

Committee: Housing Board

Date: 10 December 2020

Title: Homelessness Update

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Summary

1. This report updates the Housing Board on the latest developments regarding Homelessness within Uttlesford.

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board:
Notes the contents of this report

Financial Implications

3. N/A.

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Members
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

5. The table below shows the comparative homelessness statistics for last three years

	2016/17	2017/18	2019/20
Homelessness Presentations	98	106	210
Homelessness Acceptances	52	49	20
Homelessness Preventions/ Reliefs	55	60	136

6. A dramatic increase in homelessness applications has been seen in the last 2 years. It is a testament to the work of the Housing Options/Homelessness Prevention Team that so many cases have been relieved or prevented. However, 2020/21 and the pandemic has increased the pressure on the Team. Whilst the number of applications remained steady, we have seen a large increase number of approaches for homelessness advice since the start of the pandemic this has resulted in the Team having to prioritising those in greatest need and in many cases only being able to offer short term solutions, with advice only to a large number of people contacting us.
7. The pressures of an increased workload during the pandemic and a reduction in available options for applicants, has seen a reduction in successful homelessness prevention and relief work. We have accepted the main homelessness duty for 25 people in the first 2 Quarters of this year, in the same period last year it was 8. Successful homelessness prevention and relief cases were 71 by Q2 last year, this year it is only 32.
8. The Team have also throughout the pandemic been responding to cases of verified and unverified rough sleeping and working to the Government guidelines on providing accommodation for public health reasons. We are also now looking at requirements for normal winter provision for any reports of rough sleeping. We have been working closely with colleagues within Essex County Council and other Essex authorities and will continue to do so, particularly in making joint bids for funding and resources link with rough sleepers.
9. The decrease in supply of affordable housing in 20/21 has reduced the through flow from temporary accommodation resulting in more people requiring Bed & Breakfast. We have doubled use of B&B so far this year. There has also been a 20% increase in numbers on the housing register.

10. The number of clients with complex needs continues to increase, particularly clients with serious offending history, mental health problems and alcohol and drug addictions
11. The situation remains difficult as far as finding alternative housing for people is concerned, as the private rented sector continues to be unaffordable or not accessible for other reasons for most of the people we are seeing. It is therefore essential that the supply of affordable housing is maintained.
12. We forecast a further increase in homelessness/ housing need following the pandemic. The DWP took 1328 new claims for Uttlesford during the first lockdown. In July: 12,700 out of 41,600 employees in Uttlesford were furloughed (it seems to be about 30% of employees in a lot of areas). It would take less than 0.5% of these to approach for homelessness assistance and our case load would be effectively doubled. We are also planning for an increase in the loss of private sector accommodation once the restrictions on evictions are removed.
13. The Council has recently approved the recruitment of two extra members of staff for the team, one to particularly focus on finding private sector housing solutions for people and managing our temporary accommodation

Risk Analysis

14.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The council fails to have sufficient resources in place to meet its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act if it becomes law later this year	2 –The council can adjust resources as required resources that may be required	3 – The council will be open to legal challenge if it does not fulfil its duties under homelessness legislation	The housing department will continue to do work to understand the demands that may be placed upon it by this legislation and put bids forward for the required resources as they are identified.

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.