

REPORT TITLE:	Discharge of Roles and Responsibilities since the last meeting of the Council
REPORT AUTHOR:	Councillor Scott Patient
AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY:	Climate Change and Resilience (including Housing and VCS)
DATE:	9 <sup>th</sup> February 2022

## HOUSING

### Homelessness Team:

**Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-2025:** Planning around the pathway and services needed over the next three years to support rough sleepers is underway, working closely with other agencies to inform our future needs. To inform the bid which needs to be submitted in February, we are required to complete a self-assessment. Maintaining the current interventions such as outreach, tenancy sustainment and accommodation options is the core bid but strengthening our accommodation offer for women who rough sleep with additional complex needs will bring additionality to the pathway.

**Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation:** The Refuge, Temporary Accommodation & Support Service and Housing Options Teams are providing information to inform a needs assessment of current provision supporting people experiencing domestic abuse. The Council has received additional funding which will enable us to provide safer accommodation options and strengthen the support available. The Homelessness Service is supporting with identifying what the needs are in Calderdale.

**Migration Support Team:** This team have responded to supporting a hotel in Calderdale which has been set up by the Home Office to support Asylum seekers. The team are supporting school services with language skills and the experience we have of working with migrating families to complete applications for school admissions. They are also supporting to bridge the gap with the voluntary sector who have been impacted by the large influx of families to Calderdale.

### Private Sector Housing Team:

**Empty Homes Work:** A robust case has been made for the compulsory purchase order (CPO) of 164 King Cross Road, Halifax, a property that has been empty for around 30 years and caused significant cost to the Council through blight, complaints, lack of historic enforcement of grant conditions and a reduction in Council Tax income from residential properties adjacent to the site. A virtual public enquiry chaired by HM Planning Inspectorate will take place on 15 February.

There are other long-term empties around the borough that are causing blight to local communities, costs to the authority and the wider public purse. Despite numerous efforts to bring them back into use through renovation or sale, such properties and their owners are often beyond support and a more robust enforcement approach is required. This will then help to send a clear message to other absent owners whose empty homes are also causing nuisance across some of our most deprived areas. An action plan and Cabinet paper will be brought forward later in the year for consideration.

**Housing Energy – Affordable warmth & Climate Emergency:** Latest government fuel poverty data (2021) for 2019 suggests over 15,700 low-income households in the borough (17% of total homes) were in fuel poverty, however this does not include the expected increase due to more recent rising energy costs. A range of small grants and low-cost loans are in place to assist low-income owner occupiers with heating and insulation works.

The team has secured £8.68m in Green Homes Grant (Oct 2019 – Mar 2023) to deliver room in roof and other insulation works to c900 low-income households. Whilst this improves thermal comfort and can reduce CO2 emissions, it only helps in homes with affordable heating.

Through the Household Support Fund and Anti-poverty work, we are working with a number of local partners including Newground Together and Calderdale CAB to deliver a package of fuel vouchers, energy advice and access to our energy efficiency schemes to help residents make their homes warmer, healthier and cheaper to heat.

£93k has also been provisionally secured (subject to funding agreement) via the WY NHS Health Partnership to ensure our work is being targeted to assist lower income households with long term health conditions to ease winter pressures on health and care services. Early discussions are underway to link this work to the CCG's population health management work and voluntary and community sector to ensure our support reaches those in greatest need.

Research is being carried out by the Energy Saving Trust to identify the types of works, policy changes and estimated £Ms of private and public investment required to deliver the energy upgrades to 69,000 homes to energy band C by 2038 to achieve our NetZero ambition. This will report back in March 2022.

## **Flood Grants:**

No of Applications	355
No of Eligible Applications	243
No of Applications Approved	112 (of the 243) to the value of £527k
No of Applications Completed	70 (of the 112) to the value of £331k

The scheme ends in May 2022. Customers continue to be contacted and reminded of this deadline and the need to provide outstanding information for their applications and/or complete their approved work and submit their contractors' invoices to ensure payment before the scheme is closed down. As the deadline approaches, increasingly more officer time will be needed to encourage, support, and remind customers to take action and provide the required information to complete their applications.

