

Subject:	Support Service for People in Temporary Accommodation		
Date of Meeting:	16th January 2019		
Report of:	Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	(All Wards);		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 In November Housing & New Homes committee, proposals were requested to look at how we can build on the support work that the Welfare Officers had been providing to help vulnerable homeless people living in temporary and emergency accommodation, both within the city and out of the city. Officers were also asked to look at innovative ways we can work to support applicants and homeless people through the application and assessment procedure.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Housing and New Homes Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the contents of the report and recommends to Policy, Resource & Growth Committee that £0.250m is added to the council's 2019/20 budget proposals in order to expand the options for providing support for people in emergency and temporary accommodation for one year only.
- 2.2 Delegates to the Executive Director of Housing the decision to determine the most appropriate option to achieve a support service within the £0.250m budget, if approved.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 There is evidence to suggest that, over the past couple of years, there is an increase in the level of multiple and complex needs that people who are becoming homeless are experiencing. This is reflected in an increase in the number of people who have died while resident in emergency or temporary accommodation. There is a case to be made for increasing support for these households which would not only benefit them but may also reduce longer term demands on statutory services.

- 3.2 Becoming homeless is very stressful and on top of this, a significant proportion of people in emergency accommodation need supported accommodation but due to the level of demand, this can take some time to provide.
- 3.3 There are now approximately just under 1700 households currently in emergency and temporary accommodation. Most of these households are in longer term temporary accommodation which are good quality houses and flats and they generally have relatively lower or no support needs.
- 3.4 However, there are around 400 households in emergency accommodation of which approximately 125 are outside of the city. Accommodation is arranged depending on where there are vacancies at the time people become homeless.
- 3.5 Of all the households in emergency accommodation, approximately 10% are on waiting lists at any one time for supported accommodation. Many households require floating support on a spectrum of quite intensive support to basic practical support to enable them to settle in and manage. Households who have identified needs come to our attention but there is another cohort who may have deteriorated and therefore have unidentified needs.
- 3.6 Emergency accommodation is basic accommodation and placement depends upon what is available at the time a household become homeless. People are placed into emergency accommodation either whilst they are being assessed for what housing duty the council may have, or whilst they are waiting for other accommodation to become available. The length of time they will be waiting will depend upon what the assessed accommodation solution is that can meet their needs. This might be moving to private rented accommodation; moving to other longer-term temporary accommodation or moving to supported accommodation.
- 3.7 Whilst most emergency accommodation is self-contained and has basic furniture, it is generally small. In addition, each block has a mix of households that have differing needs.
- 3.8 The council's two welfare officers have been a valuable resource in supporting people to help them manage in difficult times. Until 2015 there was a Housing Support Service and the proposals in this report draw upon what worked well to set out options as to how to build on current provision
- 3.9 To provide a support service equivalent to the previous Housing Support service will cost approximately £0.250m pa. In addition, we can enable the development of a volunteer service to support and help people through the application and assessment process as we appreciate this can be daunting at a stressful time.
- 3.10 Therefore the report recommends the provision of an initial support service for one year (2019/20) whilst officers monitor and evaluate alternative options for supported and temporary accommodation

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The current level of support services be continued but we will not be able to address the concerns being raised in respect of residents.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 We have undertaken some brief consultation with existing support providers. However, in view of the timescale it has not been possible to conduct full consultation.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There are concerns being raised at the gaps in the level of support available to households who become homeless and are placed into emergency and temporary accommodation. There is sufficient evidence to support these concerns and therefore to expand current support. To supplement support we will also give consideration to developing a volunteer service that would help people through the assessment and application process. This can be achieved at costs in the region of £250k.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The estimated cost of the service is £0.250m. The report is recommending that this service is set up for one year, while officers monitor and evaluate alternative options for supported and temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation is a housing general fund function. The current budget for temporary accommodation is forecast to overspend by £0.750m in 2018/19 although this can be mitigated in the short term by use of one-off grant funding. Therefore there is currently no budget available for a new housing support service. In order to fund this, new resources for 2019/20, approved by Policy, Resources & Growth Committee, are required. This report recommends that PR&G approve one year funding in 2019/20 of £0.250m to be included in the 2019/20 budget proposals

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 13/12/18

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The requirement under the Housing Act is to provide suitable accommodation. There is considerable case law around affordability location, space and arrangement. The Governments; Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities (Chapter 17) includes the requirements and circumstances of the homeless person. This is broadly set out, but does not include any reference to provision of welfare / support services. We are not aware of any case law which says provision of support is a legal requirement; as such it would be an addition to the basic requirements.
- 7.3 The government in its guidance (Chapter 16) acknowledges that local authorities can provide supported accommodation and commission supported housing services. This is as a concept somewhat different to what is proposed in this report (which is floating support) but could be a comparison.

- 7.4 Accommodation may be suitable in the short term even were it not to be suitable over a longer period.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court Date: 07/01/19

Equalities Implications:

- 7.5 In supporting the more vulnerable households in the city, this will have a positive impact on reducing inequalities.