

**TO: All members of the Council**

**Our reference** CS  
**Your reference** N/A  
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22 January 2024

Dear Councillor

**Council - Tuesday 19 December 2023**

Attached are the written responses to questions raised at the above meeting, as referred to in the minutes.

Yours sincerely

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**West Suffolk**  
Council

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## **Council: 19 December 2023 - written responses to questions**

### **Item 6: Leader's Statement**

Councillor Margaret Marks asked a question in connection with Cabinet's recent decision regarding the investment in Provincial House, Haverhill.

Whilst welcoming the investment, Councillor Marks asked for the reasons for borrowing approximately £2 million for the project and whether the Eastern Education Group (West Suffolk College) will be contributing; whether there was a fully costed business case, and if so, for it to be shared with members so the implications of the scheme, and particularly its impact on the town, can be considered.

### **Response from Councillor Diane Hind, Portfolio Holder for Resources:**

The Provincial House business case was subject to Cabinet scrutiny and approval at its meeting on 5 December 2023.

The link to the full business case is available and included on the Council's intranet via the link below. Please note this business case is currently exempt and is only available to view by members upon entering their usual log-in credentials, when prompted:

#### [Provincial House Haverhill Business Case](#)

The Council is in discussion with the Eastern Education Group with regards to contributing a capital sum alongside annual rental income, so I can confirm contributions will be taking place in some form. The detail of those are still being worked through.

As discussed at the Council meeting itself, borrowing will only take place once our treasury management cash-flow requires us to do so. We are not currently looking at further external borrowing for another 12 to 18 months; but in line with the approach to assessing business cases, this business case was assessed on the basis of borrowing and provision will be made in the budget to fund the cost of borrowing once that takes place.

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## Item 6: Leader's Statement

Councillor Ian Houlder asked a question in connection with homelessness and rough sleepers.

He acknowledged that many people that had found themselves rough sleeping often presented with complex needs. Being mindful of sensitivity and confidentiality, Councillor Houlder asked whether information can be provided to highlight some of the specific issues being presented by rough sleepers; for example, the range of age groups; the different sorts of mental and social problems being experienced; and whether individuals are citizens of West Suffolk or from elsewhere.

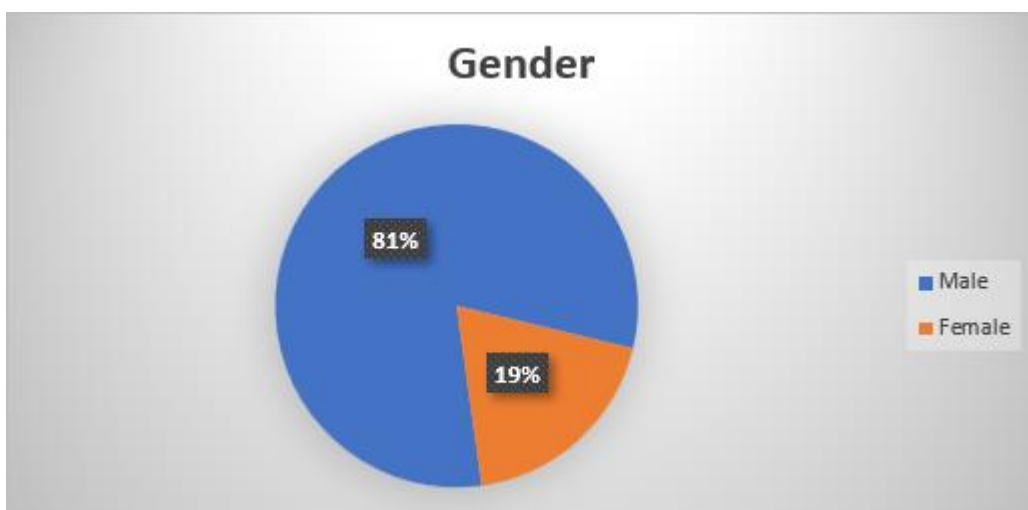
Councillor Houlder also welcomed news on the success stories had by the team.