## Housing Strategy and Growth Team:

**WYCA:** Officers continue to work closely with WYCA to deliver outcomes related to funding secured through the Housing Revenue Fund. To date, the Housing Strategy & Growth team have secured circa £250k worth of investment into the Council, with the Council providing £88k match. This crucial funding has enabled the team to undertake capacity studies on strategic sites, benefit from external commercial advice and increase capacity in the team. Part of this has included creating a 2-year fixed term Graduate post, with someone starting in January. The role will gain experience across the team's work streams and wider partners such as WYCA, Homes England and Registered Providers whilst undertaking a qualification through the Chartered Institute of Housing.

**Housing Development:** three sites in Calderdale continue to progress through the Brownfield Housing Fund. This remains a challenge due to the rigorous assessment process and central Government prescribed requirement of developments having to achieve a Benefit Cost Ratio of 1 (a large part of this BCR calculation is weighted against Land Value Uplift which poses issues in areas where land values are low). Officers have fed back these challenges in the hope that this can be used by WYCA to lobby central Government and we understand that other WY Local Authorities are facing the same issue getting through the assessment process. 1 site is being taken forward by a private developer and the BHF funding has meant 4 affordable homes will be delivered on the site, 1 site is a former Council owned site in Hebden Bridge which Connect Housing and Calder Valley Community Land Trust are taking forward for a fully affordable rent scheme and the third site is the currently Council owned Cow Green site in Halifax which the Council is working with Place First (a Build to Rent developer) to devise an apartment scheme that will act as a 'market maker' for the town and contribute to the wider regeneration activity. If the requests are accepted, it will equate in close to £3m in grant funding from the programme.

**Housing Delivery Test:** the results of the Housing Delivery Test have been released by central Government. Calderdale remains in the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' category but has had a small improvement of 5% on last year's results. The Team has begun updating the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan which will be released in due course and supports the objectives of the new Housing Strategy. It highlights the importance of the Council and its partners remaining focused on housing delivery as a key priority for the Council and the continued challenge to deliver new homes in the Borough.

## GREEN ECONOMY

The end of January marks the three year anniversary of the Climate Emergency Declaration, despite a global pandemic and a Major Flood in this time the work being done in this area has been significant. The difference culturally and within the Council in elevating climate based work to the very top of its priority list has been significant. This is no longer just a small team working on this area, the drive to do more is now shared by many decision makers within the Council. Significantly we are now working on the Climate Action Plan following the Emission Reduction Pathway, have just completed a soon to be realised Governance review of our Climate Working Party and are just about to move into Phase 2 of funding rounds for our Climate Community Fund Joint Funding Grant which had a very successful and well received first round. Work at the WYCA Climate Energy & Environment

Committee continues with Calderdale having a good presence in leadership, officer and activist roles. The last informal meeting saw us discuss amongst other things Nature Recovery - which will be a key area of both our Climate work but also our emerging Ecological Emergency work too.

**Community Engagement & Communications:** we are working with Comms to plan for increased profile of the Climate Leaderships graphics, and for posters to be installed in buildings which have had low and zero carbon interventions to raise the profile of our current and historic work. Planning will begin shortly for the next phase of the £1m CMBC and Community Foundation for Calderdale Climate Emergency grant, which is anticipated to open for applications in March 2022. An informal Climate Emergency Cabinet Working Group has begun laying the foundations for a structure for our local Climate Action Plan, which will be a key document for partnership working and communication.

**Capital Work & Projects:** we continue to support CAFM on phases 1 and 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation team, and Transportation to investigate EV options and explore how WYCA could support work in the region. We are working with the North East Energy Hub to scope out the benefits of a Local Energy Asset Representation (LEAR) / Local Energy Action Plan (LEAP) for Calderdale. This seems to be emerging as the industry standard for energy transition planning (it is OFGEM approved) and could bring together disparate data sets to help us understand and unlock local opportunities. However, it would be a significant project – requiring external engagement as well as cross-department involvement internally. We aim to refine a scope and explore costs (which the Energy Hub could part-fund) to help inform decision makers when considering whether this project should be commissioned.

**Environmental Policy:** the Green & Healthy Streets policy has now been approved by Cabinet. Work to scope out how the Council should tackle the Ecological emergency has begun, with conversations on governance scheduled as a first step. The Council passed its ISO14001 internal audit; which has confirmed that the Council is operating in line with Environmental regulations and established good practice; and seeking to continuously improve. Climate training to staff and key partners is ongoing.

