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| STRONG & SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | Agenda Item No. 5 |
| 20 JULY 2016 | Public Report |

Report of the Service Director of Adult Services and Communities

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HOUSING NEEDS & HOMELESSNESS AND AN UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the Council's approach to preventing and tackling homelessness.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to scrutinise the progress made on the Homelessness Strategy and to provide challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support the continued delivery of priorities.

3. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 Providing affordable, warm, safe and secure housing is the cornerstone of a strong society. This principle is most closely aligned with the priority to keep all our communities safe, cohesive and healthy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This report provides an updated position on the council's Homelessness Strategy and the initiatives in place to tackle the housing needs of the residents of the City.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Housing Needs

- 5.1.1 The Housing Needs team deliver a housing options approach when dealing with clients who approach the authority for assistance and will seek to prevent a household's homelessness wherever possible.

- 5.1.2 The number of clients contacting the service is high. In the last financial year the team were contacted 19,758 times by clients for advice and assistance, of which 2,401 were seen face to face by an officer. Officers have a number of options when preventing homelessness and have been successful in a large number of cases, which may have otherwise resulted in the household becoming homeless, and the council having to accommodate in temporary accommodation whilst seeking alternative accommodation.

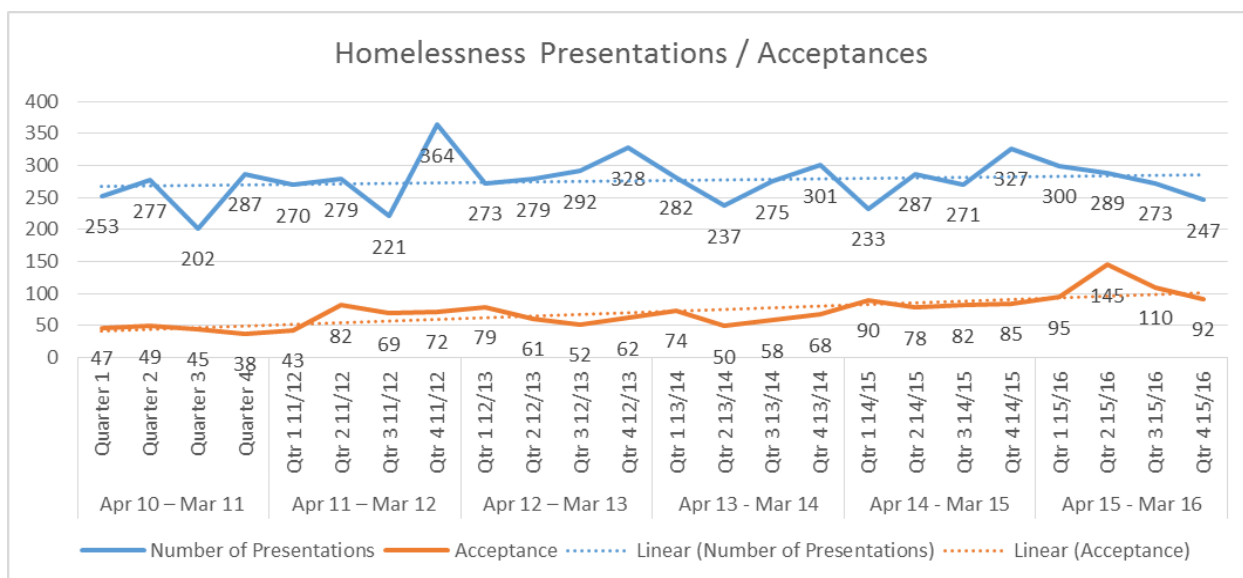
- 5.1.3 Examples of how this was achieved include:

- Negotiating with householders/landlords to resolve the issues which led to the threat of homelessness
- Liaising with the Housing Benefit team to resolve payment issues
- Taking steps to improve security in the home to allow victims of domestic violence to

- remain in the home (Sanctuary Scheme)
- Offering mortgage/debt advice
- Supporting households to move to alternative affordable accommodation in the private sector

5.1.4 In 2015/16 the council accepted homelessness applications from 1,186 households. This is a slight increase on the previous year (1,120), but remains less than the recent high of (1,326). However of the 1,186 applications, 440 were accepted as 'statutory homeless' and owed a full housing duty. This is the highest number we have seen in recent years. This is in line with the national picture, which has seen increases in homelessness presentations and acceptances year on year since 2010.

