

To: **Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing**
6th January 2022

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION PLACEMENT POLICY TO MEET HOUSING NEED
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PEOPLE

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to implement a policy relating to the allocation of temporary accommodation for homeless households. The purpose of this policy is to provide detailed guidance for the fair allocation of suitable temporary accommodation within and outside of Bracknell Forest borough boundaries.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Executive Member approves the implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy as detailed in Appendix A.

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 The Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy sets out the Council's proposed approach to the placement of households in temporary accommodation. The policy sets out the key principles underpinning placement decisions and prioritisation; when and how offers of temporary accommodation will be made and when offers will be brought to an end; when offers will be made into private rented sector accommodation; and how the council assesses suitability of accommodation in line with statutory guidance.
- 3.2 Whilst Bracknell Forest seeks to accommodate homeless households within the borough wherever possible, it may sometimes be necessary for households to be placed outside of the borough boundaries. The policy also sets out how placements inside the borough will be prioritised and, when it is necessary to make an out of borough placement, ensures that the Council is able to fulfil its statutory housing duties to homeless households by securing accommodation that is suitable and reasonable to occupy.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Do nothing. This option does not provide a clear approach to allocating temporary accommodation in line with relevant legislation.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants in certain circumstances. This is governed by legislation and guidance which can be found in the Homelessness Code of Guidance. In the first instance the duty is to endeavour to prevent homelessness where ever possible, this may take the form of intervention with landlords, negotiating with family members to continue to accommodate, or pursuing alternative housing options.
- 5.2 If it is not possible to prevent homelessness the Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households. Historically, the Council was able to meet the demand to accommodate homeless households into temporary accommodation within its own stock and that of its wholly owned housing company

Downshire Homes Ltd. This is supplemented by a small number of private sector leased properties managed by the council's Housing Service. In total the Housing Service manages circa 150 plus properties. The temporary accommodation stock is largely 2- and 3- bedroom properties (mainly houses and some flats) in the borough.

- 5.3 The situation has changed significantly over the last 12-18 months with an increasing demand, particularly with single people with complex needs and larger families. Currently there is a lack of one-bedroom units for temporary placement of single homeless households, which increases reliance on more costly nightly paid accommodation to fulfil our statutory homeless duty. Securing accommodation through the private rented sector is challenging as the sector is proportionately smaller in Bracknell than the South East or England and property is in high demand.
- 5.4 The use of Bed and Breakfast and other forms of nightly paid accommodation has escalated (principally for single people, families are accommodated in self-contained nightly paid accommodation if necessitated). At the end of Qtr. 2 in 2020 there were 9 households in nightly paid provision at any given time and by Qtr. 2 in 2021 there were 32.
- 5.5 The range of accommodation used by the Council to fulfil its obligation now includes:

Accommodation with shared facilities (Council owned and managed private sector leased)

The council owns and manages two properties comprising of a total of 20 rooms for with en-suite bathrooms and other shared facilities. These are currently only used for single households.

Council owned stock

The council has retained and acquired a small stock of temporary accommodation for homeless households, comprising of 50+ on street properties mostly 2- and 3- bedroom houses and some flats.

Downshire Homes Limited (DHL)

The council's wholly owned housing company has acquired 50+ on street properties for homeless households, again predominantly 2- and 3- bedroom properties

Private Sector Leased properties (PSL)

30 self-contained properties owned by private individuals are leased to the council and managed by the Housing Service.

Bed and Breakfast

Bed and Breakfast establishments used by the Council are independently managed. This accommodation is not self-contained although some rooms have en-suite facilities.

Nightly-let accommodation

This constitutes self-contained properties provided on a short-term nightly basis.

Both B&B and nightly let providers are fully vetted by the local authority prior to use.

