

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing, Health & Older People / Resources
Date 9 December 2020



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH - STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

KEY DECISION

AUTHOR: HANNAH MORRIS

CONTRIBUTORS:

RYAN FOSS X2130, ALISON BAGGOTT X2549, KEITH REYNOLDSON X2403

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICERS: JAINE CRESSER X2028

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Housing First approach in response to the COVID rough sleeper crisis was brought before Executive in July 2020 (see Appendix 1). The report was brought in response to the increased demand for services and the evolving resource challenges facing the Council's Homelessness Services to provide support and suitable accommodation to those clients who have slept rough or been in imminent risk of rough sleeping in an attempt to stop the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic. Following the directive from Dame Louise Casey on the 26th March 2020 to have "Everyone In" (see Appendix

2) there has been a significant increase in the variety and level of work completed by the Council's Providing Homes teams to provide an urgent and short term response.

- 1.2 This Executive report is focused on the current spend to date for Temporary Accommodation since the implementation of National restrictions from March 2020 and confirms the approach for the council's provision over the coming winter months. A further report will be brought to the Executive before the end of the financial year to provide a business case overview for the Council's medium to long term provision.
- 1.3 This report outlines the Council's initial proposals for the medium and long term response to engaging and housing the Council's rough sleeper clients together with identifying the additional resources required.
- 1.4 Recommendations are set out in this report to explore accommodation, resources, monitor budgets and investigate opportunities (both funding and land led) linked to improving the housing related offer, including support and the supply of accommodation for tackling the current homelessness crisis in Stevenage.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive notes the support provided to homeless households during the Covid-19 restrictions, March – July 2020 and then November to December 2020.
- 2.2 That the Council's operational plan over the coming winter months, as detailed in the report, be approved, and that delegated authority is granted for the Strategic Director (RP), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People, to agree any minor amendments subject to financial control.
- 2.3 That the Executive notes the current service pressures in Housing and Investment within the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA), which will be monitored by the Council's Finance department in line with the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) planning which will be reported to Executive as and when required.
- 2.4 That it be noted that funding has been obtained through Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) for short term spends and it is requested that the Executive agree the approach detailed at Paragraph 4.32 of the report.

3 BACKGROUND: CONTEXT OF THE HOMELESSNESS LANDSCAPE PRIOR TO COVID-19

- 3.1 In December 2019 the Executive approved the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 (H&RSS 2019-2024). This strategy outlined the key trends locally and nationally showing that homelessness was on the increase. In Stevenage, the total number of homeless decisions being made had increased by 46% over a 4 year period from 105 in 2014/15

to 193 in 2018/19. Nationally, the Government's own figures showed that there were 25,130 families with children identified as homeless and that the overall number of children living in temporary accommodation hit a 13-year high at 126,020, up 83% since its lowest point in June 2011. Whilst other research (Campaign to Protect Rural England reported in H&RSS) pointed to an even worsening picture of the housing crisis, with growing waiting lists and not enough long term housing being built. As such, the current housing difficulties being faced by Stevenage and the country are not a result of Covid-19, but are a problem that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

- 3.2 The Council's approach to tackling homelessness in the H&RSS, identified four key priorities:
1. Prevention and relief of homelessness and rough sleeping
 2. Provision of temporary accommodation
 3. Long term increase in housing development
 4. Support for homeless households
- 3.3 Both Members and Officers recognised that these priorities would be challenging to meet and a partnership approach along the basis of the 'Housing First' approach- see Appendix 3 (a model that provides housing with a wrapped support package from the outset to street homeless vulnerable clients) would be necessary to protect the most vulnerable in Stevenage's communities, given their deep rooted and sometimes multi-dimensional housing, support and clinical needs. The strategy sets out the Council's vision to "work co-operatively to prevent and reduce homelessness and end the need for anyone to sleep rough in Stevenage".
- 3.4 The situation in Stevenage reflects the national picture; despite the co-ordinated and co-operative efforts by the Council and partners (including the Stevenage Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the Police, the Haven and other Voluntary and Community Sector organisations) in helping residents to stay in their homes, more and more households are finding themselves homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 3.5 In the week prior to the Covid-19 National restrictions (16th March 2020), there were 121 households in Council owned Emergency and Temporary Accommodation, (EA/TA) including 19 in bed and breakfast accommodation. During June 2020 (after first National restrictions period) this figure had risen by 66% to 181 cases in Council owned Emergency and Temporary Accommodation and an 27% placement increase to 69 cases in bed and breakfast accommodation. This level of demand placed a significant strain on already stretched resources to cater for this vulnerable client group. At the start of September 2020 the Council had 153 households accommodated in temporary accommodation and 47 cases in bed and breakfast which was at an all-time high. The teams have been working at pace to bring forward the actions detailed in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to achieve the 4 priorities which are vital in addressing the additional demands placed on the Council due to COVID.
- 3.6 Since the "Everyone In" directive was put in place on 26 March 2020 the Council has had 126 cases that were rough sleeping or an imminent risk of

