

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **16 November 2017**

Report of: **Managing Director of Fareham Housing**

Subject: **UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS**

SUMMARY

This report sets out the progress made in delivering the Council's Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy 2014-17. The report outlines the actions contained within the strategy and an update on the progress to date in meeting those actions.

The report also provides an update on a presentation to the panel in March 2017 and officer's subsequent review of services.

Finally, the report touches on the new Homelessness Reduction Act, including the implications of the new provisions and how we are preparing for the new Act.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel notes:

- (a) the progress made to date in meeting the 19 actions included in the current Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy;
- (b) the progress made in reviewing particular areas of the Council's homelessness and advice services; and
- (c) the new homelessness legislation set to be implemented in April 2018.

HOMELESS AND HOUSING OPTIONS STRATEGY

1. The current Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy covers the period 2014 – 2017 and sets out a 3-year plan with actions and priorities to help prevent and resolve homelessness in the Borough. The strategy is required to be reviewed annually to check progress against the actions and to consider any new issues that may have arisen. This is the third review of the current strategy.
2. The strategy includes a total of 19 specific actions within four objectives; each action is listed in Appendix A with an update on progress made to date. The majority of actions have progressed as expected however some no longer reflect the current issues or forthcoming challenges. In addition, the Vanguard Intervention to the Housing Options service meant that some actions did not develop in the way originally expected and some actions took a different path as a result of a change in factors outside of our control.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

3. Objective 1 is to *'provide advice, assistance and support to enable homeless and vulnerable households to address their housing needs and to lead independent lives'*. The way we now engage with customer's means that we see more people at an early stage and have more opportunity to properly understand the customer's housing problem and help them find solutions. In 2014/15 we saw 873 new customers during our drop-in service, this increased slightly in 2015/16 to 919 but increased more significantly in 2016/17 to 1228. However in those same years the number of cases where we prevented or resolved homeless went from 66 (2014/15), 49 (2015/16) and then 120 in 2016/17.
4. Objective 2 is to *'adopt sustainable initiatives that deliver housing solutions accessible to those in housing need and minimise reliance on the use of temporary accommodation'*. By improving our knowledge of our customers we are better able, where resources allow, to tailor solutions to their needs. We now encourage customers to find their own private rented accommodation so they are making their own choices about the home they want to live in.
5. Objective 3 is to *'wherever possible to prevent homelessness from occurring in Fareham by working in partnership with other statutory and independent sector agencies'*. During the period of this strategy, the most successful area of partnership working has been with Two Saints and the role of the Outreach Worker. This post originated from a regional rough sleeper funding source but proved successful in supporting those sleeping rough in the area that the role was included with the formal Social Inclusion contract when that was renewed in April 2016.
6. Objective 4 is to *'monitor the demand on the service and outcomes, to inform future provision and direction'*. For a number of reasons the way the Housing Options service is delivered has changed so much since the start of the current strategy. We know that demand has increased and we expect this trend to continue. We know we are helping more people to access the private rented sector but we don't know how easy it will be to develop this option for the future. We know that new challenges lie ahead with the introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Act and we will need to consider how the service needs to develop to meet this challenge.

7. Officers will be seeking to develop the next strategy once the full implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act are understood.
8. Each objective includes an action to achieve the Gold Standard local challenge relevant to each objective. The Gold Standard is a peer led continuous improvement programme, to help local authorities to improve their housing options and homelessness services which was developed by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS). The programme included 10 local challenges including working in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local agencies to support the wider needs of customers, offering a prevention service to all customers including providing written advice and developing suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups.
9. In developing the original strategy Fareham Borough Council took the decision that it did not want to formally engage in the Gold Standard programme but wished to be mindful of the 10 local challenges, hence their inclusion in the strategy.
10. As can be seen in Appendix A, the Housing Options Service has delivered positive outcomes across all areas of the strategy which is a significant achievement as the pressures on the team have increased dramatically over the last 3 years.

