

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
10 JULY 2018	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Service Director for Communities and Safety	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development	
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**HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ROUGH SLEEPING ACTION PLANS
PROGRESS REPORT**

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Head of Housing Needs	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scrutinise the progress updates in relation to the Homelessness Reduction Strategy Action Plan, the Rough Sleeper Task and Finish Group recommendations and the Housing Needs Service update. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted at the request of the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with an update of progress on the Homelessness Reductions Strategy Action Plan and the recommendations of the rough sleeping Task & Finish group, which were agreed by Cabinet on the 20th March 2017. The report also provides an update on the Housing Needs service.

2.2 This report is for the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No.2.1, Functions determined by Council,

3. Housing need (including homelessness, housing options and selective licensing).

2.3 This report links to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping our communities safe, cohesive and healthy
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	n/a
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 The Homelessness Reduction Strategy Action Plan

4.1.1 The Homelessness Reduction Strategy was previously considered by the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee in March 2018, and presented and agreed by Full Council on the 21 May 2018. The strategy was the product of a cross-party task and finish group which considered a range of evidence during its development.

4.1.2 Homelessness can be complex and not every case is the same. The situation is affected by national and local circumstances that are always changing, but this does not prevent the council from aiming to achieve the best for its citizens. The Housing Needs team strives to prevent homelessness where possible, takes steps to identify the causes and ensure households are supported in minimising the risk of homelessness and breaking the cycle.

4.1.3 The Homelessness Reduction Strategy sets out the ten key objectives what we are trying to achieve:

- Objective 1: Eliminating the use of Travelodge-type accommodation and reducing / eliminating the use of B&B-type accommodation for temporary accommodation
- Objective 2: Ensuring the effective implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and embracing the culture change this will bring
- Objective 3: Creating a suite of prevention tools which will give the Housing Needs team improved chances of success in preventing homelessness
- Objective 4: Supporting landlords and tenants to support them to overcome landlord/tenant issues which may lead to eviction action
- Objective 5: Bringing together services to work holistically in ensuring financial inclusion, income maximisation and debt advice are accessible and prioritised in order to support preventative work
- Objective 6: Increasing the supply of self-contained temporary accommodation options in order to support the reduction of B&B use
- Objective 7: Exploring the potential of a Social Lettings Agency/Guaranteed Rent Scheme for private landlords
- Objective 8: Ensuring that information and advice on housing and homelessness prevention is widely available and that our customers are seen at the earliest possible opportunity
- Objective 9: Maintaining services and creating an effective supported accommodation pathway for single homeless people and rough sleepers
- Objective 10: Increasing the focus on performance supported by clearer data

4.1.4 The Homelessness Reduction Strategy Action plan attached (appendix 1) provides the committee with an update on the progress made against the individual actions and objectives contained in the plan.

4.2 The Rough Sleeping Task & Finish Group Recommendations

4.2.1 Rough sleeping is a key aspect of homelessness which the council continues to be proactive in addressing, and forms an important part of the overarching Homelessness Reduction Strategy, building on work which has been underway for two years. At its meeting on 20 July 2016 the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee (now the Adults and Communities

Scrutiny Committee) recommended that a cross-party task and finish group be established to review the work being undertaken in Peterborough to support the apparent rise in rough sleeping in the city.

4.2.2 The Committee received a report of the group's findings and recommendations at its meeting on 7 March 2017 which was then submitted to Cabinet on 20 March 2017.

4.2.3 At the meeting on 20th March 2017 Cabinet considered the report and recommendations of the Task and Finish group and agreed the amended recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 1

That a strategic group be set up which meets regularly in order to identify duplication and gaps in current provision for rough sleepers and which includes representation from partner agencies including from the faith and voluntary sector. This group will develop a Rough Sleeper Strategy to be developed and approved by Council to support the work of officers and the wider partnership arrangements, and will monitor and respond to fluctuations in the delivery of the council's homelessness policy.

Recommendation 2

The creation of a multi-agency task and targeting group to work on a long-term plan to ensure that individual rough sleepers are supported to move away from a street-based lifestyle.

Recommendation 3

That the staff resource dedicated to supporting rough sleepers is increased beyond the current single officer to provide greater resilience and capacity, including provision for weekend outreach work in addition to the existing Monday to Friday service, subject to the availability of funding.

Recommendation 4

With a growing rough sleeping population, it is important for the availability of suitable all year round night shelter accommodation to be maintained, or perhaps increased, to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to get some shelter especially during severe weather conditions.

