

# REPORT FOR DECISION



<b>DECISION OF:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>31 January 2018</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Homeless 2018 and Beyond</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>Councillor O'Brien, Cabinet Member, Finance and Housing</b>
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Karen Young Strategic Lead Inclusion/Ahmed Ajimi Project Manager</b>
<b>TYPE OF DECISION:</b>	<b>CABINET (NON KEY DECISION)</b>
<b>FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:</b>	Public domain
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	The report informs members of the current picture of homelessness in the Borough and outlines the preparation for the new Act on 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2018.
<b>OPTIONS &amp; RECOMMENDED OPTION</b>	<b>For information</b>
<b>IMPLICATIONS:</b>	
<b>Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:</b>	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
<b>Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:</b>	A robust approach to homelessness is essential. Failure to address homelessness issues presents a risk to individuals, and a potential financial risk / service pressures for the Council
<b>Health and Safety</b>	
	Homelessness activity will be funded from

<b>Statement by Executive Director of Resources:</b>	within existing resources, which include Government Homeless Support (£181k) and Homeless Prevention (£457k) Grants, GM funding (£40k), and Housing Benefit where permissible
<b>Equality/Diversity implications:</b>	No (see paragraph below)
<b>Considered by Monitoring Officer:</b>	Yes JH The report sets out advice on forthcoming legislative changes to the Council's duties on homelessness.
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Scrutiny Interest:</b>	

## TRACKING/PROCESS

## DIRECTOR: Interim Executive Director of Communities and Well Being

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
x			
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

### Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the changes to homelessness nationally, regionally, locally and showcases the good work that has been done in Bury to date. Bury now, with the changes in legislation has a strong platform to help those at risk of homelessness and to improve their life chances. This builds on the service transformation agenda of "Helping People to help themselves"
- 1.2 Homelessness is on the increase nationally and is one of the key priorities of the new GM Mayor going forward. Due to the national increase in homelessness, there has been a change to legislation- The Homeless Reduction Act received Royal Assent in April 17 and will be enacted next April(18). This requires us to change our approach to supporting those that are homeless.
- 1.3 The Council is changing due to a number of factors and the change to neighbourhood working, requires us to deliver services in a different way. We need to continue with this move to an early intervention and prevention focused approach- assisting customers to help themselves. Providing support to the most vulnerable will continue proactively.

- 1.4 Over recent years, the Homeless Service in Bury has transformed and is now one of the higher performing authorities in Greater Manchester, in terms of preventing homelessness. The number of preventions in Bury has risen from 312 in 2009/10 to 2121 in 2016/17 which has seen us rise performance against the other GM authorities. The service focuses on the individual, not their homelessness and we should be proud of what has been achieved in the last five years. This is at a time, when complexity of homeless cases is on the rise. Bury is "bucking" the national trends in terms of homelessness and rough sleeping. Giving "someone" a home is not always the answer to homelessness; vulnerable customers need a circle of support to improve their life chances, not just a building.
- 1.5 The booklet shown as Appendix 1 gives us an insight of the current picture of homelessness. This is intended for staff and to be published on the web.

## **2.0 National Perspective**

2.1 The national changes are as follows:

- The Homeless Reduction Act comes into force in April 2018. The new legislation focuses on early intervention and prevention. A wider range of customers will be helped earlier (56 days prior to becoming homeless- currently 28 days) focusing on early intervention and prevention. Customers will be provided with a personal housing plan, which will empower them to work with the Council and partners to relieve their homelessness. There are twelve clauses within the Act which means that our approach to supporting customers who are homelessness or approaching homelessness needs to be revised.
- The Act represents a major change in our operational responsibilities. However there is no duty to re house or accommodate everyone. There are no responsibilities to provide extra social housing. This is about shaping current provision, however we anticipated a rise in demand.
- There will be a new duty for partner agencies (details as yet unknown) to inform the Council when in contact with a person who is threatened with homelessness
- There are new duties within the act to support various vulnerable groups such as young people
- National focus on reducing rough sleeping, both entrenched and new rough sleepers which mirrors a whole person approach- not just finding an individual accommodation

## **3.0 Regional Perspective**

3.1 The regional changes are as follows:

- Stronger working arrangements across AGMA on homelessness and in recent months, this has strengthened further.
- A Strategic Lead for Homelessness, has been appointed as part of the GMCA.
- GM will work to a similar homeless model to ensure that customers are not passed between authorities.
- Work streams are developing new customer pathways, including a common IT system.
- Rough sleeping is an issue in some local authorities in AGMA.