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING ADVICE SERVICES IN FAREHAM

11. In March 2017, the panel received a presentation looking at the current housing options service focussing particularly on the issues and services to those sleeping rough - what works well and what we could improve. Officers were asked to review in conjunction with other partners how we could improve services, including assessing:
 - (a) Multi-agency working
 - (b) Sublet scheme
 - (c) Housing First
 - (d) Shared housing
 - (e) Supported Lodgings models
12. In discussion with the Police and Fareham Borough Council's Community Safety team, it has been decided that multi-agency working to deal with issues around rough sleepers will initially take place within the current Partnership Action Group meetings (PAG). This is an existing monthly meeting that key partners already attend so avoids the need to ask agencies to attend another separate meeting. This will be reviewed in case it proves not to be the most effective route.
13. In conjunction with Two Saints we are progressing well in developing a local sublet model. We have drawn up the basic principles of the scheme (see Appendix 2), we have assessed the affordability of the model and are now beginning to look at specific customers who would benefit from being offered a sublet opportunity. We will keep the scheme under review and the outcomes from this scheme will help determine if we develop it further into the Housing First model.
14. Our current conversations with single people include discussing the option of shared housing within the private rented sector and a small number of customers have been assisted to secure lodgings in an existing shared arrangement. At present, we are not developing the suggestion of shared housing within the social housing sector – this may be considered further when the Allocation Policy is reviewed. We are also not

currently developing any sort of extension to the supported lodgings model.

15. Hampshire County Council have just begun to consult with all the district councils about the future budget proposals for social inclusion services as further savings will need to be made to the budget from 2019. The Head of Housing and Benefits will be attending meetings to discuss the future of the social inclusion services in Fareham.

HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT

16. The Homelessness Reduction Act (the Act) received Royal Assent in April 2017 and the Government has indicated its intention to commence the Act in April 2018. The Act introduces new and amended duties for local authorities to provide housing advice and information to anybody in its district, including information on customers housing rights, what help is available and how to access it.
17. The Act extends the definition of when someone becomes threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days. The Act expands the duty to provide advisory services, to assess each customer's circumstances and to provide a written copy of the assessment. The local authority will also have to produce a personalised plan for each customer, which will have to be kept under constant review.
18. New prevention and relief duties are being introduced in the Act that largely ignores whether someone is in priority need or has a local connection to the borough.
19. The Act creates many new decision-making steps and each decision comes with a right for the customer to seek reviews of any adverse decision. There is also a new duty for other public authorities to refer cases to a local housing authority.
20. The new provisions follow on from and to some degree replicate Welsh housing legislation that came into force in 2014. As a result of all the new duties it is not difficult to imagine that one implication to authorities is that workloads for officers will increase and early reports from Welsh authorities indicate that caseloads have increased by 30% – 50%.
21. The Government is also changing the statistical collection requirements in line with the new Act and so we are taking the opportunity to review the current IT system.
22. New Burdens Funding is being provided to each Local Authority to assist with the costs of additional staff, training and IT systems related to the implementation of the Act. Fareham will receive a total of £72,052 over the three years 2017-2020. The Government has indicated it will review the level of funding after year 2 to ensure the methodology for the distribution of funding is correct.
23. The number of new enquiries to the housing options team has steadily increased since 2013 so with the further increase in workload expected as a result of the Act, we have recruited an additional Housing Options Officer into the team.
24. Since the Vanguard Intervention we have been undertaking a Housing Needs Assessment with each customer and believe as a result that we are better placed than many authorities to meet the new requirements in the Act around assessments and personalised housing plans. However the team are receiving training on the new Act, including attending generic homelessness conferences, participating in web based training and an external consultant will deliver a day's training on the Act at the end of November.

RISK ASSESSMENT

25. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

CONCLUSION

26. The majority of actions contained within the current strategy have been met, although some actions have changed course as a result of the Vanguard Intervention into the Housing Options service. In addition, some actions haven't progressed as expected as they have been influenced by a change in other party's position, such as Hampshire County Council. The new Homelessness Reduction Act will bring significant changes to the way services are delivered and this will need to be reflected in the next Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy.