Recommendation 5

That night shelter accommodation is identified for rough sleepers with dogs where the rough sleeper would not be willing to allow the Council to place the dog into kennels as is current practice, subject to the availability of funding. Additionally, work with organisations in the voluntary sector to develop pet-sitting or other similar projects to enable a rough sleeper with a dog to access services.

Recommendation 6

That consideration be given to establishing formal daytime drop-in advice and advocacy services for rough sleepers, in partnership with the voluntary and faith sectors, focussed on offering advice and guidance as well as case management for service users, with the caveat that this is not a daytime shelter.

Recommendation 7

That consideration be given to a flexible approach to activating severe weather emergency provision (SWEP), taking into account the good practice guidelines provided by Homeless Link.

Recommendation 8

That an urgent solution is found to the deficit of on-street drugs and alcohol support, either through renegotiating the existing contract the council holds with the provider.

Recommendation 9

That a focussed and ongoing communications campaign is undertaken to encourage the public to report rough sleeping to the council so that the most appropriate support can be provided.

Recommendation 10

To design and print business card sized information cards for rough sleepers with contact details

for rough sleeper touch points and durable conveniently sized hand-outs, which can be personalised with key advice and action plans for rough sleepers to support them to leave the streets.

Recommendation 11

That, following a recent announcement from Government about potential support to roll out the Housing First model, further work is carried out to understand the detail behind this announcement with a view to extending local provision by at least two further beds.

Recommendation 12

That the current Chronically Excluded Adults (CEA) project which provides personalised support to rough sleepers and others with the most complex needs be mainstreamed into normal council business from 1 August 2017, the point at which existing grant funding ceases, subject to the availability of funding.

Recommendation 13

That the relationship between affordable housing and rough sleeping be further explored. If it is found that there is a direct correlation between volumes of rough sleeping and availability of affordable housing, that a full report is prepared for Cabinet that explains this connection to enable Cabinet to consider the consequences in the Local Plan.

- 4.2.4 Appendix 2 attached to the report is a copy of the updated Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan detailing current progress against these agreed recommendations.
- 4.2.5 The progress reports for both the Homelessness Strategy and the Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan illustrate the significant progress which has been made across the Council and in close partnership with other statutory, voluntary and faith based organisations.

4.3 Housing Needs Service

4.3.1 Demand

The last year 2 years have been particularly challenging for the Housing Needs Team. In the period April 2016 - March 2017 the Council saw increasing levels of households requiring assistance, with 1586 presenting as being homeless or threatened with homelessness. This represented an increase of 43% on the previous year. This level of demand has remained between April 2017 - March 2018 with 1509 households presenting as homeless.

4.3.2 New Legislation - Homelessness Reduction Act

In addition, new legislation came into force on 3 April 2018. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is a significant change to the way the team operates and changes the role of most of the team from investigative officers to lead professionals who need to be creative in reaching suitable solutions to prevent or relieve a household's homelessness.

The new Act places more emphasis on prevention activities by placing new legal duties on local authorities to provide meaningful support to everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness, regardless of whether they are in priority need or 'intentionally homeless', as long as they are eligible.

Previous legislation (Housing Act 1996 as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) defines that a person is considered to be threatened with homelessness if it is likely that they would have become homeless within 28 days. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 doubles the number of days from 28 to 56, including those who have been served with a valid Section 21 notice (the legal notice that must be served by a landlord notifying the tenant that possession of the private sector property is required). This has an implication on how the Local Authority needs to respond.

Anyone accepted by the council as being threatened with homelessness will be owed the new prevention duty and the council must take 'reasonable steps' to help them avoid becoming homeless. The Act stipulates that the support offered to eligible applicants is to be more robust than currently required. Once a local authority is satisfied that someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance, an assessment should be carried out which includes:

- The circumstances that have caused homelessness / potential homelessness
- The housing and other support needs of the applicant and their household
- A personalised plan, setting out steps for the applicant and the council to take to ensure accommodation is secured and/or retained. An applicant's assessment and plan must be kept under review and updated as necessary, until the local authority has determined that no further duty is owed.

