

<b>GROWTH, RESOURCES AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
<b>13 NOVEMBER 2024</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Rob Hill, Service Director of Housing and Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Alison Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities	
Contact Officer(s):	Matt Oliver, Head of Stronger Communities	07484900432

## HOMELESSNESS SERVICES UPDATE REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM:</b> <i>Rob Hill – Director of Housing and Communities</i>	<b>Deadline date:</b> <i>13<sup>th</sup> November 2024</i>
It is recommended that the Growth, Resources and Communities Committee comment and provide feedback on the detail of the report which sets out the delivery of the Housing Needs Service and endorses the proposed transformation approach and plan.	

### 1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 Report requested by Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee as part of the yearly agenda planning to ensure oversight of Peterborough’s statutory homelessness functions.

### 2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 To provide Growth, Resources and Scrutiny Committee with information regarding activity which supports the delivery of Peterborough City Councils' statutory homelessness functions.
- 2.2 This report is for the Growth, Resources and Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by the Council:

1. Housing need

### 3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	<b>N/A</b>
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### 4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Peterborough City Council’s Housing Needs service fulfils the Council’s legal obligation to make an appropriate offer to those households presenting to us as homeless, it provides advice and support to all those eligible to meet the council’s duties regarding prevention and relief of homelessness.
- 4.1.1 The service is regulated by the [Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2018](#), overseen by the MHCLG Homelessness Assistance and Support Team and works to key policies such as [PCC Housing Register Allocations Policy](#) and our [Homelessness and Rough](#)

## [Sleeping Strategy 2021 – 2026.](#)

4.1.2 This report sets out information for members of scrutiny committee in relation to the individual functions of the Housing Needs service, to give an overview of the current presenting issues and set recommendations for transformation moving forward.

### 4.2 PETERBOROUGHS CURRENT HOMELESSNESS LANDSCAPE

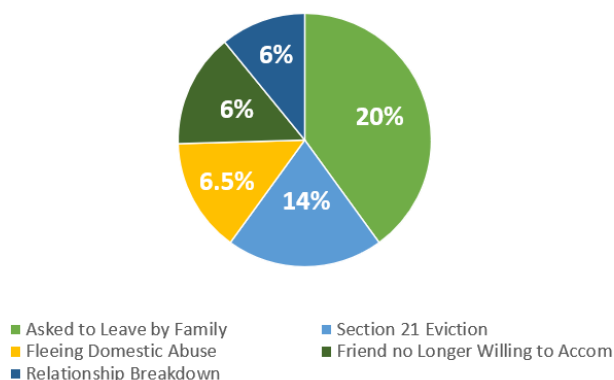
4.2.1 The number of households contacting us for homelessness assistance has remained very high at 2031 presentations for the first 2 quarters of 2024/25 compared with 3654 in the whole of 2023/24 and 3298 households in 2022/23.

4.2.2 Under significant demand, the service has worked hard to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness and with an average of 50% of homelessness cases prevented is now comparable to our nearest statistical neighbour at 51% and higher than the national average of 48%; this is a 13 percentage point increase from the baseline figure last year and should be recognised as a significant improvement.

4.2.3 The council has set an aspirational stretch target that 60% of homelessness cases will be prevented by 31 March 2025 as we recognise the impact that homelessness has on households as well as the financial pressure this places on the council through the high cost of temporary accommodation, particularly nightly spot purchased accommodation.

4.2.4

#### Top 5 Homeless Reasons – 24/25



Analysis of our data shows that the top 5 reasons for homelessness are:

- Asked to Leave by Family 20%
- Section 21 Eviction 14%
- Fleeing Domestic Abuse 6.5%
- Friends Not Willing to Accommodate 6%
- Relationship Breakdown 6%

### 4.3 The Housing Register and Allocations

Demand on the housing register remains exceptionally high, with an average of 75 new applications received each week. Conversely, the supply of available properties has remained low averaging 10 listings per week. There are currently 2,834 households actively registered, along with nearly 1,000 applications pending assessment, each requiring review against the Council's Allocation Policy. An analysis of need from 2023/24 showed a 74% gap between the housing available and requirement on the housing register.

4.3.1 Lettings rates through our Registered Provider partners have remained generally static over the last 18 months and significant work continues to build good relationships with Registered Providers to ensure that the council secures the best terms through nominations agreements as we can to combat homelessness demand.

