

Committee: Housing Board

Agenda Item

Date: 30 June 2015

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Title: Homelessness Update

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Item for information

Summary

1. This report is to brief members on:-
 - The homelessness figures for the year 2014/15
 - The outcome of the recent peer review of the housing options service
 - The consultation process for the new homelessness strategy

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board notes this report

Financial Implications

3. None

Background Papers

4. Housing Performance Indicator Report 2014/15
NPSS Peer Review Report

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	N/A
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

Homelessness Figures

6. The table below shows the comparative homelessness statistics for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

	2013/14	2014/15
Homelessness Presentations	97	112
Homelessness Acceptances	57	60
Homelessness Preventions	80	45
Number of Temporary Accommodation placements made in the year	76	81
Average time spent in Bed and Breakfast by accepted homeless families	3.71 weeks	1.73 weeks
Customers receiving in-depth housing advice	433	859

7. As can be seen the levels of homelessness are still increasing, having significantly increased in year 2012/13.
8. The time lag effects of the recession continue to put individuals and families under pressure that in some instances has led to homelessness.
9. There has, with careful managing of the council's own temporary accommodation, been a decrease in the time it has been necessary to place homeless families in bed and breakfast, although the number of households in temporary housing at the end of the year is up on 2013/14.
10. The housing options team have seen almost double the number of clients for in-depth housing advice in the past year compared to 2013/14.

11. Although the team have continued to prevent homelessness, the figures show that it is becoming increasingly difficult, with families more reluctant to keep adult children at home and with many private landlords unwilling to consider applicants on benefits and with Local Housing Allowance rates well below market rents in this area. The options we are able to offer people facing homelessness are very limited.
12. The picture for the rest of the coming year is that the situation is likely to remain difficult, with the welfare reform changes having an increased effect on people's incomes and the continued lack of affordable properties within the private rented sector.

Peer Review

13. The housing options service has recently undergone a peer review which is part of the National Practitioner Support Services' (NPSS) Gold Standard Challenge (Supported by the DCLG).
14. The service scored very well against councils that have already been reviewed, many with considerably more resources than in Uttlesford. The review identified many areas of good practice some of which the NPSS would like to share with other authorities. It also made some recommendations that could enhance the service further and officers will now be looking to implement these.
15. It was particularly pleasing that the reviewers noted that staff were observed to have excellent listening and empathy skills as housing options and homelessness prevention work can be very challenging.

Homelessness Strategy

16. The council is due to renew its homelessness strategy this year and as such the consultation process will shortly commence on this. We will begin by reviewing the current document which is a chapter within the current housing strategy. It is proposed that this time the homelessness strategy will return to being a stand-alone document, co-incidentally this was also a recommendation made during the peer review.
17. A draft strategy will be brought to the next meeting of the housing board for discussion. It will then be put out for public consultation before the final document is put before members for approval. It is anticipated that the new homelessness strategy will be in place in January 2016.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
2. Cost of dealing with homelessness increases	2. The PI's show that homelessness still is on an upward trend	2. There will continue to be a need to have the funds available to	Careful monitoring of the homelessness budget allows for early notification if an overspend is

		meet the council's statutory homelessness duties	likely The Housing Options team continue to try to prevent homelessness where ever possible and keep the time that clients have to spend in nightly let accommodation to a minimum
2 Lack of temporary accommodation	2 There has been an increase in use of temporary accommodation over the past year due to increase in homelessness	3 If there is no other suitable temporary accommodation available then the use of bed and breakfast might increase. Legislation says that bed and breakfast should not be used for families, there is a risk of legal challenge if placements run over 6 weeks	Continue to monitor the availability of temporary accommodation and if necessary make provision from council stock for the use of existing properties as temporary accommodation
3 Council fails to produce a Homelessness Strategy	2 The document is a requirement by government and must be referred to when making homelessness decisions	3 There is a risk of challenge if the document is not updated	There is a timetable for producing the new document which will be reviewed regularly to ensure that the document is ready for adoption when the current strategy expires

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.