**Public Services:** We are exploring the possibilities for offering Water Cremation in Calderdale, which is a gentler and more natural end of life option to flame cremation, and a positive alternative to burial, with significant environmental benefits over both - essentially returning the body to ash using water (hydrolysis) instead of flame.

We are in the process of replacing the diesel all-terrain vehicle at Parkwood with a new electric utility vehicle for grounds maintenance activities at the Crematorium – this should be with us in the next couple of weeks.

We are also identifying appropriate areas in our cemeteries to leave to nature as wildflower meadows (whilst actively maintaining the areas around graves/paths etc.) and piloting the introduction of bird boxes in cemeteries as an alternative memorial offer.

We are also continuing to work on the development of the AQ Strategy and associated projects, such as the public and Council EV charging infrastructure.



## VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

### **I am pleased to announce relaunch of small grants scheme to support local groups.**

We know that our volunteer and community groups do so much for local people. We're delighted to be able to reopen our Community Small Grants programme to help support these local organisations and aid their recovery from the COVID pandemic. Many of the borough's small and often volunteer-led groups have had their usual activities restricted for nearly two years. We know how much of a difference these community grants can make, so urge eligible organisations to consider how they can benefit from this grant scheme.

Our thriving cultural scene and our strong community spirit are some of the things that make Calderdale distinctive. As we continue our recovery from COVID and all look towards a brighter future, we want to ensure that we can support those smaller events or projects which bring so many benefits for local communities.

The programme was suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 emergency. As the Council continues to focus on supporting the borough's recovery, the Small Grant programme will be directed to help local community and voluntary groups get back on their feet.

The Community Small Grants programme will concentrate on the Council's priorities: Supporting Strong and Resilient Towns, Reducing Inequalities and Tackling the Climate Emergency.

The Council is particularly looking to support small organisations running an event or a project later this year. These events and projects should:

- Improve the strength and resilience of our local communities.
- Support job creation and skills, mainly through volunteers.
- Grow the community and social enterprise sector.
- Increase volunteering in regions of greatest need.
- Support local projects and build local capacity.
- Support high-quality health and wellbeing events.
- Improve equality and social cohesion.
- Improve access for deprived communities.
- Encourage activities to save energy and introduce clean transport options
- Improve our local environment.
- Promote healthy, affordable, sustainable and local food

The deadline for the next round of grants is 21 February. The funding pot is £70,000, with a maximum grant of £3,000 available for successful applicants.

<https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/residents/community-and-living/grants/grants-voluntary-organisations/small-grants-scheme>

**Recipients of grants from our Supporting Stronger Neighbourhoods programme were also pleased to hear of Cabinet's decision to extend funds.** This allows them to plan now to continue their projects beyond March 2022. These grants support voluntary activity and Calderdale Smartmove volunteers have already given almost 4,000 unpaid hours since April 2021. Their volunteers ensured that 300 vulnerable people received both food and gift

deliveries at Christmas.

Work is underway to develop and expand the Staying Well service social prescribing offer for adults in the community.

Work as begun to co-produce an action plan with members of the voluntary and community sector to implement the recommendations of the review of the impact and spend with the voluntary community and social economy in Calderdale from Centre for Local Economic Strategies.

### **Anti-Poverty Partnership Event**

The Voluntary Sector team coordinates the work on anti-poverty and the first event of 2022 is being planned for February. The event *Working Together to Strengthen Money & Debt Support in Calderdale* already has over 70 people registered. The virtual event will include a combination of presentations and workshop discussions and will explore the following:

- What is the data telling us about the problems?
- How does debt impact on mental health and wellbeing?
- How can we eradicate the stigma of debt?
- What services are in place and how do they help people?
- How you can help signpost and refer people to the right services?

Further information can be found [here](#).

### **Anti-Poverty Steering Group**

- The group last met on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December and the group focused on the links between mental health/suicide and poverty.
- The anti-poverty action plan will be refreshed in early 2022
- The group has agreed to move from 8 weekly meetings to quarterly meetings.

### **Household Support Fund**

- Community Foundation for Calderdale on behalf of Calderdale Council has funded 23 winter projects. Monitoring data is currently being collected. A directory has been uploaded onto the HSF [webpage](#).
- Power Calderdale will go live on the 7<sup>th</sup> February. The Newground Together team is working closely with all referral partners to ensure people in need receive emergency fuel vouchers. Vouchers can now be issued for both pre-payment and direct payment customers.