



To: Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) Date: 17 September 2020
Subject: Housing and Homelessness Update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny board with an update on the following key areas related to Housing and Homelessness;
- Update on Rough Sleeping in Coventry
 - Update on transformation initiatives previously approved by Cabinet
 - Financial update -including the impact of Covid 19
 - Anticipating future demands on the service

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
1. Note the information contained within this report; and
 2. Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The Council approved its Housing and Homelessness Strategy (2019-2024) in March 2019 and is the core strategy the drives the service forward. The strategy has four key areas of focus;
- Preventing homelessness & supporting homeless households
 - Support for people and communities
 - Improving existing homes
 - Housing development
- 3.2 The Housing and Homelessness Service has undergone a significant transformation over the previous 18 months with a number of initiatives/projects being worked on with the intention of:
- Reducing the financial burden on the Authority whilst providing better quality temporary accommodation options
 - Increasing the number of households where homelessness is prevented or relieved and therefore decreasing the number of households in temporary accommodation.

4 Rough Sleeping

Over the previous 12 months the council has recruited a rough sleepers outreach team to work in the city with a focus on eliminating rough sleeping in Coventry by the end of 2022, in line with the City's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024. The team is funded through MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding and now consists of;

- A rough sleeping co-ordinator
 - A senior Outreach worker
 - 5 Outreach workers who engage and support rough sleepers to engage with services and access accommodation including a substance misuse specialist
 - 2 Navigators with specific experience regarding complex women and people with No Recourse to Public Funds. Navigators hold smaller caseloads and work intensively with rough sleepers to secure and maintain accommodation
- 4.1 In March 2020 the Government instructed councils to offer accommodation to all rough sleepers and to close any nightshelters or shared living spaces due to Covid 19. At this point In Coventry we had 3 nightshelters which were open, accommodating 50 individuals as well as further 25-30 individuals sleeping rough. The Councils outreach team, alongside the Salvation Army, worked tirelessly over a 2-week period to ensure as many rough sleepers as possible were accommodated and that everyone had been made at least 2 offers of accommodation.
- 4.2 Since this date the Council has continued to accommodate any individuals who we find rough sleeping in the city. The following information is correct as at the 1st September 2020
- A total of 223 individuals have been accommodated since the start of lockdown
 - 86 people are currently being accommodated across 4 hotels and Frank Walsh House
 - We have accommodated a total of 72 people who at the point of entering accommodation had no recourse to public funds – 25 of these have moved on successfully
 - 91 individuals have moved on to longer term accommodation including;
 - 32 people into The Salvation Army hostels
 - 19 have moved into other supported accommodation including Cyrenians, The Gateway, CRMC accommodation etc
 - 22 into private rented accommodation
 - 7 into temporary accommodation through the homelessness route
 - 4 into Housing first
 - A number of organisations across the city have pulled together to support the council including The Salvation Army, Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, Cyrenians, Crisis, Citizen, DWP & CGL.
- 4.3 At the outset of the Everyone-in initiative MHCLG announced £3.6 million funding to assist Local Authorities with accommodating rough sleepers. CCC received £17.5k of this funding. The Government have also funded Local Government £3.7bn to provide services during the pandemic with Coventry receiving a total of £24.4m with rough sleeping a named line within this grant agreement.
- 4.4 The council is awaiting the outcome of a funding bid it has submitted to MHCLG for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to ensure funding is available to meet the needs of rough sleepers moving forward.
- 5 Statutory Homeless Service improvements and progress**
- 5.1 The table below sets out a number of projects/improvements that have been implemented over the previous 12 months and the outcomes these have achieved.