Background Papers:

Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy 2014 – 17
Presentation to Panel in March 2017

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Cathy Dawes (Ext 4498)

Objective 1: To provide advice, assistance and support to enable homeless and vulnerable households to address their housing needs and to lead independent lives

ACTION	INTENDED OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
<p>1a – Senior Housing Options Officer to ensure best use is made of all available funds including DHP, in the prevention of homelessness and the securing of alternative accommodation.</p>	<p>To limit the number of households becoming homeless.</p>	<p>Since the start of this strategy and up to the end of March 2016, 74 households have been assisted by the Housing Options team to secure private rented accommodation.</p> <p>In this time, a further 47 households have been assisted by the Benefits team to secure private rented accommodation, using Discretionary Housing Payments.</p>
<p>1b – review the training needs of all Housing Options Officers on a regular basis to maintain knowledge and skills and to keep up to date with changes in case law and best practice.</p>	<p>Ensure customers receive a comprehensive advice service, through which they are made aware of other agencies able to give support and advice.</p>	<p>Officers have attended training on specific issues in the past year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asperger’s Awareness • Dementia Awareness • TB Awareness • Lime Legal – annual Homelessness Conference • Managing Conflict and Aggression • NHAS Homelessness Symposia • NHAS Webinars on the new Homelessness Reduction Act <p>Consultant led training on the new Homelessness Reduction Act coming soon</p> <p>Officers also receive monthly updates from the National Housing Advice Service which includes information about latest case law.</p>
<p>1c – review the Housing Options website,</p>	<p>Information is user friendly, current and</p>	<p>The website will be updated as we prepare for</p>

factsheets and housing options plans.	accessible.	<p>the new Homelessness Reduction Act.</p> <p>Minor amendments have been made to some of the factsheets</p> <p>Will need to revise current housing options plans to meet the requirements of the new Act which requires customers to be given Personalised Options Plans</p>
1d – strive to achieve Gold Standard local challenges relevant to this objective	Provide an enhanced housing options service.	The Housing Options team offer a drop-in service, operating Monday to Friday providing a range of housing advice, focussing on preventing homelessness where possible.

Objective 2: Adopt sustainable initiatives that deliver housing solutions accessible to those in housing need and minimise reliance on the use of temporary accommodation

2a – achieve move on from TA within agreed timeframes for 70% of households in year 1 (2014/15), increasing to 90% in year 2 (2015/16)	Increase capacity of existing TA, resulting in fewer placements in bed and breakfast accommodation.	<p>Following the Vanguard intervention, we are no longer moving customers solely on the basis of the time they have spent in a particular type of accommodation.</p> <p>None the less, between April 2014 and March 2017, 240 households have moved on from temporary accommodation into social housing, private rent or made their own housing arrangements.</p> <p>Bed and breakfast placements remain fairly similar in most years since the start of the strategy:</p> <p>2013/14 - 59 households placed</p> <p>2014/15 - 49 households placed (plus 4 single people accommodated under Severe Weather</p>
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		<p>Emergency Protocol provisions (SWEP)).</p> <p>2015/16 - 45 households placed (plus 9 single people accommodated under SWEP)</p> <p>2016/17 – 50 households placed (plus 15 single people accommodated under SWEP)</p>
<p>2b – monitor the success and impact of the Tenancy Support Worker, prior to the 12 month period coming to an end to determine whether to extend the post</p>	<p>Accommodation Officer released to secure more accommodation in the private rented sector.</p> <p>Rent arrears reduced in TA</p> <p>Better management and intervention around cases of anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>This action is now complete as the Tenancy Support Worker is now part of our permanent structure.</p>
<p>2c – launch new private rented initiatives in 2014 with the target of taking on 45 properties within the first 12 months of operation</p>	<p>Meet the future demand for temporary accommodation and minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.</p>	<p>This action is complete. A total of 112 private sector properties have been utilised within one of the three elements of the FareLets scheme.</p> <p>Following the Vanguard Intervention more customers have been sourcing their own private sector accommodation and the Council has been assisting through greater flexibility in meeting the up-front costs needed to access the private rented sector.</p> <p>The number of placements into bed and breakfast has remained fairly similar throughout the life of this strategy. If we had not taken on these private properties and if customers had not been supported to find their own accommodation the numbers in B&B could have been much worse. However, it remains a priority to minimise our use of this</p>

		accommodation.
2d – purchase 8 properties using Right to Buy receipts	Increase available stock of temporary accommodation	This action is complete. The Council purchased 7 properties using the right to buy receipts. The council also purchased a 4 bed house to enable a future redevelopment opportunity, but which is being used as temporary accommodation in the meantime.
2e – work with Housing Associations to develop new affordable housing in the borough.	Increase range of affordable housing to meet housing need in the borough.	We continue to work successfully with our housing association partners to deliver a range of affordable housing across the Borough.
2f – strive to achieve Gold Standard local challenges relevant to this objective	Provide an enhanced housing options service.	The focus of the Options and Initiatives teams is to avoid and minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all household groups. The Vanguard intervention has led to using more flexible ways to make best use of social housing stock and the limited private rented accommodation available in the area