4.3.2 This has been evident in the work that we have done with new builds in Great Haddon where we have ensured that our standard ask of 100% nominations on first lets and 90% on subsequent lets has been maintained as well as work with providers on Local Lettings Plans to ensure that developments are sustainable from the outset.

4.3.3 It is clear that access to permanent housing is critical to address future homelessness demand and the service works closely with our housing strategy colleagues to plan for the future building of 1250 new affordable homes over the next 3 years and to ensure that our stocks of temporary accommodation take this into consideration. In June 2024, the service set up a Registered Provider forum of which there have been two workshops over the summer period to create a plan to work more closely together to support the most complex homeless households, setting out the areas of shared information, joined up tenancy support, better professional relationships, and multi-agency meetings. It is intended that the voice of Registered Providers and the ideas generated feed into the council's homelessness transformation programme and hopefully will bring better outcomes for our residents.

#### 4.4 **Access to the Private Rental Sector**

As access to social housing is so pressured, one of the ways that the council can support homeless households is through greater access to the private rental sector. The service has increased its resource in this area over the last 6 months and continues to improve its relationships in this area to take a more partnership focussed approach.

#### 4.5 **Housing Related Support and Supported Accommodation**

Supported accommodation continues to form one of the key pathways out of homelessness for those that need more support managing a tenancy. As part of the council's ongoing transformation plans, the service has taken the opportunity to implement evaluation recommendations and move to a contracted model, providing more control and oversight. Between April and November, a procurement exercise was undertaken which successfully awarded contracts to Longhurst and YMCA to provide 140 units of supported accommodation to be managed through the Peterborough City Council Supported Housing Panel. This change has delivered £900k of savings.

#### 4.6 **Temporary Accommodation**

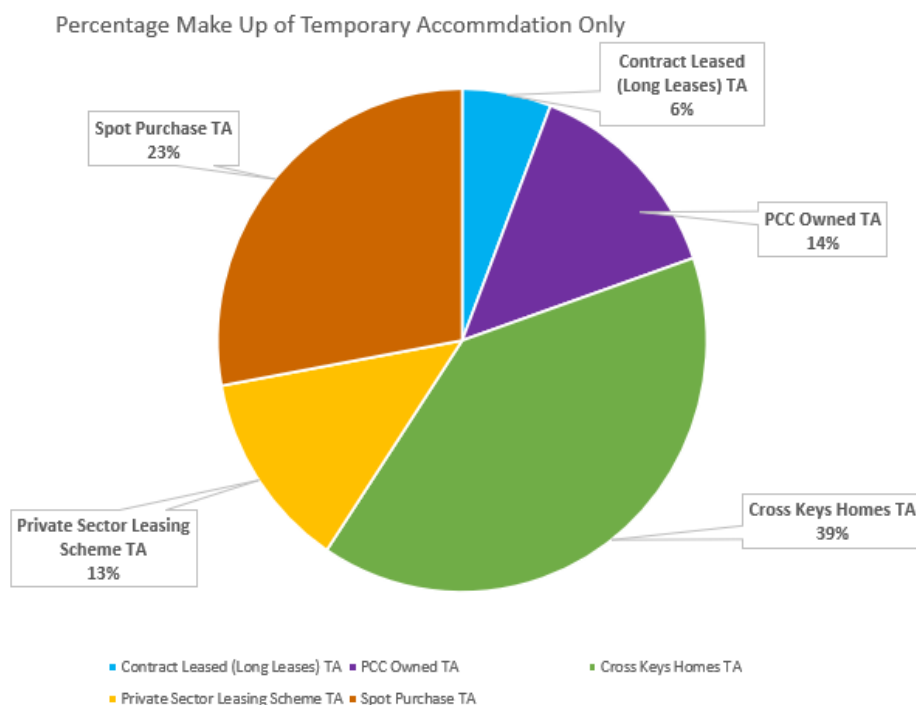
4.6.1 As demand to the service increases and supply remains restricted the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased. At time of writing this report the number of households in our temporary accommodation stands at 378, this being a 16% increase within the year from 325. Of those in temporary accommodation 23% (88) are housed in the most costly and inappropriate form, that being Bed and Breakfast accommodation, and although the service has performed well to mitigate the increase in B+B over the last 12 months its use is still too high.

4.6.2 In-year plans to reduce bed and breakfast use have seen continued procurement of alternative temporary accommodation, including the acquisition of 8 family homes as well as 33 additional units of accommodation through an extended Private Sector Leasing scheme.

