

**TO: ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
20 JANUARY 2015**

**HOMELESS STRATEGY
Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To offer the Overview and Scrutiny Panel an opportunity to discuss the homeless strategy at an early stage of its formulation.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That the Panel considers the priorities agreed by the Homeless Forum as a basis for the homelessness strategy formulation.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 The Homeless strategy will directly support the Council's priority to sustain economic prosperity and medium term objective 10 to continue to find ways to enable people to secure a suitable home.

4. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local Authorities to carry out a homeless review and formulate and publish a strategy based on that review. This will be the Council's second homeless strategy since the requirement came into place as the Council was not required to publish a second strategy as it had achieved the top comprehensive assessment score in 2008/9.
- 4.2. The review must include the following elements:
- The current and likely future levels of homelessness in an authority's district
 - The activities carried out in the district to
 - Prevent homelessness
 - Securing accommodation in the area for people who are or may become homeless
 - Providing support for people who have been homeless and need support to prevent it recurring
 - The resources available to the authority, social services authority other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other such persons for the above activities.
- 4.3. The following table sets out the total number of homeless households the Council owed a statutory homeless duty to provide a permanent home for the last 7 years.

Unrestricted

Year	Total number statutory households	Percentage change
2008/9	81	
2009/10	26	-68%
2010/11	28	+7%
2011/12	72	+62%
2012/13	64	-12%
2013/14	108	+41%
2014/15 predicted	125	+14%

- 4.4. The main reason for homelessness has consistently been loss of private rented accommodation. In 2013/14 that reason accounted for 52% of all homelessness and it is running at similar levels in 2014/15. The second most common reason is parental eviction.
- 4.5. There has been an increased use of bed and breakfast accommodation over the last twelve months. In 2013/14 there were 2538 household nights of B&B used and so far in the first six months of 2014/15 there have been 3,973. This is despite the Council providing its own non-self-contained temporary accommodation in the borough and increasing the temporary accommodation is has via purchasing properties under the temporary to permanent scheme. The Council has also taken on more leased properties in the private rented sector to address the increased demand.
- 4.6. The increased use of bed and breakfast accommodation to provide emergency accommodation for homeless households reflects the change in the housing market and lack of availability of private rented accommodation. In 2012/13 there were 865 households who received advice and homeless prevention activity and homelessness was prevented in 97% of cases. Within that number 15% of households were helped into an alternative home in the private rented sector with financial help from the Council. In 2013/14 there were 747 households who received advice and prevention from the Council and of that 97% were prevented from becoming homeless. Of that number 13% were prevented from becoming homeless due to financial help from the Council to secure an alternative home in the private rented sector. In the first six months of 2014/15 346 households have received advice and prevention from the Council but 96% had been prevented from becoming

Unrestricted

homeless and only 7% had been due to the Council providing financial assistance so they could secure an alternative home in the private rented sector. It is the lack of access to homes in the private rented sector that is driving homeless demand and hampering the Council's ability to prevent homelessness.

- 4.7. The council has undertaken rough sleeper counts over the last two years. The counts are undertaken in line with Department of Communities and Local Government guidelines and if the guidelines are complied with then the DCLG will verify the count findings. The count figure is a net figure after taking into account any provision that was available for those found rough sleeping in the Borough on the night of the count. In 2011/12 three rough sleepers were found in the borough and in 2012/13 4 rough sleepers were found. Those rough sleeping are often known to the council and we have been working with them to help them overcome their barriers to securing a home.
- 4.8. The inaugural meeting of the homeless forum took place on the 19/11/14 to begin work on the homelessness strategy. The meeting was attended by various officers from services across the Council as well as housing providers and the voluntary sector. There is still the need to find representation of homeless families on the forum and also to invite the advice agency Shelter. The redesigned housing and benefit service to maximise household income and independence was recognised as a positive approach to preventing homelessness. The meeting agreed four priorities to work on to develop the homelessness strategy:
- Good quality housing advice and accessible prevention services
 - Partnership working to ensure expertise is best used and duplication of services is avoided
 - Meeting the need for emergency accommodation
 - Maximising access to the private rented sector
- 4.9. It is anticipated that the work on the strategy will progress over the next six to eight months with a view to recommending the strategy to the Executive in early autumn 2015.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Simon Hendey, ASCHH - 01344 351688
simon.hendey@bracknell-forest.gov.uk