- The GM Mayor has set up a homeless fund and is setting up a Homelessness Action Network.
- Since 2010 in GM there have been the following increases:

GM Figures		Bury
○ Temp accommodation	236%	19%
○ Homeless presentations	79%	11%
○ Homeless acceptances	69%	64%
○ Rough sleeping	361%	266%

Please note the number of rough sleepers is approx 10. Please see 4.1

The causes of this are:

- Lack of affordable and appropriately sized housing
- Lack of voids in social housing due to
- Impact of welfare reform changes- difficulty in accessing benefits and rent element goes to the customer
- Access to work and local labour markets
- Availability of suitably sized social housing
- Customer's expectations and perceptions
- Relationship breakdown
- Increased complexity of need and negative lifestyle choices
- Funding pressures to Councils

## 4.0 Local Perspective

4.1 Some notable achievements are:

- The service has been transformed locally and no longer focuses on just homelessness but considers a whole person approach. The service is 24/7. The Homeless Strategy action plan has been refreshed with further work in 2018.
- Homeless preventions have quadrupled in since 2010/2011, evidencing our commitment to early intervention and prevention.
- The rough sleeping situation in Bury is not the same as it is nationally, or the City centre of Manchester. The numbers are low and officers take a proactive approach to support those that are rough sleeping, so they do not spend a 'second night out'. Work through the Bury East Hub has reduced Begging in the Town centre, which had gone up by 400% last year. The Council commissions a Rough Sleeper Service from the voluntary sector, which includes an Outreach worker. Also the Council commissions additional support during freezing temperatures to prevent deaths and further hardship. Annually the Council does an estimate or a rough sleeper's count. The current estimate is approximately 10 rough sleepers; if a count is conducted the numbers are often lower as you can only count rough sleepers who are "bedded down".
- Admissions into temporary accommodation have increased following national trends, however the Council has not and will not use Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Bed and Breakfast has not been used since 2008- unlike other authorities. However this remains a challenge and may alter in the future. Bury is proud of the achievements of customers that have been placed in the HEN Project and to date 81 Service Users have accessed paid employment, 58 have gain experience through volunteering and 189 have accessed some form of education or training. The new arrangements are likely to increase the need for the Local Authority to homeless temporary accommodation

## **5.0 HOUSING NEED– ITS IMPACT ON HOMELESS**

- 5.1 Strategic consideration of the reducing availability of social housing is vital. In the last twelve months, twenty 3 bedroom properties have been removed from the Council stock due to 'right to buy'. Also there are pressures in terms of affordable social housing. Not all customers are in a position to afford, or aspire to own their own homes. The affordable housing market does not meet the needs of all.
- 5.2 The profile of customers on the housing register is predominately applicants requesting 1 bed accommodation. In Nov 17, there were 1,724 customers on the register of which 835 require one bed. The current growth in affordable housing is a massive achievement for Bury, but does not meet all housing need. With the growth in homeless, we need more affordable social options for people
- 5.3 The current review of supported housing and floating support is welcomed. Complexity of need is increasing and new provisions of service are necessary that meet current and future- not historical housing demands.
- 5.4 There are limited options within the private rented sector, due to demand. In Bury, demand is outstripping supply. Other challenges include competing private renters, Serco agreements with private landlords and the general housing market. The shortage of supply is increasing rent levels in localities, making it a less affordable option.
- 5.5 There is an emerging issue, in terms of the availability of Council properties available to let. Tenants are staying in their properties longer and the number of failed tenancies is decreasing. The average length of tenancy is increasing therefore there is a reduced turnover of stock making it difficult to place homeless households.