4.6.3 As previously mentioned, the service has also been working with supported accommodation providers to develop additional supported temporary accommodation models that facilitate empowering single persons to develop the skills to manage a tenancy and avoid them being placed in bed and breakfast or spot purchased accommodation. At the time of writing this report there are 74 beds in the pipeline through this scheme.

4.6.4 Due to the current demands, it is likely that the council will need to continue to invest in an increased portfolio of alternative temporary accommodation to bed and breakfast over the next 2 years while our transformation plans focus on management of demand and increase in supply of affordable housing.

4.6.5 The graph below shows the percentage use of temporary accommodation across the portfolio over the last year.



## 4.7 Rough Sleeping

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has expressed strong appreciation for the effectiveness of our Rough Sleeper Outreach Team, highlighting their work as a best practice model for other local authorities.

- 4.7.1 Particularly of note is our off-the-streets accommodation programme where 41 rough sleepers have been placed and 14 moved in to supported accommodation over the last 6 months and the work-ready house brought online this year with currently 17 people have been placed and 6 moved on in to their own independent living, these have proven to be particularly successful in helping highly complex individuals transition away from street homelessness and to remain housed.
- 4.7.2 The Rough Sleeper programme is also seeing significant positive outcomes from preventative initiatives, including the deployment of officers at hospitals, within the prison, and based at supported accommodation providers. Through these initiatives 132 clients have been supported with various homelessness issues to prevent rough sleeping.
- 4.7.3 This year, we have effectively focused our efforts on addressing the large non-eligible cohort in Peterborough. We have established an excellent pathway to assist these individuals in obtaining status, identification, and employment, resulting in a decrease in the number of EEA rough sleepers.
- 4.7.4 This year the service has allocated additional grant funding to Lincoln House, our 22-unit off the streets accommodation facility for rough sleepers with low to medium needs. This investment has allowed us to establish an on-site office for our two staff members, who are now available at the centre from Monday to Friday. Additionally, we have installed secure gates for the car park and implemented CCTV surveillance. Collectively, these measures have resulted in a noticeable reduction in antisocial behaviour and improved outcomes for residents.
- 4.7.5 This year, the number of rough sleepers has remained relatively stable, culminating in an annual count of 24 for 2023. We take pride in maintaining the same count as 2022, a result not commonly achieved nationwide.
- 4.7.6 Although we continue to see an influx of new individuals sleeping rough, the Rough Sleeper team promptly identifies and assesses them, offering tailored support. Each rough sleeper is

provided with an individualised streets-to-home pathway, holistically addressing barriers to maintaining accommodation.

4.7.7 While the number of individuals who have slept rough for over six months remains stable, we are optimistic that initiatives like Single Homelessness Accommodation Program (SHAP) and off-the-streets accommodation will contribute to a downward trend moving forward.

#### 4.8 **Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme**

4.8.1 The Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) is a £200 million government initiative to develop housing solutions for single people facing homelessness.

4.8.2 In April 2024 Peterborough City Council were successful in securing £2 million match funding from the scheme to acquire 25 single bed properties to create safe, supported, and sustainable accommodation, reducing homelessness and promote long-term stability.

4.8.3 The Council have successfully acquired 15 units of accommodation for complex rough sleepers so far enabling us to also draw down subsequent funding for 3 support workers fully funded by government. The timeline for acquisition of all 25 units is the end of March 2025.

4.8.4 To date, 11 individuals with complex needs have been provided with self-contained accommodation through this initiative. These individuals faced significant challenges and repeated tenancy failures, which often left them either homeless or reliant on costly bed-and-breakfast accommodation with limited opportunities for positive transitions.

4.8.5 In July 2024, the Head of Provider Management at Homes England commended our performance during the 2023/24 period, particularly highlighting our forecasting accuracy and our proactive engagement with their team.

#### 4.9 **Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)**

4.9.1 In 2023, the council was awarded two rounds of capital funding from Government under the LAHF. The funding allowed the council to purchase 40 properties to be used for either Ukrainian or Afghan refugees legally resettled through Government programmes. Government has recognised that councils have faced additional pressure on housing demand through having refugees settle across the country and that existing housing stock would not be sufficient to meet demands.

4.9.2 PCC has completed the acquisition of 40 properties across the city which are now undergoing necessary repairs and maintenance to bring them up to council standards. To date, 16 houses have now been tenanted, with a further 3 properties available for wider housing use by the Housing Needs service for temporary accommodation.