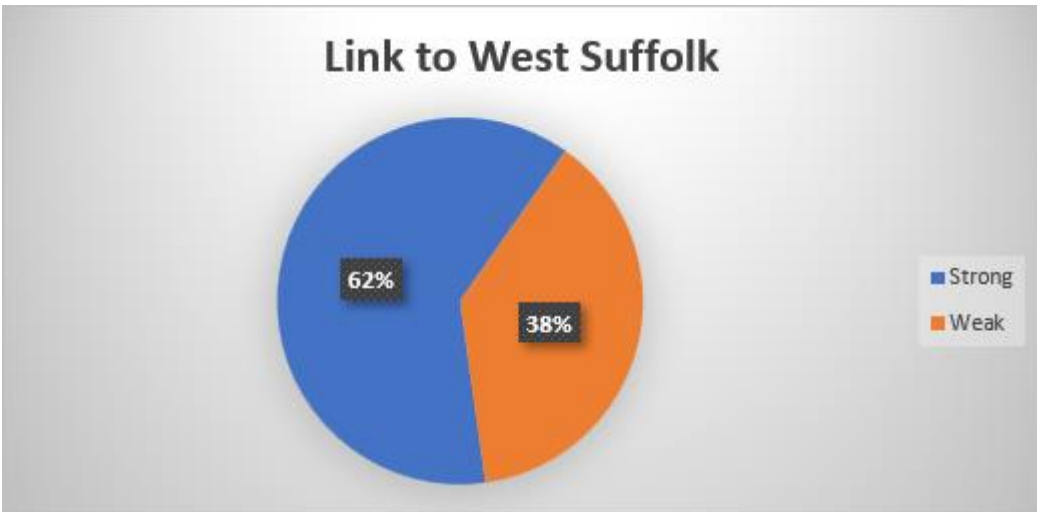
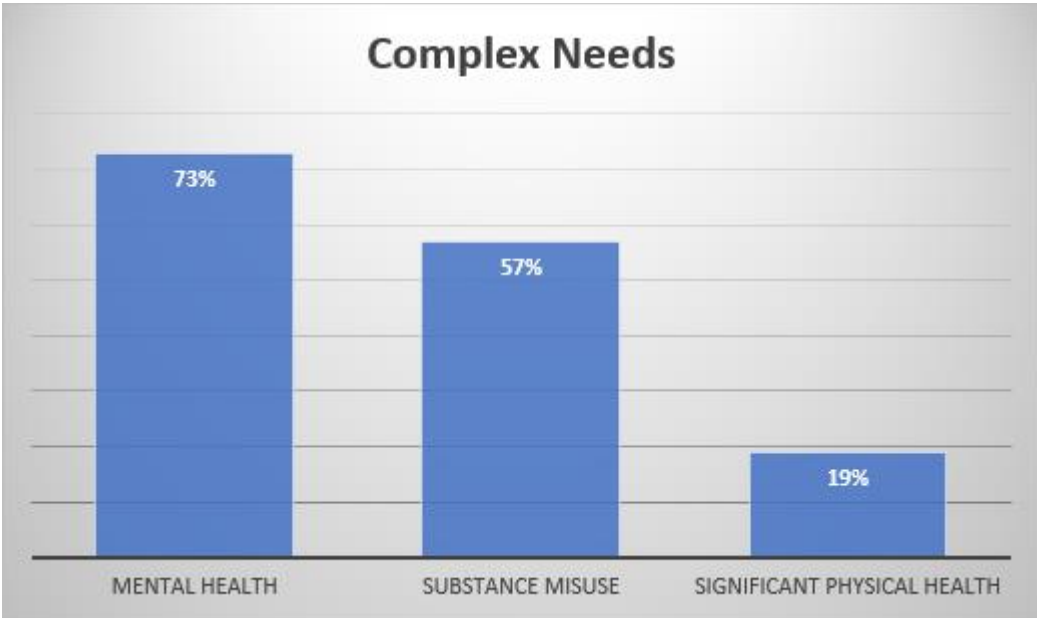
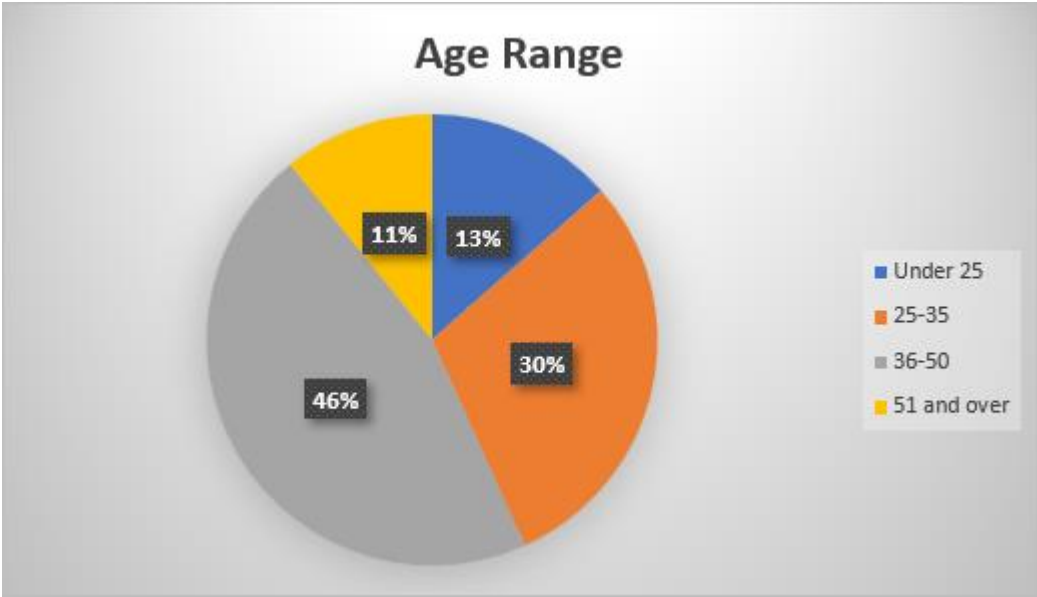
### Response from Councillor Richard O'Driscoll, Portfolio Holder for Housing:

