

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)	Date of Meeting:	28 September 2022
Subject:	Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group Final Report – Update on Recommendations	Wards Affected:	All
Report of:	Chief Legal and Democratic Officer		
Is this a Key Decision?	No	Is it included in the Forward Plan?	No
Exempt/Confidential	No		

Purpose/Summary

To update on the implementation of recommendations contained in the final report of the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group that was approved by Council in November 2021.

Recommendations: That

- (1) The report updating on the implementation of recommendations contained in the final report of the Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People Working Group be noted; and
- (2) A further update report be submitted in six months.

Reasons for the Recommendation:

To comply with a Council resolution to update the Committee on the implementation of recommendations contained in the Working Group's final report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

No alternative options were considered. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to be updated on the implementation of recommendations contained in the Working Group's final report.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no financial implications arising for the Council as a direct result of this report. The implementation of recommendations that result in efficiency savings and any necessary financial investment will be the subject of separate reports.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no financial implications arising for the Council as a direct result of this report. The implementation of recommendations that result in efficiency savings and any necessary financial investment will be the subject of separate reports.

Implications:

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

Financial	
Legal: Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012	
Human Resources	
Equality	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes
There are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report.	

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose

<p>Protect the most vulnerable: The aim of the Working Group was to review the topic of housing support services provided to vulnerable people by non-governmental organisations and charities and their links to statutory agencies covered by the Communities and Housing portfolio. The Working Group focused on asylum seekers and refugees who are some of the most vulnerable people in Sefton's communities. A recommendation of the Working Group aims to ensure that any support services that are commissioned by the Council to support vulnerable households should be tailored to the target group with specialist provision and the ability to flex up and flex down as and when required</p>
<p>Facilitate confident and resilient communities: in order for elected Members to provide a local insight into the Postcode Check process, a recommendation of the Working Group is that appropriate Ward Councillors' views be sought as part of the Postcode Check consultation process. A further recommendation, to provide as much evidence base as possible as part of the Postcode Check process, is that all elected Members are contacted urging them to contact the Head of Communities as to which</p>

<p>areas within their wards maybe suffering issues that should be taken into account, such as instances of crime, including hate crime, anti-social behaviour and any community tensions, when considering future asylum accommodation procurement; and that in order that elected Members are aware of the strategic planning, location and distribution of Housing and Support Services for vulnerable households the Head of Communities be requested to provide 6-monthly updates to all Councillors</p>
<p>Commission, broker and provide core services: recommendations within the Final Report relate to when commissioning specific housing and support services for vulnerable groups, the Council should continue to adopt a strategic approach that is cognisant of other such services, the capacity of wider statutory, community and voluntary services and reflects; that any support services that are commissioned by the Council to support vulnerable households should be tailored to the target group with specialist provision and the ability to flex up and flex down as and when required. Local, Sefton based services, often run by the Community and Voluntary sector based in our communities should always be the preferred option wherever possible. The longer-term aim of self-reliance for the service user and longer-term sustainability of the project should always be the aim with a focus on reducing demand on demand-led services issues at a local community level within each ward as to the location of the housing element; and that where housing and support services that are not commissioned by the Council fail then officers should use the governance structures in place to escalate issues</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: Information as contained in “Facilitate confident and resilient communities” section above</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: None directly associated with this report</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: None directly associated with this report</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment: None directly associated with this report</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener: None directly associated with this report</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

The Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6833/22) has been consulted and notes there are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

The Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5033/22) is the author of the report.

Head of Communities

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the meeting

Contact Officer: Paul Fraser
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Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection

Introduction/Background

At its meeting held on 5 November 2019 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills) approved the establishment of a Working Group to review the topic of Housing Support Services to Vulnerable People with the terms of reference and objectives set out below.

To review the topic of housing support services provided to vulnerable people by non-governmental organisations and charities and their links to statutory agencies covered by the Communities and Housing portfolio. This is a wide-ranging topic and will include looking at accommodation and support services provided to Asylum Seekers, Syrian Refugees, those fleeing domestic violence and vulnerable homeless households. The terms of reference and objectives of the Working Group are:

- The collation of information on the scale and location in Sefton of supported accommodation for vulnerable people that fall under the remit of the Communities and Housing portfolio
- How do we ensure that such services provided to vulnerable people are regulated and are being delivered in accordance with contract specification.

Accordingly, the Working Group met on six occasions to undertake such review and its Final Report, together with associated recommendations can be accessed using the following link:

[Sefton Home](#)

Methods of enquiry undertaken by the Working Group included:

- Analysis of current Sefton practice
- Desktop research into practise elsewhere
- Witness interviews with officers, stakeholders, experts and other organisations
- Possible site visits / conference calls with experts and other organisations

The table below sets out the Working Group recommendations and progress on their implementation.

UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE WORKING GROUP

Recommendation	Update
<p>in order for elected Members to provide a local insight into the Postcode Check process, appropriate Ward Councillors views be sought as part of the Postcode Check consultation process.</p>	<p>This recommendation has been consumed within the next recommendation – rather than provide piecemeal feedback on an individual requests, members are asked to provide evidence to provide a more strategic approach to the procurement of additional asylum accommodation throughout the borough.</p>
<p>to provide as much evidence base as possible as part of the Postcode Check process the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer be requested to write to all elected Members urging them to contact the Head of Communities as to which areas within their wards maybe suffering issues that should be taken into account, such as instances of crime, including hate crime, anti-social behaviour and any community tensions, when considering future asylum accommodation procurement.</p>	<p>An email was sent to all Members of the Council on 29 November 2021 in accordance with this recommendation. A reminder email was sent to all Members on 1 June 2022 and this also extended the opportunity for newly elected Members to make submissions.</p> <p>Only 1 elected member provided feedback which was more of a comment on the unequal distribution of housing for asylum seekers and refugees throughout the borough.</p>
<p>in order that elected Members are aware of the strategic planning, location and distribution of Housing and Support Services for vulnerable households the Head of Communities be requested to provide 6-monthly updates to all Councillors.</p>	<p>An email was sent to all Members on 11 July 2022 that contained a breakdown of the numbers of Asylum & Refugee properties for each ward.</p>
<p>when commissioning specific housing and support services for vulnerable groups, the Council should continue to adopt a strategic approach that is cognisant of other such services, the capacity of wider statutory, community and voluntary services and reflects issues at a local community level within each ward as to the</p>	<p>No new housing and support services have been commissioned within the last 6 months. This will remain a key factor of any new commissions in the future.</p>

<p>location of the housing element.</p>	
<p>any support services that are commissioned by the Council to support vulnerable households should be tailored to the target group with specialist provision and the ability to flex up and flex down as and when required. Local, Sefton based services, often run by the Community and Voluntary sector based in our communities should always be the preferred option wherever possible. The longer-term aim of self-reliance for the service user and longer-term sustainability of the project should always be the aim with a focus on reducing demand on demand-led services.</p>	<p>No new housing and support services have been commissioned within the last 6 months. This will remain a key factor of any new commissions in the future.</p>
<p>where housing and support services that are not commissioned by the Council fail then officers should use the governance structures in place to escalate issues.</p> <p>An example of this is where officers have used the Liverpool City Region Officers network and the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership so that issues can be escalated by elected members to the Lead Member for the Liverpool City Region group.</p>	<p>Any failures of existing housing and support services that are not commissioned by the Council have been escalated where necessary through the correct routes.</p>