4.9.3 Without the LAHF, it is highly likely that many of our refugee families would have presented to the Housing Needs service creating additional demand and pressure on the team. There has also been an added benefit that as families move from their existing accommodation to LAHF properties, it had released private sector housing back to the wider community or the Housing Needs service on some occasions.

#### 4.10 **Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.**

4.10.1 Over the last 12 months the council has worked continuously with enthusiastic key partners to share the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2021-2026. Partners have welcomed taking the lead on part initiatives and actions and working groups have thrived alongside the delivery through our strategy operations group.

#### 4.10.2 Status of Current Action Plan – 2021 to 2026

Status of Actions on Plan		
70% through lifespan of Action Plan		
Red	Amber	Green
27%	27%	46.1%

4.10.3 We are currently refreshing and reviewing the strategy action plan to ensure that we convert the RAG status above to green by March 2026 and will continue to grow this approach over the next year.

4.10.4 We value the work with partners as a key member of Safer off the Streets Peterborough and through commissioning of services through the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and the Housing Related Support programme for supported accommodation providers. We recognise their commitment to both preventing and relieving homelessness and will work together to further develop the action plan over the next 12 months.

#### 4.11 Future Demand Assumptions

As part of business planning for 2025 – 2028 the service has built in a set of demand assumptions which are listed below to support the committee understand the pressure which may materialise over the next 3 years:

- **Population Increase** - Peterborough's Population has increased by 17.5% to 215,700 and is expected to rise by around 23% by 2036.
- **High Rents** - Private sector average rent levels for homes of all sizes increased by 15% between March 2021 and March 2023 and these are anticipated to increase significantly in the coming years, an expected cumulative growth of 18.8% between 2024 and 2028.
- **High Demand for Housing** - According to "Housing Anywhere" UK house prices are expected to grow by 17.6% by 2028 and this is expected to be mirrored in Peterborough if not higher.
- **Supply of Affordable Homes** - While the proportion of rented tenure affordable housing stock in Peterborough is marginally above the national average (18.7% compared with 17% nationally), the supply of new affordable homes struggles to meet demand.
- **Economy** - Peterborough has a relatively low-wage economy compared to national averages exacerbating the high demand for affordable and social homes to rent.
- **Changing demography (Increase in Complexity of Cases)** - 22.1% of residents report having a disability or long-term illness, 36.1% of population are not economically active, the number of adults with learning disabilities forecast to rise by 10% over next 6 years, number of people with physical disabilities is forecast to rise by 14% over next six years.
- **Known Causes of Demand** - Local and national data show that family breakdowns and relationship issues are identified as leading causes of homelessness, followed closely by section 21 evictions, and fleeing domestic abuse issues which are exacerbated by the above points and are expected to impact demand in the future.
- **Renters Reform Bill** should have a dampening effect on section 21 notices, however, may also reduce the stock available in the private rental sector as landlords withdraw from the market.
- **Increased Numbers of Children Coming into Care** will have a knock-on effect on availability of social housing stock in the future. Local Policy is for social housing to be made available to Care Leavers on their eighteenth birthday, or seventeenth birthday through the House Project which will mean an increase draw from a limited social housing pool.
- **Recent Lower Inflation** – should stabilise the price of goods, services, rents, and mortgages and should provide a reset of cost-of-living pressures, however remembering that it may take some time for wages and spending power to return.

## 4.12 Integrated Housing Transformation Programme

4.12.1 The council recognises Housing and Homelessness as one of the key strategic priorities which it must address if it is to become sustainable for the future due to the issues presented in this report.

