

To: Scrutiny Coordination Committee

Date: 24th January 2018

Subject: Homelessness

1 Purpose of the Note

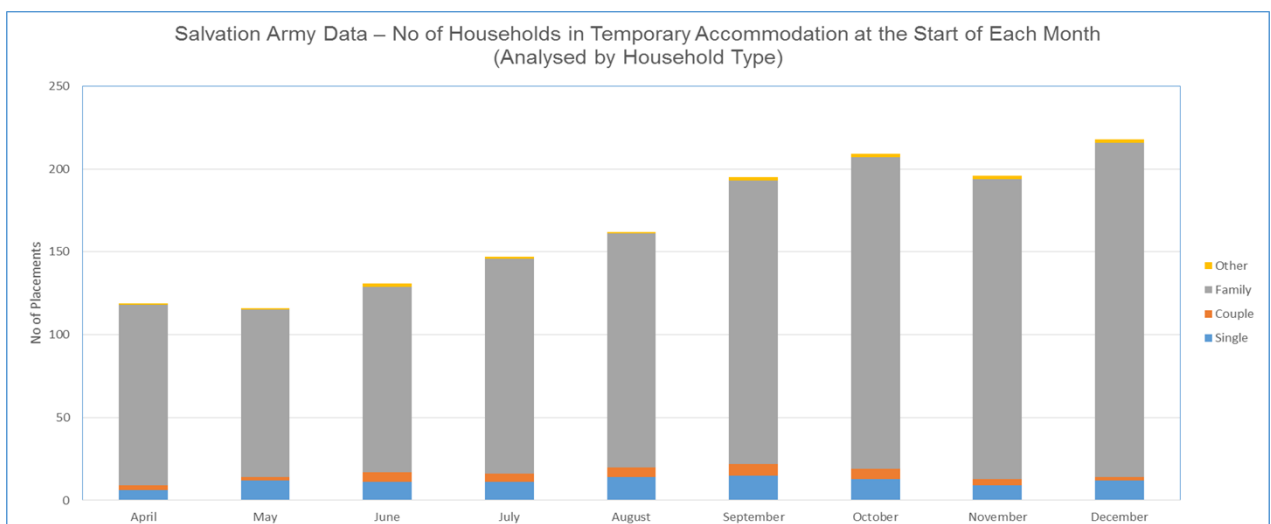
- 1.1 To present the current position for homelessness in Coventry, and to highlight the reasons why people will find themselves without a home.
- 1.2 In addition Scrutiny Coordination are asked to note the work being undertaken by the City Council and partner organisation to try and alleviate the effects of homelessness.
- 1.3 In attendance today is Nathan Slinn from the Salvation Army to provide further information on work carried out by them in Coventry.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Scrutiny Coordination Committee is asked:
 - 2.1.1 To note the increasing trend of homelessness in Coventry, and the increasing financial pressure that this brings.
 - 2.1.2 To note the work with partner organisation to alleviate some of the problems presented by the increase in homelessness.
 - 2.1.3 To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member as appropriate.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The trends of those presenting as homeless, are provided in table 1 below.



- 3.2 The increase demonstrated above also represents an added estimated financial pressure in 2017/18 of £4.2m against a budget of £1.3m (total spend £5.5m) from the provision of temporary accommodation, particularly for families. Fuller details are shown at appendix 2.
- 3.3 A breakdown of the reasons given for homelessness is in appendix 1, along with our current performance against West Midland and County neighbours. The top three reasons for homelessness remain: ending of an assured short hold tenancy at 27%, breakdown of family relations at 29%, and domestic violence at 12%.

4 Changes to legislation and early intervention:

- 4.1 In 2017, government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The legislative requirements of the act come into force across England on the 1st April 2018, and place a legal prevention duties on local authorities to intervene in homelessness cases earlier and maintain an involvement with service user for longer.
- 4.2 The housing placements team (People Directorate), and the strategic housing team (Place Directorate) have been working to get Coventry ready to implement the requirements of this legislation. There are a number of small policy changes that will be required to implement the guidance of the act and allow the City Council to intervene earlier in an attempt to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. These policy changes and establishment of a dedicated team are currently making their way through the political approval process.

5 Work currently underway with partner organisations:

- 5.1 **Building new homes** through our joint venture with Whitefriars – as approved by council in November 2015, this joint venture has achieved planning permission on two sites, and will deliver a minimum of 122 additional affordable homes before 2020. A further 39 homes are also likely to be brought forward following a separate land sale to Whitefriars. It should be noted that these are in addition to the affordable homes provided as part of planning requirements on developments over 25 properties. (The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) reviewed housing supply and delivery at their meeting on 17 January 2018. Representatives of Whitefriars, Stonewater and Midland Heart attended the meeting.)
- 5.2 **Reducing temporary accommodation spend** -working with Whitefriars and Valley House, the City Council is proposing to convert a previous care home into temporary accommodation for up to 32 families, reducing our reliance upon bed and breakfast. The legal agreements for this should be completed by the end of January allowing a final approval report to be brought to cabinet. Officers are currently preparing a second business case to build further temporary accommodation using a locally manufactured modular building system, on a former neighbourhood office site. This could bring forward a further 20 family units. A full business case and permission to proceed will be presented to cabinet in due course.
- 5.3 **Improving current temporary accommodation** – by working with the current suppliers of temporary accommodation the housing placements team have been successful in negotiating a number of long term accommodation places that they can then place service users in at a cheaper rate.
- 5.4 Joint work between licensing and housing options colleagues, will also see the roll out of new Service Level Agreements (SLA) with accommodation providers during the last quarter of 2017/18. This is aimed at driving up the standard of temporary accommodation and where possible reducing the cost of the accommodation, by removing ad hoc procurement arrangements.
- 5.5 **Future plans to increase housing supply in Coventry** – the City Council has now adopted a local plan and area action plan for the City Centre. These release additional land within the City and where a development is over 25 dwellings, developers will be required to provide further affordable housing.

