

**Committee: Housing Board**

**Agenda Item**

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> August 2011**

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**Title: Housing Options homelessness update**

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### **Summary**

1. This report sets out recent changes in the allocations policy and the way that people apply for housing in the District.

The report also updates members on the number of people seeking housing advice or presenting as homeless.

### **Recommendations**

2. That the Housing Board notes the contents of the report.
3. That the Housing Board consider the use of underused council stock to provide extra emergency temporary accommodation.

### **Financial Implications**

4. Additional costs due to increase in use of bed and breakfast.

### **Background Papers**

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

### **Impact**

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	N/A
Community Safety	Housing options and homelessness services contribute to Community Safety
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	Housing options and homelessness services contribute to Health and Safety

Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

7. The Housing Options Team have now successfully completed the implementation of the Councils new allocations policy as well as the introduction of the new on-line application form. Uttlesford has been the first authority within the HomeOption consortium to move to an on-line application form, Chelmsford has since followed and other partners will be doing so in due course.
8. The implementation process began at the end of June when all current applicants on the housing register were asked to re-register using the on-line form. People who were unable to use the on-line form themselves were invited to use the services of the council's customer services team either in person at the council offices or by phone to help them complete their re-registration forms.
9. Once the forms had been received the applications were reassessed using the new banding system and then the applicants were notified in writing of which band they had been placed in.
10. Applicants received two further reminder letters before the cut off date of 15 August. Housing Options staff also contacted people they knew might have difficulty with the process and completed re-registration forms with them over the phone.
11. Prior to this process there were just under 1200 applicants on the housing register, we anticipated between a quarter and a third would not re-register as this has been the usual pattern when previous re-registration processes have been completed. Following the deadline 394 applications were removed and the applicants written to confirming that their application had been cancelled.
12. Since the end of June we have also only been accepting new applications via the on-line form. Again if people have difficulties accessing the internet or do not have the help of family or support workers, they can receive assistance from staff either at the council offices or over the phone. Currently the housing register contains 815 live applications. There are 175 applications waiting to be validated, these are applications where we are waiting for the applicants to send in their supporting documents.

13. To date a total of 1075 people have completed an on-line form either to re-register or to make a new application. The level of new applications received has more than doubled, over the same period last year, since the forms became available on-line.
14. The process has been a major undertaking for the housing options team and although a very small number of complaints were received, considering the major changes that have been implemented these were far less than might have been expected and in most cases were able to be resolved satisfactorily.
15. The number of people seeking housing advice has continued its upward trend and there has also been an increase in the number of potential and actual homeless cases.
16. Currently all the temporary accommodation at Molehill Green is full and we have three homeless cases accommodated in bed and breakfast, we are also using two council bungalows on a temporary basis. The Board may wish to consider the use of other underused properties within council stock, to provide further emergency accommodation and an income stream from stock that might otherwise remain void.
17. We have taken 17 full homeless applications to date since the 1 April, compared to 11 for the same period last year, some of which have been very complex and requiring a multi agency approach.

## Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Increase in use of bed and breakfast	4 – current temporary accommodation is full	4 – unsuitable accommodation for families and increased costs for the council	Convert further council accommodation

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.