5.1.5 The table below shows the number of homelessness presentations and number of homelessness acceptances each quarter from April 2010.



5.2 Homelessness Prevention

5.2.1 Rent Deposit Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments

The service continues to offer a Rent Deposit Scheme which enables persons to access an interest free loan to be used for the upfront costs associated with securing a property in the private rented sector.

5.2.2 This continues to be a successful option for the prevention and relief of homelessness and also increased access to permanent accommodation. In 2015/2016 a total of 184 households were assisted into private rented sector accommodation through this scheme.

5.2.3 In addition the team have continued to make use of the Discretionary Housing Payments fund (DHP), made available to all local authorities. This is used to support households who were in receipt of housing benefits, and may be at risk of homelessness, to move to alternative private sector accommodation. It can cover up front fees such as deposits, rent in advance and reasonable administration fees. In 2015/16 the team were successful in assisting 112 households.

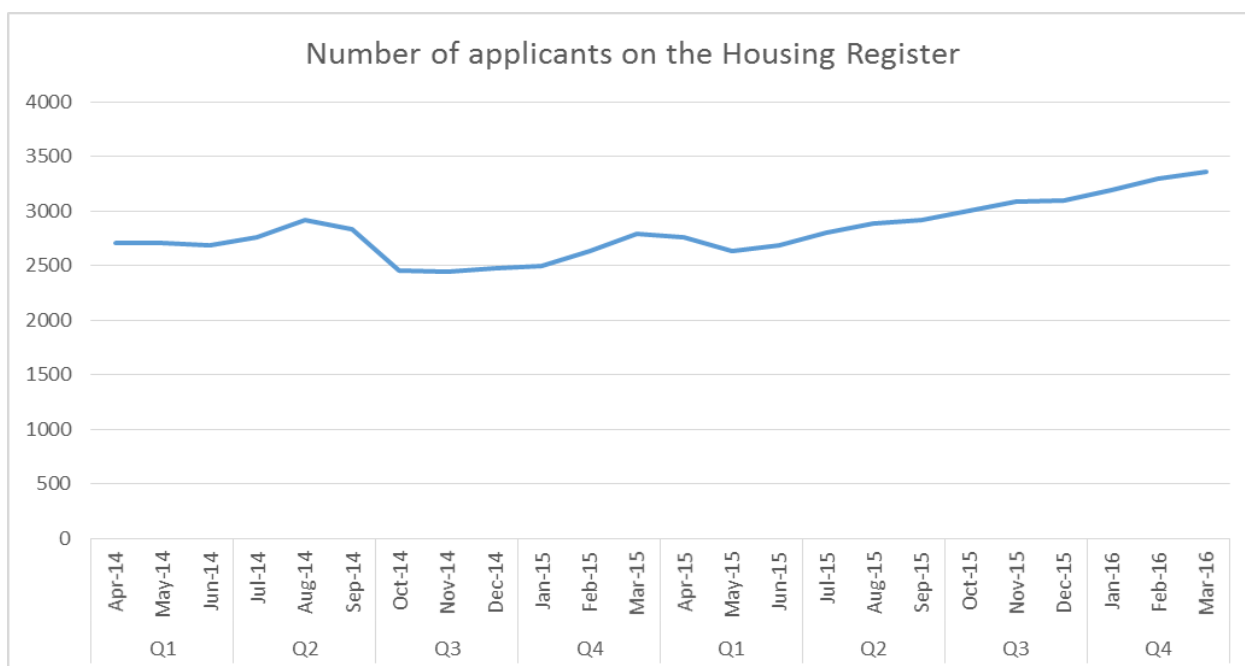
5.2.4 The Peterborough Homes Scheme and Choice Based Lettings