Project	Progress	Next steps
Re-commissioning of Homelessness Support Services	All contracts were mobilised and in place by the target date of April 2020.	Continuation of embedding the services and the reporting mechanisms that were put on hold due to Covid 19
Operational data	All Data and reporting across the service is now accurate and are now being used to drive improvements.	Continue to use data to drive performance
Implement Homefinder Allocations Scheme	Cabinet approved the new Homefinder allocations scheme	Currently procuring a new IT system in order to implement the policy
Rough Sleeping team	Launched the Change into Action scheme with partners which collects cash donations from the public and goes directly to help Rough Sleepers.	Continue to promote the Change into Action scheme including more ways for the public to donate.
Rough Sleeper Strategy	Following extensive engagement and consultation, this strategy was agreed by Cabinet on 10 December 2019 and sets out an ambitious and positive strategy to end rough sleeping in Coventry.	Ongoing – monitor the actions and delivery against the agreed strategy, and work with partners to deliver their commitments.
Reduce cost of expensive Temporary Accommodation	Households have been consistently moved from more expensive accommodation to higher quality and lower priced accommodation over the past 18 months. Reduction in costs across providers of TA is now estimated to be the equivalent of at least £2m per year.	The Accommodation team will continue to review costs and ensure best value for money, building on their success negotiating substantial rate decreases over the last 18 months. We will also continue to consider alternative TA options which deliver good quality accommodation alongside financial savings.
Eliminate use of B&Bs for families	All families moved out of B&B accommodation into more suitable placements. No families placed by Housing team into B&Bs for more than a few days in an emergency since 19 th July 2019.	Maintain this achievement
Eliminate use of B&Bs for single people	All singles accommodated through the Homeless Service have been moved out of B&B accommodation into more suitable placements. There are still Covid 19 placements in B&Bs who are only accommodated due to Everyone-in	Maintain this achievement and secure alternative accommodation for rough sleepers
Frank Walsh House	FWH was delivered on time on the 5 th April 2020 and was originally renovated to provide temporary accommodation for small families. Following the Everyone-In initiative it was agreed to utilise the building to accommodate rough sleepers temporarily	Seek to move rough sleepers into alternative provision in October and then move families into the building ASAP.

Whitefriars Refurbishment properties	32 properties have been let and households have moved in. These are a higher standard and much lower cost compared to previous properties.	All 32 properties have been refurbished and are currently being used as Temporary Accommodation Project completed
Caradoc Hall	Completion of the Lease including Fire Safety Strategy was all completed to time at the end of 2019. Households have been moved into the building as planned and occupancy has remained over 90%.	Project completed. The service area will continue to place households into Caradoc Hall and liaise with the building managers.
Discharge Homeless Duty into the PRS policy and Let's Rent Coventry.	Reviewed and updated policy has been completed implemented following Cabinet Member agreement. Let's Rent Coventry scheme, to incentivise private landlords to make properties available for homeless households, has been launched and 6 families have been rehoused permanently	Savings will be realised by families leaving TA throughout the year with Let's Rent Coventry having a target of 40 properties during 2020. If successful we will seek to build on the scheme.
Temporary Accommodation charging policy	Changes to charging policy completed following decision-making process with Cabinet Member and Cabinet in early 2020. Processes and procedures agreed and implemented with operational team. Households are now being charged if they have excess income for their rent and also furniture storage. Rates for TA have been reduced as individuals now responsible for utilities and council tax.	Continue to monitor income collection and assess any impact on individuals
Frontline operational plan	Changes to triage process, assessment and appointments, joint working with Children's Services (MASH) and data collection on performance have all been implemented. Currently the service is performing more efficiently and with better prevention outcomes than previously.	Continue to monitor the impact of these changes, especially on successful prevention rates, staff capacity and number of clients returning to service. Note that some impacts are hard to measure currently due to exceptional impact of Covid and the pausing and eviction proceedings.
Temporary Supported Accommodation	Proposal developed for new Council-owned Hostel buildings and Houses of Multiple Occupation for single homeless people. 14 units in houses have been purchased and are being prepared for letting. Offers have been accepted on two larger buildings (42 units) and two further houses (9 units). The team is currently in the process of finalising these property deals and preparing the units for use.	Recruitment for housing management and support roles are underway. Minor works need completing on purchased properties. Service standards, policies and procedures need completion. Viewings and offers on additional properties are required, as new properties come onto the market

Housing Advisers Programme	Successful bid for LGA money to fund research and development to increase the number of affordable permanent homes in the city. Meetings held with Cabinet Member, senior Elected Members and Senior Officers to discuss options before the forum options appraisal and business case.	Present options and discussion to date to Political Cabinet in September 2020. Based on discussion and feedback, prepare formal options appraisal and follow decision making process for preferred option.
Cornerstone Contracts	Secured Cabinet & Council approval in March 2020 for 2 contracts with Cornerstone Partnership 1. To provide 78 units of temporary accommodation for 2 years 2. Provide a total of 103 PRS properties over a 2-year period	All temporary accommodation properties provided and utilised. 16 PRS properties have been let at Local Housing Allowance rates to families in temporary accommodation

- 5.2 Although the number of families approaching the council as homeless decreased at the outbreak of Covid 19 the number of approaches and applications have increased during the last 2 months and are now back at the level the service was experiencing pre-Covid (as can be seen in table 1 below).

