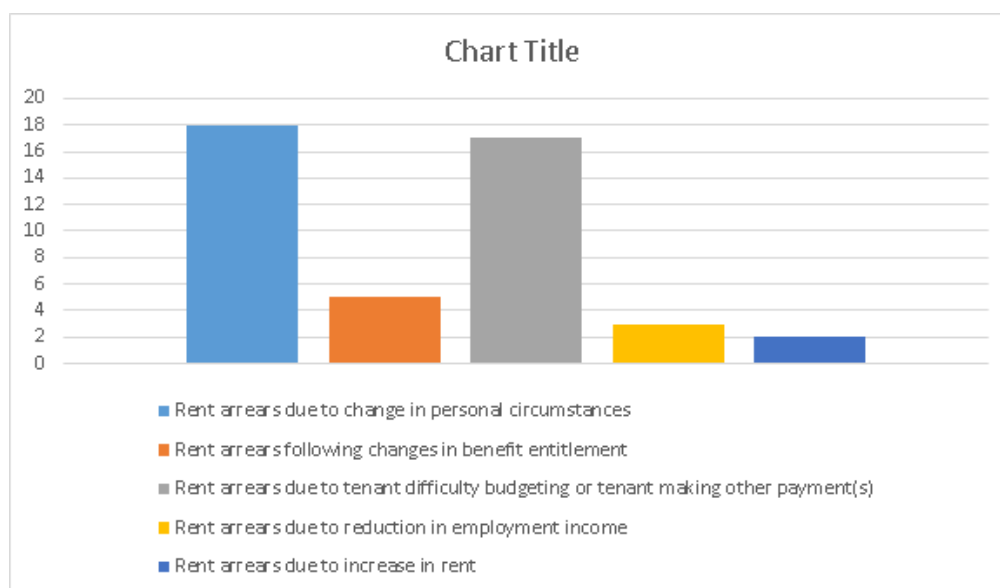
*How many private rented tenants are being pushed into rent arrears?*

The Council can provide a response in terms of those Homeless/Threatened with Homelessness approaches to the Council. The information below reflects the period 1 April 2018 to 18 March 2019.

NOTE: This does not include households who have registered on the Housing Waiting List for Social Housing and have not approached the Council as Homeless/Threatened with Homelessness

### **Of the 387 approaches, 45 were evicted for rent arrears.**

- 387 households approached as homeless/threatened with homelessness in 2018/2019 financial year.
- Of this total 285 households (singles, couples and families) approached as homeless/threatened with homelessness from private rented and social rented accommodation.
- Of the 285, 45 were evicted for rent arrears, and the reason for the rent arrears is broken down as follows:



10. **From Councillor Prater to Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and special projects**



Would the Cabinet member for Housing provide the number of LGSRS (gas safety certificate tests) on our housing stock that EKH invoiced this council for in each of the financial years 2016-17, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019?

**ANSWER**

Information provided by East Kent Housing shows the following number of gas safety inspections (LGSRS) were completed and invoiced over the 3 year period from 2016-2019:

In 2017/18, 4459 LGSRS were completed and invoiced by our contractor.

In 2018/19, 3737 LGSRS were completed and invoiced by our contractor.

The information is not available for 2016/17 as this work relates to our previous contractor.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

The figures in 18/19 were less than in 17/18 – this does not stack up?

**ANSWER:**

The council's contract was currently up for renegotiation, and therefore certain information could not be released due to its commercial sensitivity. I will get the figures checked for you.

Information provided by EKH states that the number of LGSRS completed in any one year varies because the update inspections, wherever possible, are completed prior to the expiry of the previous 12 month LGSRS. This can result in a significant increase in certificates completed in any one 12 month period and a reduction in the next. However, as you are aware, the issue of LGSRS is being fully investigated by this and the other owner Councils.

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