The council continues to work in partnership with the 10 registered providers of social housing who have significant numbers of social housing in the city, to allocate their properties through the Peterborough Homes Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

5.2.5 In 2015/2016 the team allocated 1,059 properties through the Peterborough Homes Choice Based Lettings Scheme. This is a reduction from 1,280 properties in 2014/15. Of particular concern are the number of 2 bedroom properties becoming available to rent through social landlords. In 2015/16 the team allocated 305 2 bedroom properties. This is a 26.32% (414) reduction on the numbers available last year and remains the most needed type of property amongst those who are accepted as homeless and who the Council has a full housing duty towards.

5.2.6 In January 2013, the Council implemented significant changes to the allocations policy, restricting entry to the register to those who are in the most urgent housing need. These changes were detailed in a previous Scrutiny report and continue to be relevant. The table below shows the numbers on the housing register month by month from April 2014.

5.2.7



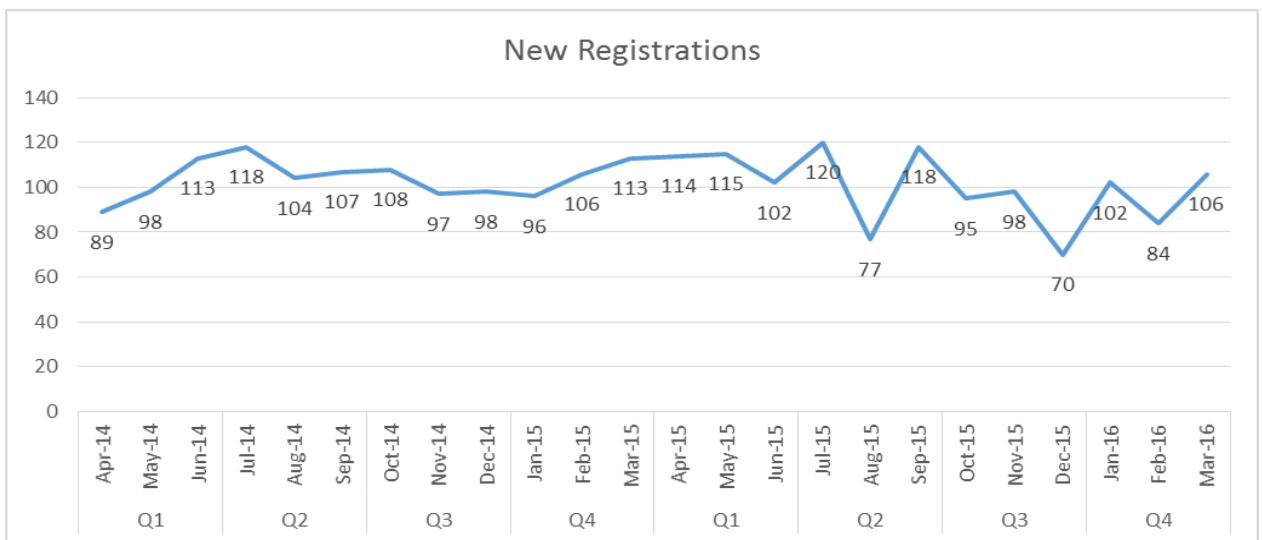
5.2.8

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|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Apr-14 | May-14 | Jun-14 | Jul-14 | Aug-14 | Sep-14 | Oct-14 | Nov-14 | Dec-14 | Jan-15 | Feb-15 | Mar-15 |
| 2706 | 2707 | 2688 | 2762 | 2918 | 2832 | 2454 | 2450 | 2472 | 2495 | 2632 | 2790 |
| Apr-15 | May-15 | Jun-15 | Jul-15 | Aug-15 | Sep-15 | Oct-15 | Nov-15 | Dec-15 | Jan-16 | Feb-16 | Mar-16 |
| 2760 | 2634 | 2683 | 2807 | 2884 | 2915 | 3007 | 3086 | 3099 | 3191 | 3294 | 3359 |

5.2.9 While the numbers on the Housing Register appear to be increasing the team are currently part way through a review of the register. Letters have been sent to all those applicants with a live Housing Register application and who have not been participating in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme by bidding in the last 12 months. Letters were sent to over 1,200 applicants and those who do not respond by starting to express interest in properties (bidding on properties) or confirming that they are still in housing need will have their applications cancelled. It is expected that the number of applicants on the housing register will be reduced to around 2,700 following the review.

