



## **Report to Health and Housing PDR Panel**

Date: **14 March 2013**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **REVIEW OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

### **SUMMARY**

Changes to benefit entitlement introduced by the Welfare Reform Act are expected to result in an increase in the number of households seeking housing assistance from the Council's Housing Options Team. In response to this, and the new power introduced in November 2012 enabling the Council to discharge its homeless duties to households through an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector, the Council proposes to conduct a review of all temporary accommodation.

The review process will determine whether the stock of temporary accommodation available to the Council is fit for purpose and sustainable in light of the changes imposed by the Welfare Reform Act and attempt to estimate the type and number of temporary accommodation units required to meet future demand.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Panel is asked to note the proposal to conduct a review of all temporary accommodation and to expect a full report setting out the findings and proposals from the review in June 2013.

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Significant changes have already been made and will continue to be made to the benefits and tax credits system over the next few years following the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. Some of these changes will have a direct impact on the ability of some households to continue to afford their accommodation and could result in an increase in the number of households seeking housing assistance from the Council. Some of the caps and thresholds being introduced could also present challenges for the Council as to the type and size of accommodation it is able to secure for some of these households.
2. As a result of the changes, it is necessary to conduct a full review of the Council's existing stock of temporary accommodation to determine if it is suitable and sustainable. It is also necessary to try and determine the future levels and type of temporary accommodation required in order to meet the anticipated increase in demand, how existing units contribute to this and how any shortfall identified can be met.
3. The Localism Act 2011 amended Homelessness legislation to enable Councils to meet their homelessness duty by providing an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. Previously homeless households were able to refuse such an offer, insisting upon a placement in temporary accommodation until such time as an offer through the Housing Waiting List of long term social housing was made. The offer of accommodation in the private rented sector must meet certain criteria and the review of temporary accommodation will be extended to establish our approach to securing accommodation in this sector.

## **SCOPE OF REVIEW**

4. The first stage of the review process will be to scope any issues with the existing units of temporary accommodation, to include the existing management arrangements, the effectiveness of the provision, the size, type, location, rent levels, longevity etc.
5. To consider the benefits and implications of converting existing units of self contained accommodation to shared accommodation, in order to respond to the changes in Housing Benefit levels for under 35 year olds.
6. To review all Housing Association properties in the Borough to establish if there is any stock which might be suitable for use as temporary accommodation.
7. To review the budgetary implications of the Council's portfolio of temporary accommodation and set up monitoring processes to ensure the approach is cost effective and becomes self financing in the longer term.
8. To consider the options available, along with the work required and the budgetary implications to increase and improve the Council's ability to access the private rental market.
9. To determine what processes, procedures and funding is required to enable the Council to access and secure accommodation in the private rented sector which complies with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2012.
10. Following completion of the above exercises to consider whether funds from the sale of the Dibles Mobile Homes should be used to increase the number of temporary

accommodation units available to the Council and if so the type, number and size these should take.

### **TIMESCALES FOR REVIEW AND POSSIBLE ISSUES AFFECTING COMPLETION**

11. A new team is being formed within Strategic Housing to manage all forms of temporary accommodation and undertake allocations to long term social housing stock. Part of this teams remit will be to develop and carry out the process to secure accommodation in the private rented sector which complies with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order and to increase in general the Council's access to accommodation in the private rented sector. Two members of this team will be new appointments; appointing to the post of the Senior Housing Officer (Initiatives) in particular could therefore delay the completion of Points 8 and 9 above.
12. It is planned to complete the review by the end of May 2013, however this will be dependent upon the commitment and input of Housing Associations with temporary housing stock in the Borough, the successful recruitment to the posts of Senior Housing Officer (Initiatives) and Temporary Accommodation Co-ordinator.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

13. The Council must provide a housing options and homelessness service and where necessary ensure suitable accommodation is made available to those households threatened with homelessness. To ensure that the Council's stock of temporary accommodation is fit for purpose and there is a plan in place to meet the continuing increase in demand for such accommodation, it is essential a thorough review is carried out.

### **CONCLUSION**

14. The continuing economic crisis in conjunction with the effects of the Welfare Reform Act has resulted in more and more households seeking the assistance of the Council's Housing Options team. To ensure that the best use is being made of our existing stock of temporary accommodation and that all opportunities are explored to develop our relationship with the private rented sector, it is felt timely to carry out a review as detailed above and report the findings and recommendations to Members later this year.

### **Background Papers:**

### **Reference Papers:**

- Localism Act 2011
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012

### **Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact Sara Head. (Ext 4369)