S55. Homelessness - Days to Secure Permanent Housing

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Transformation, Communities and Corporate Services presenting further information on the increase in the average time to find permanent rehousing for homeless applicants.

The Committee noted that contact had been lost with some homeless individuals which contributed to the increased case-closure timescale. The Committee asked how often the Housing Service had attempted to make contact with individuals who had not been responsive. The Housing Needs Manager confirmed that the loss of contact with homeless individuals had increased because there had been homeless presentations in Falkirk Council by people who did not necessarily reside in the Falkirk area because they could not find housing in their own area. She advised that a variety of methods were employed to maintain contact with applicants.

The Committee noted that the Scottish Government measured the number of days to close all cases assessed as homeless, with the Scottish average of 280 days, and the Falkirk average of 457 days. The Committee asked whether the Council had a target against this indicator, and whether this indicator could be used to inform a revised target for the number of days to secure permanent housing. The Housing Needs Manager confirmed that there were several performance indicators used in national reporting which did not have a local target attached to them. She confirmed that the average number of days to close all cases assessed as homeless in Falkirk had reduced from 457 days.

The Committee noted that Falkirk Council's target number of days to secure permanent housing for homeless applicants was 120. In 2024/25, the average number of days was 381.64 days, which was an increase from 324.66 days in 2023/24. The Committee asked whether this target was too ambitious and whether a revised target would be beneficial. The Housing Needs Manager advised that the target was achievable and was achieved until the Covid-19 pandemic. She stated that it was important to the service that ambitious targets should be set to motivate performance improvements, but these targets could be reviewed by using other local authorities as a benchmark. She recognised that aspirational targets had to be achievable.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Bouse commended the Housing Service for their work to improve their performance and thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their questions.

Decision

The Committee noted:-

(1) the changes in performance in this indicator in recent years, and the reasons for this change;

(2) the actions and activities being undertaken by the Housing Needs Service to improve our performance; and

(3) the overall performance of the Housing Needs Service, in the context of the Scottish national picture.