Objective 3: Wherever possible to prevent homelessness from occurring in Fareham by working in partnership with other statutory and independent sector agencies

3a – continue to monitor the success and outcomes of the Money Advice worker and determine whether funding is available to extend the post for the life of this strategy.	Number of evictions due to rent or mortgage arrears reduced Homelessness prevented as a result of better money management, budgeting and awareness of benefit entitlement.	This action is effectively complete as the Money Adviser post has been funded for the life of this strategy. Since April 2014, 161 referrals have been made to the Money Adviser. The Adviser helps to prevent homelessness by:
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended court with owner occupiers and social housing tenants to defend repossession proceedings. • Assisted others to manage and settle debts to help them move on from a housing situation that is unsuitable or unsustainable. • Negotiated with lenders, landlords and other debtors - this helps customers to either remain in their present home or puts them in a better position to find their own alternative solution.
<p>3b – monitor the success of the Rough Sleeper Outreach worker and determine whether funding can be extended beyond the 12 month Regional Rough sleeper group funding</p>	<p>Reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the borough.</p> <p>Quick engagement to prevent entrenched rough sleeping.</p> <p>Co-ordinated response to rough sleeping with police, community safety and substance misuse agencies.</p>	<p>The regional funding ceased and this action is effectively complete.</p> <p>Outreach work is now provided as part of the Social Inclusion Contract between HCC and Two Saints. Performance against key performance indicators is monitored and discussed at regular contract review meetings.</p>
<p>3c – in partnership with Children’s Services agree the future role of the Accommodation Resource Centre following the reduction in Supporting People funding.</p>	<p>Maintain the gateway agency to ensure 16 / 17 year olds are given independent advice as to their options.</p> <p>Prevent homelessness through mediation</p>	<p>The Accommodation Resource Centre ceased to operate as the local ‘gateway’ service following the new Hampshire County Council contracts for young people services.</p> <p>The Options team now works with</p>

	and support	<p>representatives at the Early Help Hub or at the Children's Services team to meet the needs of young people – especially those aged 16 and 17.</p> <p>Since April 2014 14 young people have been placed in B&B accommodation. The move-on for these young people were:</p> <p>Supported housing = 6 Transferred to children services = 1 Returned home = 2 Made own alternative arrangements = 5</p>
3d – prepare for the impact the reduction in the Supporting People programme will have on homelessness services across the borough through the reconfiguration of services and the targeting of remaining funds to meet statutory duties.	Maintenance of as many homelessness prevention services as possible.	<p>The Options team works with relevant Hampshire County Council teams to ensure the needs of local residents are being met by the new services such as the Mental Health, Young People and Social Inclusion contracts</p> <p>Operational meetings were set up so that we can meet regularly with Hampshire Commissioning Officers and the local service providers to monitor the contract provision.</p>
3e – strive to achieve Gold Standard local challenges relevant to this objective	Provide an enhanced housing options service.	We work in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of local residents by providing a range of advice, support and accommodation.

Objective 4: Monitor the demand on the service and outcomes, to inform future provision and direction