- 5.6 At the end of Q1 there were 191 households in temporary accommodation which has subsequently reduced to 168 in Q2 as follows:

2021/22	Q1	Q2
Council own stock	48	50
DHL (Council's housing company)	50	49
PSL (Private Sector Leased)	23	22
Hostels	15	9
B&B	20	17
Other Nightly Paid	28	15
Shared	7	6
Total	191	168

- 5.7 In so far as is reasonably practical, the Council will seek to accommodate homeless households within Bracknell Forest and will always consider the suitability of the accommodation taking account of the circumstances of the individual. During the last 18 months it has become increasingly difficult to secure sufficient suitable accommodation within the borough.
- 5.8 It has become essential to secure out of borough properties. However, the Council has been able to secure accommodation within a reasonable commuting distance of the borough.
- 5.9 Of those above out of borough during Qtr. 1 and Qtr. 2 as shown below:

	Q1		Q2	
	Families	Singles	Families	Singles
Ascot	-	1	-	-
Datchet	-	2	0	10
Reading	1	5	1	6
Slough	1	4	-	1
Wokingham	3	2	-	-
Egham	-	-	-	1
Total	5	14	1	18

6 The Placement Policy

- 6.1 The policy attached as Appendix A is fully compliant with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) order 2012. The policy explains the statutory duties and considerations given to all placements made.
- 6.2 In accordance with Section 208 of the HA96 and legislation and guidance, the council seeks to accommodate homeless households within Bracknell as far as reasonably practicable and always considers the suitability of any temporary accommodation offered. However, due to the limited availability of temporary accommodation and shortage of affordable housing, it is sometimes necessary to place people outside of Bracknell. This policy sets out the council's commitment to placing in-area where possible and details clear criterion for determining whether, and in what circumstances, a placement outside the borough is justified. This will only be considered if all other reasonable options have been explored. We will monitor these cases in order to relocate them back into area at the earliest opportunity if that is their preference.
- 6.3 When the only properties available are out of borough, the policy will be followed. In making assessments when determining who to allocate the property to, a range of

factors will be considered including the proximity and accessibility for a household to employment, caring responsibilities, medical facilities and other support, and education.

- 6.2 There are a small number of applicants who may have no preference about remaining in the borough or who cannot remain within Bracknell Forest. This may be for a range of reasons including affordability of accommodation; to relocate to be closer to family; cases where the applicant is fleeing domestic violence or other violence; to enable rehabilitation away from previous contacts; and to maximise employment opportunities. We are able to support them into accommodation out of area – including into social housing in other areas of the country through Homefinder UK, which can be much more affordable than the local area for those willing to consider this.

7 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 7.1 The policy at Appendix (A) sets out the legislative framework and parameters, in accordance with Government Guidance, by which the Council, as local housing authority, formally determines “interim duty” housing accommodation offers made pursuant to Part 7, Section 188(1) Housing Act 1996 (“HA96”) (for those applicants it has reason to believe may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have priority need and whilst other homelessness duty inquiries are undertaken) and “full duty” temporary housing accommodation offers (for households accepted as homeless, eligible for assistance, not homeless intentionally and who are in priority need) made pursuant to Part 7 Section 193 HA96. The Policy does not cover final offers of secure, introductory, or assured tenant accommodation made pursuant to Part 6 HA 96, which is covered by the Council’s Housing Allocation Policy.
- 7.2 The attached policy covers the statutory requirements on local housing authorities in determining the suitability of temporary (including interim) accommodation under Part 7 HA96, having regard to the Suitability of Accommodation Orders, Chapter 17 of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s “Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018” and the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, as required by section 11 of the Children Act 2004.
- 7.3 The legislative requirements and checks and balances are as set out in the body of report at Appendix (A)

Financial Advice

- 7.3 The implementation of the Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy is not anticipated to incur additional costs.
- 7.4 The approach proposed to manage homelessness should ensure the best use of the council’s resources in meeting its statutory duties.
- 7.5 Reducing the use of nightly paid accommodation and the length of stay is a key priority for the council to deliver the best outcomes for homeless families and to reduce the expenditure in this area.

Other Consultation Responses

- 7.6 None.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.7 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). In discharging this duty the Council must have 'due regard' to a number of equality considerations and the potential impact on groups with protected characteristics under the Act.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.8 The most significant risk facing the Council is the increasing budget pressures due to increasing costs of emergency accommodation

Climate Change Implications

- 7.9 None

Background Papers

Appendix A: Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy

Contact for further information

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