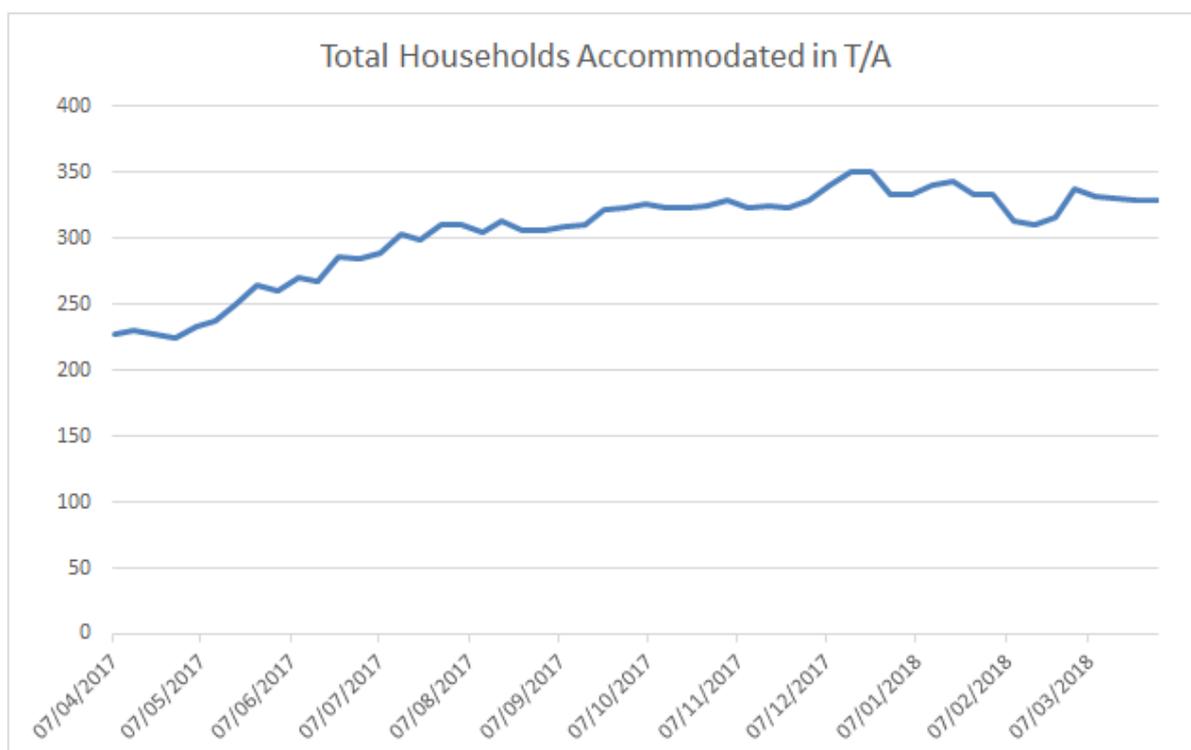
This in itself places an additional requirement upon the team in addition to the increases in demand the team have seen over the last 2 years.

4.3.3 Numbers in Temporary Accommodation

The graph below shows the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation at the end of every week last year. In the first quarter of 2018/19 these numbers have continued on a similar trajectory.