4a – continue to explore purchasing the Housing Options module from Orchard	Improved data capture and monitoring information to inform future plans and	Officers have considered the Housing Options and Homelessness module within Orchard but
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	strategies.	<p>isn't what we are looking for and doesn't represent good value for money compared to the current system, therefore this action is complete.</p> <p>However, as a result of the new monitoring and statistical requirements of the Homeless Reduction Act we are assessing the suitability of other specialised homelessness systems. The cost of any replacement system could be met by the governments 'new burdens' funding to assist authorities to implement the provisions of the new Act.</p>
4b – produce a business plan for the new private rented sector schemes prior to their launch.	To be able to monitor the success of the new schemes and support the case for continuing with the posts of Temporary Accommodation Co-ordinator and Tenancy Support Officer	Task completed. New FareLets scheme was introduced in 2014.
4c – continue to monitor the impact the new Allocations Policy has on homelessness and movement through temporary accommodation.	Increased movement through temporary accommodation.	<p>No issues currently highlighted – since the start of this strategy 55% of customers leaving temporary accommodation have moved into social housing.</p> <p>The Allocations Policy needs to be reviewed and making best use of social housing stock to meet the needs of customers will be a priority.</p>
4d – strive to achieve Gold standard local challenges relevant to this objective	Provide an enhanced housing options service.	The homeless strategy is reviewed annually via a report to Housing Policy Development & Review Panel to ensure we are able to continue to prevent and respond to the needs of homeless customers.

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUBLET SCHEME PRINCIPLES

BASIC TERMS OF THE SCHEME

Fareham Borough Council agrees to provide self-contained accommodation as part of the housing pathway for those moving through supported housing toward independent living.

The properties will be let to the support provider under a lease agreement with the Council, with the provider taking on the housing management responsibility. The provider will then enter into a rental agreement with a service user accepted for the scheme. Engagement with the support provided should be a condition of the service user's rental agreement and non-engagement should be regarded as a breach of the agreement.

Fareham Borough Council will only enter into such a lease agreement with an organisation that has experience of tenancy management, which may be required to be evidenced, and such agreements will remain at the discretion of the Council.

The properties used in this scheme will all be owned by Fareham Borough Council. Availability of council accommodation is limited so whilst any preferences will be taken into account we cannot guarantee to be able to meet specific choices. The sort of accommodation that typically comes available are studio flats in blocks near to the centre of Fareham.

Once a property becomes available and a prospective occupant has been identified a viewing will be arranged with a representative of the Tenancy Services team. The support provider will work in partnership with the Council's Tenancy Services team to minimise any tenancy issues impacting on other tenants in the area.

Any service user in breach of any condition of their agreement may face eviction from the property, following appropriate warnings and in accordance with the provider's eviction protocol.

Once the service user has demonstrated their ability to live independently the provider will withdraw their interest in the property and the service user will remain in the property becoming a tenant of the council.

SERVICE USERS ELIGIBILITY FOR THE SCHEME

To be eligible for the sublet scheme a service user must meet the following criteria:

- Are eligible to apply for public resources
- Are aged 18 or over
- Must be able to afford the rent for the accommodation, so be working or in receipt of relevant benefits
- Must be addressing any debts, particularly any former rent arrears (evidence may be required)
- There must be no current concerns regarding anti-social behaviour

Acceptance to the scheme is the decision of the support provider and a representative of the Council's Housing Options team (usually the Housing Options Manager). The provider and the

Council reserve the right to revoke acceptance to the scheme at any time should the service users circumstance change.

An offer of any particular property to any particular service user under the terms of this scheme will also be subject to agreement with the Council's Tenancy Services representative (usually the Senior Housing Officer).

REVIEWS

The provider will meet regularly with the service user once they move into a property. Once the occupant has been in the property for six months the provider will provide an update report on how the occupant is managing and engaging with the service. The provider will invite a representative from the Tenancy Service team to the six month review meeting.

BREACH OF AGREEMENT

A service user not engaging with the support or in breach of any other condition of their agreement will be at risk of losing their accommodation.

The provider must make the Housing Options and the Tenancy Services team aware of any action taken for any breach of the agreement.

GRANT OF COUNCIL TENANCY

The aim of the scheme is to enable service users to develop the skills to manage and sustain their own tenancy and once this has been successfully achieved they will be able to remain in the property as a council tenant for the long term. Under normal circumstances this would normally be achieved within a 9 to 12 month timescale; if a service user needs longer under the sublet scheme this must be agreed between the Council and the service provider.

To be offered a tenancy with the council the service user must:

- Have proven their ability to live independently and manage their own tenancy – evidenced by support provider
- Be up to date with their rent and addressing any debts – evidenced by support provider
- Not have caused nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours – confirmed by the Council's Tenancy Services team

The offer of a council tenancy will be subject to agreement by all parties - the service user, the provider and the relevant Council teams.

Initially produced September 2017