5.2.10 The team continues to receive a high number of applications to join the register, but many are unsuccessful as the household are adequately housed in their current accommodation, or they are not considered a qualifying person due to previous behaviour such as not paying rent. The table below shows the number of new applications accepted onto the register month by month from April 2014.

5.2.11



5.3 **Rough Sleeping in Peterborough**

- 5.3.1 Peterborough City Council has a rough sleeper outreach officer to assist individuals who find themselves sleeping rough after losing their accommodation. There continues to be a core of entrenched rough sleepers in the city who are resistant to engaging with the outreach approach.
- 5.3.2 More recently the service has seen increases in non-UK nationals rough sleeping, and continue to work with the Home Office to ensure that those who are not exercising their treaty rights are reconnected to their home country.
- 5.3.3 The service have been successful in partnership working and have been working with Axiom Housing Association and colleagues in Adult Social Care to adopt a Housing First model project. This project takes a long term rough sleeper who has previously experienced a failure in accommodation, into a supported accommodation setting and wraps services around the person, ensuring their immediate needs are met to make positive changes in their lives and supporting them to access essential health and welfare services.
- 5.3.4 The number of known rough sleepers at the time of our most recent rough sleeper count was 15. However this submission was made in November 2015 and there has been an increase since. The outreach officer is currently aware of 26 individuals rough sleeping in Peterborough. Statistics collated nationally have identified an increase of 30% in rough sleeping across the country.
- 5.3.5 The table below shows the number of reported rough sleepers in Peterborough following the rough sleeper count/estimate submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

| Year | Number of rough sleepers |
|------|--------------------------|
| 2015 | 15 |
| 2014 | 17 |
| 2013 | 11 |
| 2012 | 12 |
| 2011 | 17 |
| 2010 | 21 |

5.4 **Single Person Homelessness**

- 5.4.1 The team remain committed to supporting single homeless persons to prevent them from having to sleep rough. The Crisis private rented sector scheme, which is being managed by Axiom Housing Association in partnership with Peterborough City Council, continues to support single

persons to secure suitable accommodation in the private sector and offers support in the first months of their tenancy to support tenancy sustainment. In 2015/16 88 individuals were supported through this project into settled accommodation either with a supported housing provider or into the private sector.

5.4.2 The team utilise a crash bed based at Axiom's New Haven hostel to prevent single homeless individuals from having to spend any time on the streets, which serves as an ideal entry point for individuals to access the Crisis PRS scheme.

5.4.3 Most recently there is an apparent increase in street based activity, such as begging and rough sleeping, which the Outreach Worker continues to address as and when it arises. Unfortunately some of the more recent arrivals to the streets of Peterborough have migrated from other cities and do not have connections with Peterborough, so are unable to access services here. While the Outreach Worker supports rough sleepers by offering reconnections to the area from which they travelled, many refuse this assistance as they are able to maintain their lifestyle from donations from members of the public. The Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker works closely with the Prevention and Enforcement Service to provide information on those individuals who refuse to engage with rough sleeper outreach support services.

5.4.4 This year's cold weather provision for rough sleepers will run from November 2016 until February 2017 and will offer support and accommodation overnight to those who are rough sleeping in order to minimise the possibility of loss of life due to adverse cold weather. The trigger for the cold weather provision to be activated is when the overnight temperature is forecast to be 0°C or below for three consecutive nights.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Not applicable

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 Delivery against the Homelessness Strategy will continue, modified and reprioritised based on current intelligence and feedback provided by the Scrutiny Committee.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 - Homeless Review and Strategy Combined

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