OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 31st July, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr Halleh Koohestani (Chairman)
Cllr Nadia Martin (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Leola Card
Cllr Thomas Day
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr Steve Harden
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr Bill O'Donovan
Cllr S. Trussler
Cllr Becky Williams

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr M.J. Tennant.

6. APPOINTMENTS

The Committee NOTED changes to the Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year, as set out below:

- Cllr C.P. Grattan to be appointed to the Committee in place of Cllr Abe Allen
- Cllr Dhan Sarki to be appointed as Standing Deputy for the Committee in place of Cllr C.P. Grattan

7. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

8. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2023-27

The Committee welcomed Mrs Zoe Paine, Strategy and Enabling Manager, and Mr Jermiane Pinto, Housing Options Manager, who were in attendance to provide an update on the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2023-27 as set out in Report No. PG2524. Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder, was also in attendance to answer Members' questions.

It was noted that the Strategy, adopted by the Council in 2023, was an overarching way to deal with all housing matters. The Strategy supported the Council's Homes for All priority and set out the approach to, housing delivery, homelessness prevention, and housing standards. The Committee were advised of the statutory duty to have a homelessness strategy and the good practice of having a published

strategic approach to housing matters, to help underpin the operational work of the service.

The Strategy covered three themes, these included:

- Theme 1 – increasing the supply of good quality homes for residents and prospective residents for every stage of life
- Theme 2 – support residents to access affordable, well managed and maintained housing in the private and social sectors
- Theme 3- work proactively to improve the condition and energy efficiency of housing in the Borough

A progress report was provided on each theme, which included:

- Theme 1-
    - housing demand – 1,964 families were currently on the Homefinder list looking for a variety of different types of accommodation at affordable rents
    - officers were now sourcing private rented housing market data from local agents to help better assess local demand
    - £2billion was to be made available through planning reform and Government capital funding via the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP) aimed at helping deliver more homes – 60% of which would be social housing
    - introduction of new rent regimes for Registered Providers (RPs) and low interest loans
    - 94 homes had been delivered in the last financial year with a further 236 to be delivered by April 2026
    - work was ongoing towards securing developments that would deliver affordable homes via S106 sites and with RPs to secure funding for non S106 sites – for example £7.5million had been secured for use on the Wellesley development for social and affordable rent properties
    - work was underway towards securing pathways for supported accommodation for street homeless individuals and safe temporary accommodation for homeless households to reduce the need to utilise bed and breakfast accommodation

- Theme 2 –
    - the Council had achieved above the national average for homelessness prevention at 77.9% against 51.9% nationally
    - specialist staff had been recruited, including a domestic abuse worker and private rent and accommodation officer
    - the Communications team had a programme of work to engage with specific groups at risk of homelessness, this included addressing sever weather controls
    - work was underway with charities and faith groups to share expertise and enhance services to achieve positive outcomes
    - training was being provided to Members to inform how systems worked to assist with casework

- work was underway with the Registered Providers Group (RPG) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)
- upgrades to the Abritas system had been made to allow direct messaging for quicker access, secure document downloading, self-serve options to reduce barriers and a mobile friendly design

- Theme 3-

  - regulatory and enforcement work continued to ensure good standards of housing, this was done through the RPG, Housing Regulator and Housing Ombudsman. In addition, the Council were a member of the Warmer Homes Consortium and promoted the Home Upgrade Grant
  - measures were being taken to ensure staff resource focussed on housing standards
  - development of effective communication to residents and landlords regarding the support and advice available

It was also reported that further changes were imminent, these included tenancy reforms to the Renters Right Act, new statutory duties for the Council in relation to the Supported Housing Act and reforms to the Decent Homes Standards (DHS) and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for social and affordable homes. It was also expected that Local Government Reorganisation would have an impact on the housing service.

In response to a query regarding DHS and MEES, and how noncompliance could affect residents, it was advised that the proposed reforms were currently in the consultation stages and work would have to be undertaken with the ombudsman and regulators to deal with any implications following any implementation of the proposed standards.

In response to a question regarding how the demand for social housing would be met, the Portfolio Holder advised that meetings were being arranged with the top five-ten Registered Providers, operating in the Borough, to enhance partnership working. Pockets of land potentially available for social housing development in the future included the Civic Quarter, Farnborough, a number of brownfield sites and some military land. The Committee discussed the Local Plan and how that had the opportunity to influence and meet the needs of local residents. The need for more bungalows was noted and it was advised that the Council were working with Rushmoor Accessibility Action Group (RAAG) and others, to best address this issue, taking account of land values, single storey properties were not a priority for developers. The Committee commented that the “pepper pot” approach, where social housing was scattered amongst private properties on developments, and how this helped sustain people’s feelings of being part of the community. In response to a query around demand for houses by age group, it was reported that the average age group was those in their mid-40s. Further data would be sought and shared via the Committee’s Action Tracker.

During a discussion regarding temporary accommodation, the Portfolio Holder advised that work was underway with a partner who purchased larger homes and converted them into Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). There was also potential

for them to purchase existing HMO's and upgrade them to rent out. In response to a question, it was noted that there were currently only two-three individuals housed in hotels outside the Borough, two-three homeless people across the Borough and a high number of street attached. During April – June 2025, 78% of 91 cases of those at risk of homelessness had been prevented.

The Committee discussed shared ownership and were advised that there was good demand for this type of property, in particular two bed properties. Specific data was requested on the interest/take up of shared ownership, and this would be provide through the Committee's Action Tracker. It was noted that people looking for shared ownership properties could apply anywhere in the country and not just within Rushmoor. It response to a query regarding veterans and military personnel it was noted that these individuals took priority on shared ownership properties, if the individual had a local connection.

With regards to adaptations to properties, it was advised that this was the responsibility of HCC. Enquiries were referred to Occupational Therapy (OT) via HCC and it was thought that currently waiting lists were long. It was noted that individuals were able to use private OTs to expedite the process.

During a discussion on how the building of new homes could be quicker, it was advised that the Council had limited influence over private developers, however, it was reported that the requirements around Homes England funded developments was much stricter, and monies could be lost if developers failed to meet set timescales. SANG allocations could also be withdrawn if developers failed to develop to certain timescales.

The Committee discussed the 82 units at Union Yard, Aldershot, that had been allocated for key workers. It was noted that arrangements were in place with the provider and Frimley NHS Trust to ensure key workers and critical members of staff had access to the accommodation. It was also advised that there would be onsite management for the units and strong working links would be established with Frimley NHS Trust Human Resources teams to ensure standards were maintained.

What	**By Whom**	**When**
Data to be share on interest/take up of shared ownership	Zoe Paine, Strategy and Enabling Officer	August 2025
Data on demand for housing by age group	Jermaine Pinto, Housing Options Manager	August 2025
Data to be provided on take up of the Warmer Homes scheme	Jermaine Pinto, Housing Options Manager	August 2025

The Chair thanked the Portfolio Holder, Mrs Paine and Mr Pinto for their contribution to the meeting.

9. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee noted the current Work Plan.

It was noted that a Special Meeting of the Committee had been scheduled for 4th September to carry out pre decision scrutiny on the Council's response to Local Government Reorganisation prior to Cabinet on 16th September and the Full Council Meeting on 25th September, 2025. The Progress Group would follow up on this at their meeting on 13th August, 2025.

It was advised that the Police and Community Safety Team would be in attendance at the Meeting on 18th September, 2025. The Progress Group would scope the item at its meeting on 13th August, 2025.

The potential future items would also be considered at the Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm.

CLLR HALLEH KOOHESTANI (CHAIRMAN)