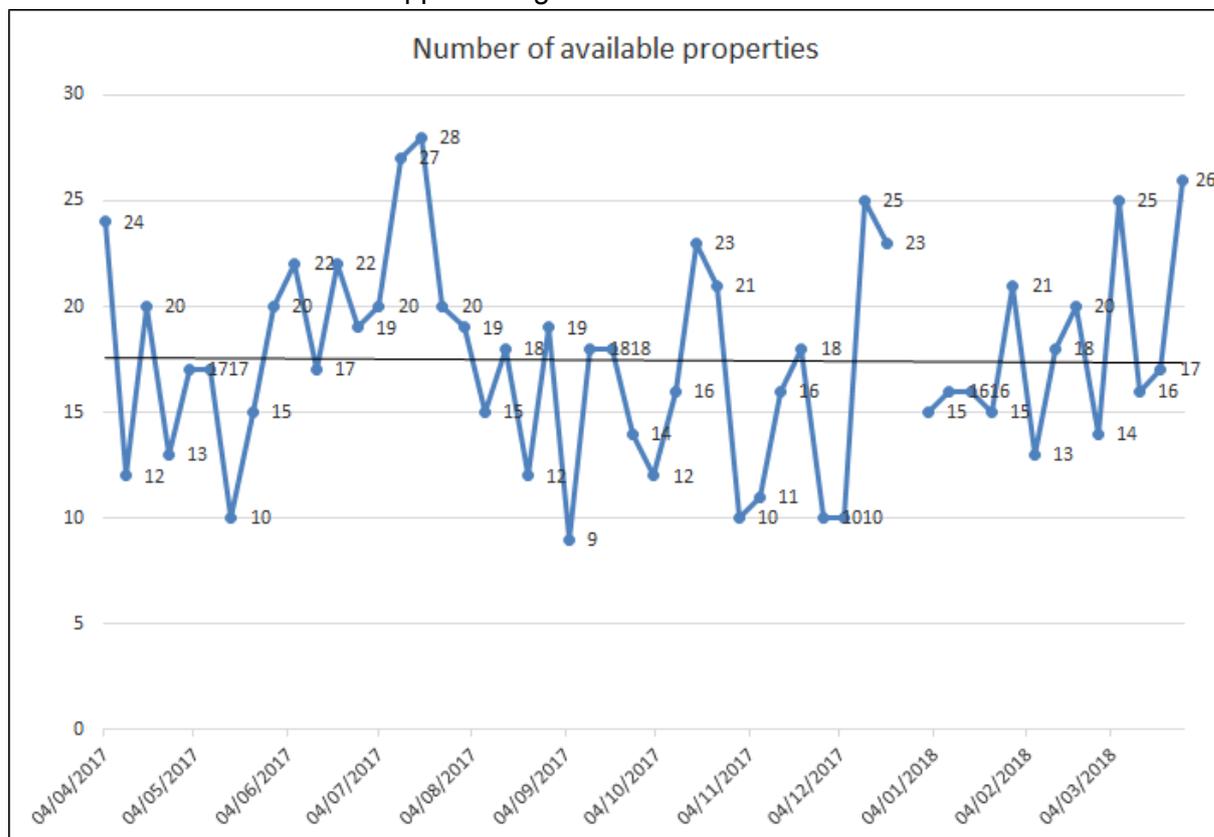
The accommodation which is being brought forward as part of the investment into Medesham Homes is scheduled to start becoming available in July this year and will result in the number of households being accommodated in B&B type accommodation being reduced, which will be a significant improvement in the experience for homeless households who are faced with having to go into temporary accommodation.

In addition the recent launch of the private sector leasing scheme has generated a lot of interest amongst private landlords as we're confident that this will be able to secure more property for use by the Housing Needs team in August 2018.



4.3.4 Available Social/Affordable Rented Properties

The graph below shows the number of social affordable housing properties that have been made available for the housing needs team over the last 12 months (892 in total, averaging 17 per week). These continued low numbers of available properties while the demand increases means that we have to ensure we are making best use of the private sector housing market in meeting the needs of the households approaching us.



4.3.5 Changes in Team Structure

There is recognition of the increases in demand and the increases in workload, not least as a result of the new legislation being implemented. As such, additional investment has been made into the Housing Needs team and the service has been restructured so it will be best positioned to deal with the new burdens.

The restructure commenced in May this year and is near completion. It is envisaged that all new roles will be recruited to and new ways of working adopted by the 1 September 2018.

4.3.6 Successful funding bid

The Council's Housing Needs Team has been successful in a bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to secure funding to increase its provision to support rough sleepers to leave the street.

The funding, which totals £284,765 for 2018/19, will support the following initiatives:

1. Expansion of the current rough sleeper outreach team from 2 officers to 4
2. All year round emergency crash bed facility to accommodate up to 10 rough sleepers
3. An expansion of the current Severe Weather Emergency Provision offered by Axiom Housing
4. Extension of the current winter night shelter provision offered by the Light Project Peterborough from the current 13 weeks up to 20 weeks
5. Increase in specialist outreach to support those with drug and alcohol misuse issues

6. Funding of specialist GP support services for rough sleepers
7. Funding of a landlord incentive scheme to increase access to single person accommodation in the private sector
8. Funding of 2 specialist workers to support single people to maintain their accommodation once housed
9. And funding of a co-ordinator role who will lead on the delivery of the above initiatives

These initiatives will make a significant difference to the positive work already underway with partners across the City, and will support the delivery of our Homelessness Reduction Strategy.

The funding opportunity came about as part of the Government's targeted £30m fund announced on 30 March 2018.

The funding is for activities in 2018/19, and further discussions between the MHCLG and the council will take place over the coming months regarding continued funding for 2019/20.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 N/A

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

6.1 The views of Scrutiny Committee members will help inform the continued delivery of the action plans and homelessness prevention services.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 To ensure that progress to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping remains on track.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 N/A

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 It is not expected that there will be any additional financial implications, which have not already been accounted and budgeted for.

Legal Implications

9.2 N/A

Equalities Implications

9.3 N/A

Rural Implications

9.4 N/A

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 10.1 Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Homelessness Reduction Strategy Action Plan June 2018
- Appendix 2 - Rough Sleeping Delivery Plan June 2018