## **6.0 What Difference Are We Making?**

- 6.1 Highlights of improved performance include:
  - The Council has not used Bed and Breakfast since 2008
  - Number of preventions increased from 239 in 2010/2011 to 2,121 in 2016/17
  - Number of weeks in temporary accommodation is at 10.49 weeks (this figure includes two entrenched rough sleepers who are being housed using the housing first model), compared with many months or years in the London authorities
  - Number of low level housing enquires has risen from 3615 in 2015/16 to 6915 in 2016/17
  - Number of homeless decisions has increased from 297 in 2010 to 331 2017
  - Number of rough sleepers was 9 in 2016 to 3 in 2016. In reality the figures is approximately 11, as the difference is caused by alternating between actual rough sleeper counts and estimates. Estimates give a more realistic figure than actual counts due to the fact on a count a customer has to be seen bed down

## **7.0 GM Picture-How are we performing?**

- 7.1 Bury has performed well compared with Greater Manchester. Some of the highlights are as follows:
  - 2nd in performance for number of preventions
  - High number of low level housing enquiries dealt with at first point of contact
  - Lowest number in temporary accommodation
  - Relatively high proportion of families for a small borough
  - Lower number of people accepted as homeless

## **8.0 Funding**

- 8.1 There are a number of funding streams available to the Council and will impact on the funding of temporary accommodation going forward:

- GM has been successful in obtaining trailblazer funding of £3.8 million pounds that will fund 7 work streams across GM and £1.8 million as a Social Impact Bond (SIB) to fund support for entrenched rough sleepers. Government also has committed to fund transitional arrangements. In year one, Bury share of this funding is £ 40,008 (3 years funding stream- approx £30,000 in year 2 and 3). This will not cover the increase in demand.
- Funding for temporary accommodation has changed to a Homeless Support Grant. This has left a shortfall of approximately £200,000, previously this was funded through the Housing benefit system.

## **9.0 Risks**

9.1 There are a number of risks associated with this area of work which is detailed below:

- Not meeting national and regional expectations, including targets for change
- Demand is highly likely to increase at the front door, with the Government estimating by 26%. They also anticipate temporary accommodation decreasing, however this is not the experience of Welsh authorities that have been operating the model for a longer period of time
- Insufficient partner/provider and community engagement
- Financial risk and legal challenge
- Delays may mean that operations demands are not met
- Pace of change and commissioning
- Changes fail to deal better outcomes for customers
- Information governance demands

## **10.0 Next steps**

10.1 A number of GM work streams are underway to prepare for the implementation of the new Act these are overseen by a Task and Finish groups. The main highlights are as follows:

- The Council is working towards a homeless self assessment. This will include the 'Quality of Life wheel'- supporting the move away from homelessness, towards improving customer life chances and supporting them to help themselves.
- The Council is working with GM colleagues, to prepare for the new working arrangements but is retaining a local focus
- The review of floating support and supported accommodation will be completed in the new year
- Further work is required within the private rented sector in terms of landlord incentives and private sector leasing , this will remain a challenge with local housing market conditions
- With the introduction of place based working, homelessness will be part of these new working arrangements. The focus will be early intervention and prevention but focussing on helping customers to help themselves
- A Development Officer is being appointed to manage the transition to the new arrangements as determined by the new Act.
- The rough sleepers contract is being re-commissioned
- The Allocations' Policy, Strategic Tenancy Policy and the Homelessness Strategy will be updated to reflect these new arrangements
- Introduction of GP friendly practises

## **11.0 Conclusion**

11.1 In conclusion, homelessness is on the rise- as is complexity of need. The Council has changed its approach from a traditional service, to one that puts the customer at the centre. The Council has already committed to working across GM with partners and the third sector to try and end homelessness and the implementation of the new Act but retaining a local focus. Work continues on meeting housing need but presents many challenges going, however it requires the authority to monitor and adapt to the changing landscape that people face in their housing and risks to homelessness.

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**List of Background Papers:-**

Homeless 2017 and Beyond

**Contact Details:-**

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