

Report Title	COUNCIL RESPONSES TO HOMELESSNESS
Purpose of Report	To update Members on council initiatives to combat homelessness and seek authority to examine options to deliver temporary accommodation in the district for homeless households.
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES to:</p> <p>(1) Support the further investigation of options to deliver a temporary accommodation for homeless households; a further report to be brought before Housing Committee once options are clarified and costings known.</p> <p>(2) Locate suitable HRA properties to provide accommodation for former rough sleepers being supported via the Social Impact Bond.</p>
Consultation and Feedback	Any proposals for new provision will be brought before strategy and Resources Committee and will be fully consulted upon as part of the planning process.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>There are no finance implications arising directly from this report.</p> <p>Any costs associated with preparing an options appraisal for delivering temporary accommodation will need to come from existing resources. A full business case for any additional spend will need separate approval and will need to consider the revenue cost of any capital expenditure as well as the ongoing revenue costs of the accommodation.</p> <p>The financial position of the HRA would not be affected if a small number of properties are leased to a provider of supported accommodation.</p> <p>Lucy Clothier, Principal Accountant Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk</p> <p>Risk Assessment: the provisions of this report should help to mitigate the risk to the council and to individuals facing homelessness. The health risks of homelessness and rough sleeping are well-known and the provision of appropriate accommodation can alleviate this risk.</p>

Legal Implications	<p>This report seeks authority to take steps towards enabling the Council to satisfy the statutory duties in relation to homelessness that it is bound to fulfil.</p> <p>Nicola Swan, Interim Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: nicola.swan@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Author	<p>Pippa Stroud Policy Implementation Manager Tel: 01453 754099 Email: pippa.stroud@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Options	<p>The council has a statutory duty to carry out certain activities in relation to homelessness. One of these is to provide temporary accommodation to qualifying homeless households. At present, private sector provision outside the district is relied on to accommodate these households. This could continue but may not represent good value nor provide as good accommodation as more permanent housing provision appropriate to the needs of those households.</p>
Performance Management Follow Up	<p>A further report will be brought to Housing Committee with options for delivery once these have been explored.</p>
Background Papers/ Appendices	<p>Homelessness Reduction Act fact sheets: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-reduction-bill-policy-factsheets</p>

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 imposed new duties on Councils dealing with homeless households and has been described as ‘one of the biggest changes to the rights of homeless people in 15 years’.
- 1.2 In summary, it introduces a new prevention duty which applies to all applicants threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The council now has a duty to assess and provide a written ‘personalised housing plan’ for all eligible applicants.
- 1.3 It also introduces a new relief duty within which the council has a duty to take ‘reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available’.
- 1.4 On the face of it, these new duties reflect the good practice that the Housing Advice Team were already following prior to the introduction of the Act. However, practice has shown that the added paperwork and extension of time periods (from 28 to 56 days) that duties are owed has had a considerable impact both on the Housing Advice Team’s capacity

to process homelessness applications, and on the amount of temporary accommodation and extended stays required by these new aspects of the Act.

- 1.5 At time of writing, there are 6 people that we know of who are regularly rough sleeping in the district. A further 17 have accepted interim temporary accommodation and are waiting for suitable permanent accommodation to become available.

1.6 ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

1.7 Temporary Accommodation

- 1.8 As a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the budget expended on temporary accommodation has increased considerably, and shows no sign of reducing. At present, households are accommodated in a mixture of accommodation provided by private sector landlords and ranging from use of Travel Lodge hotels to private 'bed and breakfast' style facilities. None of these are located in the Stroud district and, at times of high pressure, can be as far away as Bristol or Worcester.

- 1.9 Clearly, this situation is unsustainable both from a budgetary or suitability perspective and the temporary accommodation budget of £50,000 is currently overspent by 240% to £172,000. In addition, accommodating homeless households away from schools, support networks or places of employment can be detrimental to the life chances of that household.

1.10 Social Impact Bond

- 1.11 Following a joint partnership bid in 2016 Gloucestershire was successful in obtaining £1.2m funding from the MHCLG to support work with entrenched rough sleepers and individuals experiencing repeat homelessness. In the case of Gloucestershire, the forward funding is provided by Charity P3 who provide the support element of this project, with a 'payments by results' mechanism to refund these costs to the charity from central government.

- 1.12 The provision of accommodation is pivotal to the success of the project and we have been approached by P3 to ask for 2 x 1 bedroom flats to be provided by the HRA. It is expected that the units will be leased to P3 who will provide intensive support to the residents.

- 1.13 We are currently already providing 2 accommodation units for specialist support by leasing them to Greensquare as 'Places of Safety' for those fleeing domestic abuse.

1.14 Gloucestershire Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

- 1.15 The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol is operational between 1st November and 31st March during periods of extreme weather. Emergency accommodation is made available for people sleeping rough for the night, and they are offered support to find more permanent

housing. Emergency accommodation is available in Cheltenham and Gloucester, with the Stroud District being the only rural Gloucestershire district having SWEF provision, provided from January to March 2019 by the Salvation Army and Stroud Baptist Church.

2. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Temporary Accommodation

2.2 Initial conversations have been held with Registered Providers about developing temporary accommodation within the district and managing it on behalf of the council. There could be options for this accommodation to be funded via capital borrowing by the council, or by borrowing by the Registered Provider, depending upon cost effectiveness.

2.3 Given the need to provide this accommodation without delay, it seems likely that the purchase and conversion of an existing property within the district would be the most appropriate route.

2.4 Social Impact Bond

2.5 Charity P3 has asked the council for the lease of 2 x 1 bed HRA units in order to accommodate former entrenched rough sleepers within the district.

2.6 Other Homelessness Issues

2.7 Homelessness is a complex issue with a number of routes available to the local authority to prevent or alleviate the effects on households. It has been identified that regularisation of revenue funding involved in the commissioning of specialist support services is required. As a result Members will note that £45,000 in revenue funding has been made available to the Housing Strategy budget in order for relevant services to be commissioned and retained.