Table 1 & 2

Homeless Cases (HRA)	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
New Approaches	459	375	362	296	298	366	431	417
New Applications	220	224	214	147	167	223	253	167*
Successful Preventions	14	31	20	44	21	31	41	30
Sucessful Reliefs	23	31	38	42	25	48	82	54

*Not all aproaches have been assessed

Temporary Accomodation	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
Total in TA	678	716	740	752	708	684	631	593
Familes in TA	387	391	384	383	357	339	332	310
Singles in TA	291	325	356	369	351	345	299	283

- 5.3 Reported households supported in TA by the Local Authority have fallen to below 600 (593 as at 31st August 2020) as can be seen in table 2 above.

Factors which have led to this include:

- A significant drop in the number of families approaching the service since February, which is beginning to impact on numbers owed a duty to accommodate.
- Improved performance in the % number of cases being discharged from Relief Duty with a successful outcome, especially for single households.

6 Finances

- 6.1 At Quarter 1 the Housing and Homelessness Service is currently forecast to spend approximately £13.0M (net) in 20/21, excluding the impact of Covid. The 19/20 outturn was £13.1M net and was a £3.4M overspend. Additional budget resource was identified through the budget setting process for 20/21, so the service is currently forecasting a balanced budgetary position (excluding COVID discussed later in the briefing). Despite forecasting similar net expenditure levels, this financial position masks the significant unit cost

reductions that have been delivered and are factored into the financial position moving forward.

- 6.2 Most of the cost is driven by the amount that we spend on temporary accommodation (TA) less the amount we can claim in housing benefit subsidy. This is driven by activity, and unit cost. The difference between the amount we are forecast to spend in 20/21 and the amount we spent in 19/20 is a result of significant savings on the unit cost of TA offset by increased activity (number of households in TA).
- 6.3 In order to understand the level of unit cost reduction we have undertaken a snapshot exercise that compares the reduction in cost to the Local Authority of TA when comparing the end of June 2020 position with December 2019 (pre-opening of Caradoc Hall) position¹. This shows that if the unit cost of the accommodation had remained at the December 2019 level, the city council would be spending £3.9M per annum more on TA based on June activity levels.

Area	Amount £M
Lower cost (TA properties)	2.0
Reduction in LA payment of eligibles	0.6
Caradoc net saving	1.0
Savings as a result of other property (incl. Citizen Refurb properties, and LA acquisitions)	0.3
Total	3.9

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fificantly over the last 12 months. In August 2019 we had 338 family households, and 187 other households in temporary accommodation compared with 383 (family) and 369 (other) as at April 2020. Current activity is not the highest it has been, and the number of households in TA has dipped during lockdown. It is expected that activity will at least return to pre-Covid levels within the next 3 months.

7 Future Pressures

- 7.1 The City Council continues to identify options to reduce the cost of TA, and we have further projects that will have an impact this year and beyond (purchase of properties for supported accommodation, Cornerstone Property Deal, Let's Rent scheme, Frank Walsh House). If we can contain, and reduce, the overall number of households in TA we will be able to realise revenue savings for the MTFS over the medium term.

8 Covid

- 8.1 At Quarter 1 we are currently forecasting additional expenditure due to the impact of Covid of £1.3M. This largely covers the cost of housing rough sleepers during lockdown, although there is some allowance for further activity increase in the number of households in TA as a result of increased financial hardship.

9 Future pressures

- 9.1 The service is likely to see an increase in demand from both families and single people as we move through 2020 and into 2021. These increases are likely due to the following:
- The delay on evictions is likely to end on the 20th September and we await further information from the Government regarding any future mitigations they are going to put in place to reduce the impact on homelessness
 - With the likelihood of a recession and therefore unemployment increasing more households will struggle financially to meet their housing costs, whether this is rented or mortgage payments, and many will end up homeless

- During previous financial downturns there has been an adverse impact on young people living at home who are evicted by their parents/guardians due to pressures on the family.
- It is likely we will see an increase in homelessness across all groups and therefore an increase of people living in temporary accommodation and an increase in rough sleepers

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