- 5.6 Following the presentation from Birmingham City Council on their current house building activities, colleagues in the development team are preparing an options paper for cabinet to make proposals directly relevant to Coventry.
- 5.7 **Domestic violence** – whilst the percentage of the people presenting as homeless as a result of domestic violence has dropped since 2014/15, it still remains the third highest reason for someone finding themselves homeless. Public Health and the Community Safety team are concluding their work on the preparation of a new domestic violence strategy and the document will shortly be ready to consult upon. Working with the service providers who support victims of domestic violence one key output for this strategy will be to improve the provision and capacity in the City to support victims of domestic violence. (Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee will be considering the Domestic Abuse Strategy at its meeting on 28 February 2018).

6 Empty homes

6.1 Table 2 below provides the current levels empty homes and trend since 2010.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Coventry - empty over 6 months (DCLG Live Table 615)	1,565	1,495	1,455	1,445	1,273	1,080	1,150
Total dwellings (from DCLG Live Table 125)	132,130	132,890	133,800	134,780	135,870	136,980	138,390
Over 6 months empty as % of total dwellings	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%

6.2 Since 2010 there has been a steady decrease in the number of empty homes in Coventry. Work continues through planning enforcement to bring these properties back into permanent use where possible. However, it should be noted that a good proportion of the 1,150 empty homes for over six months are already paying the enhanced council tax of 150%. In exceptional circumstance the City Council can use powers of compulsory purchase to acquire an empty property and bring it back into use, this is currently being considered in a long running enforcement case and a business case is being prepared.

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Homelessness Statistics (Updated January 2018)

Reasons for homelessness - statutory homeless households (P1E):

As can be seen in the table below, the main reasons for homelessness in Coventry are: Ending of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector; parents/relatives/friends no longer able or willing to accommodate; violent breakdown of relationship with partner.

The % homeless as a result of being evicted from the private rented sector has been relatively consistent over the past three years, but has increased significantly since 2010/11 (when it was 20%) – this is in line with the national picture.

Reason for Homelessness	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18 Q1 Q2 & Q3
1. Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	10%	12%	12%	19%
2. Other relatives/friends unable/unwilling to accommodate	8%	9%	16%	12%
3. Non-violent breakdown of relationship - partner	5%	4%	5%	6%
4a. Violent breakdown of relationship - partner	19%	17%	11%	12%
4b. Violent breakdown of relationship - associated persons	2%	0%	1%	1%
4c. Racially motivated violence	0%	0%	0%	0%
4d. Other forms of violence	2%	2%	1%	1%
5a. Racially motivated harassment	0%	0%	1%	0%
5b. Other forms of harassment	2%	1%	0%	1%
6. Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	1%	0%	1%	0%
7a. Rent arrears on LA or other public sector dwellings	1%	1%	0%	1%
7b. Rent arrears on RSL or other HA dwellings	0%	0%	0%	0%
7c. Rent arrears on private sector dwellings	1%	1%	3%	3%
8a. Loss of rented accomm due to end of AST	34%	34%	35%	27%
8b. Loss of rented - reasons other than termination of AST	6%	5%	3%	4%
9. Req to leave accomm provided as asylum support	5%	5%	3%	3%
10a. Left prison/on remand	0%	1%	0%	0%
10b. Left hospital	0%	1%	0%	1%
10c. Left other institution or LA care	1%	2%	1%	2%
11a. Other - Left HM forces	0%	0%	0%	0%
11b. Other reason (eg emergency, sleeping rough)	2%	4%	4%	6%
12. Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Rate of Statutory homelessness (number stat homeless per 1000 population):
West Midlands and Geographical Neighbours P1E Stats comparison -
2016/17**

Local Authority	Number of decisions	Number of Stat Homeless decisions	Rate of stat hless per 1000 population
Coventry	1065	638	4.51
Birmingham	5473	3479	8.07
Dudley	1725	59	0.45
Sandwell	786	551	4.32
Solihull	783	418	4.71
Walsall	373	304	2.72
Wolverhampton	835	412	3.91
North Warwickshire	142	85	3.21
Nuneaton & Bedworth	173	128	2.36
Rugby	233	168	3.82
Warwick	552	136	2.24
Stratford-on-Avon	259	142	2.64
England	115550	59100	2.54

Appendix 2

	Cost		Pressure	
	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Housing Benefits	2,273	3,144	2,273	3,144
Housing Options Team (non-staffing)	154	224	119	189
Housing Options Team (staffing cost)	541	679	158	290
Neighbourhoods Team & RAS	469	572	227	330
Total excl. Supported Accom. for homeless 18-24	3,437	4,619	2,777	3,953
Supported Accommodation for homeless 18-24	1,046	878	399	231
Total	4,483	5,497	3,176	4,184

This table includes the cost of service provision including the cost of the Housing Options officer time which is largely (but not exclusively) related to homelessness. It does not however include other staffing costs or grants to voluntary providers where they would support homeless families either directly or indirectly, as this cannot be quantified, and would vary from year to year.