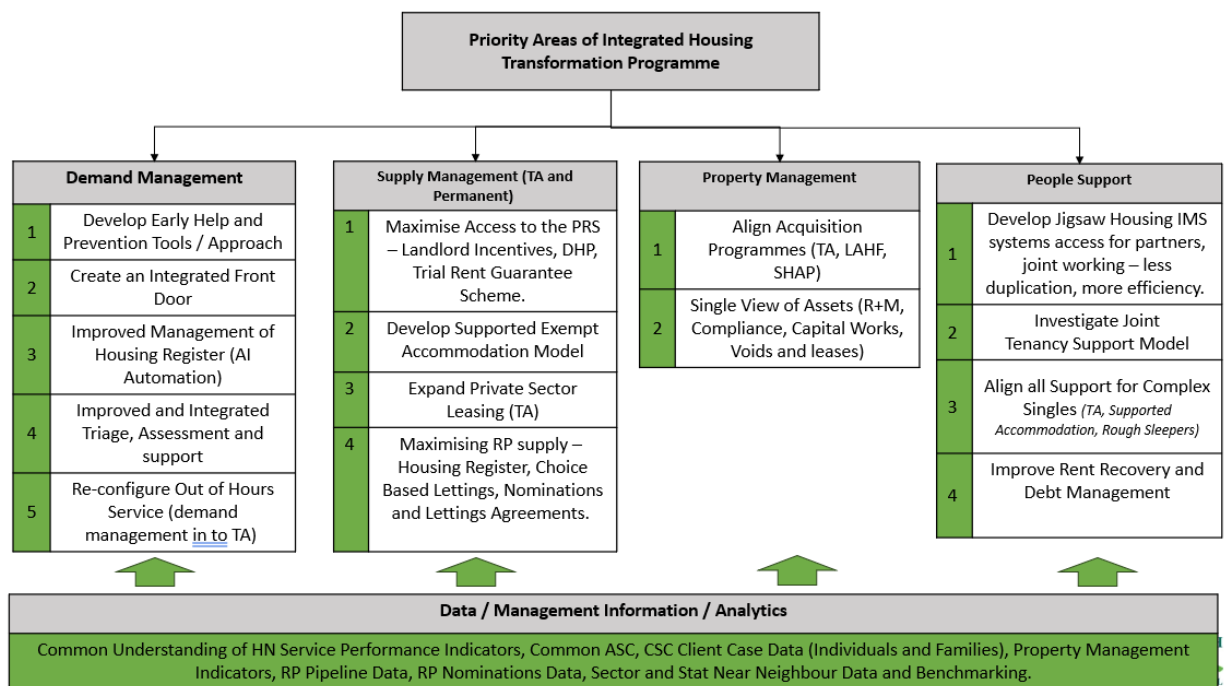
4.12.2 As part of the Prevention, Independence, and Resilience corporate priority an Integrated Housing Transformation Programme has been formed to meet the following aim:

- Join up services across the council to create an integrated housing and homelessness approach that results in better customer experience, better demand management, reduced temporary accommodation, increased housing supply, wrap around support, and better future planning.

4.12.3 To oversee the programme an Integrated Housing Board has been created with 3 subgroups:

- Supply
- Demand
- Data

Each subgroup has completed milestone plans to deliver the priority projects of the Board as set out below.



## 5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 The Delivery of the Council’s statutory homelessness functions and associated transformation plan support the following Corporate Priorities:

1. The Economy & Inclusive Growth
  - **Homes and Workplaces, Jobs, and Money**  
Supporting homeless households and individuals, or those at risk of homelessness with information, advice, and guidance as well as practical support at the earliest possible point to enable the least possible impact.
2. Our Places & Communities
  - **Places and Safety (including any rural implications), Lives and Work, Health and Wellbeing**

Preventing and relieving homelessness significantly contributes to the feelings of safety, ensures the retention or gaining of employment, and minimises adverse effects on health and wellbeing

### 3. Prevention, Independence & Resilience

- **Education and Skills for All, Adults, Children**

Transforming our approach to homelessness, particularly reducing the number of families in temporary accommodation, will significantly contribute to the ability of children to be able to participate in education and develop skills. Focusing on access to permanent accommodation builds independence and resilience for households in need and prevents deterioration in other areas of people's lives which may then drive demand to the council.

## 6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Report is an update to scrutiny committee on service delivery and therefore no consultation has taken place in the preparation of this report. However, extensive engagement and consultation with partners and council departments takes place daily as illustrated above.

## 7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 Feedback from scrutiny committee regarding delivery and elements of the transformation plan to be included in milestone action plan.

## 8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 To ensure scrutiny of Peterborough City Council's homelessness function.

## 9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 No Other Alternative Options Considered.

## 10. IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

10.1 No direct financial implications of this report.

### Legal Implications

10.2 The Housing Needs service is regulated by the Housing Act 1996, and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

### Equalities Implications

10.3 The report contains no proposals for changes to service delivery and therefore there is no decision to take which may impact equalities of the council or the city at this point.

Any agreed transformation approach shall ensure an Equality Impact Assessment is completed.

## 11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 There are no other background documents.

## 12. APPENDICES

12.1 N/A