The majority of those verified as rough sleeping present with complex issues. These include mental health impairments, poly-substance abuse, alcoholism, physical health concerns, histories involving trauma, relationship breakdown, criminality, anti-social behaviour, inability to sustain accommodation etc. A number of verified rough sleepers have an offending background, in addition to a smaller number who were care leavers or veterans.

### Analysis

The following is an analysis of 37 verified rough sleepers during the period June to November 2023





Note: Strong is where, for example, the individual was born in the area, has significant local connections and last address is in West Suffolk. Weak is where they are from elsewhere or it is unclear why they have arrived in West Suffolk. They won't necessarily have family here and their support network is limited or unknown.

Some examples of success stories:

**X** had a very significant history of drug criminality and involvement with County Lines. Following release from prison they struggled to maintain accommodation, eventually becoming street homeless. They were accommodated by the Rough Sleeper Service and following sustained support, transitioned from temporary accommodation into their own social housing tenancy. They no longer use drugs, have had no further involvement with the criminal justice system and are employed.

**Z** was street homeless following the loss of employment. They were entitled to, but had not applied for, benefits and not receiving treatment for medical conditions. They entered a supported accommodation pathway and, over a number of months, were assisted to address health and welfare issues, eventually moving into their own social housing tenancy. During support they were empowered to reconnect with family and build an enduring support network.

**A & B** were street homeless on and off for a significant number of years, heavily addicted to Class A drugs and committing crime on a daily basis. They had lost previous accommodation because they found themselves unable to adhere to rules and acceptable behaviours. The Rough Sleeper Service supported them into accommodation and empowered them to make the right choices, distancing themselves from disruptive associations, drugs and criminality. They are now successfully sustaining their own social tenancy and are model tenants.

**T** was rough sleeping in a car when they first came into contact with the Rough Sleeper Service. They were provided with temporary accommodation and supported to address health and financial issues. It transpired that they did own a property but it had been taken over by others. They were supported to apply for re-possession of their home and subsequently resumed occupancy.

**M** was rough sleeping following family breakdown, substance misuse and mental health issues. They were accommodated and supported to use physical exercise to improve mental health and to address the use of drugs and alcohol through a recovery pathway. Following a truly exceptional journey, they are now maintaining their own social tenancy, and remaining sober and drug free. They have recently been invited to join the Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous team who provide support in prisons.