rough sleeping that have been placed in accommodation that had been sleeping rough or at imminent risk of rough sleeping. There are 26 cases currently accommodated and of these there are 16 clients in nightly let accommodation and 10 of these cases within the Council's own Temporary Accommodation stock.

- 3.7 For every case the Council placed, this information was captured in the Hertfordshire case tracker which was introduced through the Hertfordshire Accommodation Cell. The tracker captures where cases have moved onto, whether they were evicted owing to serious crime and/or anti-social behaviour or successfully rehoused into alternative accommodation. This data has been used to inform what support services are needed to support this cohort.
- 3.8 The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have been working with Local Authorities throughout this period and have been attending the Hertfordshire Accommodation cell that was created and lead by Stevenage, Dacorum and Welwyn/Hatfield authorities to deal with pressures faced by all Local Authorities during this unprecedented time.
- 3.9 Following the second national restrictions introduced in early November 2020 Local Authorities have been directed to follow the "Protect programme" (Appendix 4) to ensure rough sleepers have the opportunity to isolate in the same way they did during the first national restrictions. In the two weeks following these restrictions the Council had 26 rough sleepers accommodated with 8 out of the 14 cases known to the teams to be rough sleeping after the first national restrictions who are not currently engaging and accommodated. The Council must therefore be prepared for at least these 8 cases to make a further approach.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

POST COVID-19 OUTBREAK, NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS AND STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

- 4.1 As detailed in the July Executive report the global scale and national impact of Covid-19 has been widely documented. Its impact on rough sleepers is all the more acute, as this client group is notably more likely to be suffering from issues relating to addiction and support needs for their mental and physical health.
- 4.2 The Council has engaged three rough sleeper workers through the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding, who have worked with the Temporary Accommodation team to provide support to this client group in addition to those cases otherwise owed a statutory duty for accommodation. The Council's No More service also offered support to all cases placed and worked with a number of the clients under the COVID initiative. Both the Rough Sleeping team and the No More service continue to work with the clients placed under COVID provision.

- 4.3 The Council's Housing Supply team have continued to source accommodation at pace in the privately rented sector (PRS) with 59 new tenancies sourced for cases open to the Council's Housing Options team since the start of this financial year despite a substantial period of resistance to non-essential moves within the sector for a number of months. In comparison there were 106 new PRS tenancies secured for the 2019/2020 financial year, which evidences we have achieved 55% of those secured the previous year by the end of Q2 of this financial year. This evidences that despite the restrictions in place to avoid any non-essential moves during a national pandemic the Housing Supply team have performed above target. It also reflects the positive relationship the Council's Housing Supply team have with private landlords in the Borough.
- 4.4 The Temporary Accommodation Team, with support from the Council's No More Service, have administered essential support to these homeless clients. The provision for these clients is not just limited to accommodation, but has also included food, transport and providing mobile phones and signposting to other services.
- 4.5 Security arrangements were put in place at the Holiday Inn Express "HIEX" during the initial block booking provision and the Team continue to have this in place to monitor the high risk placements to ensure safety for clients, members of the public and council staff. The Council continues to instruct security at the sites where high risk cases have been accommodated.
- 4.6 The Temporary Accommodation Team have worked hard to ensure that all of the rough sleeper cases placed at the HIEX were moved into alternative accommodation by 31st July 2020 when the HIEX provision ended. This was a mixture of permanent accommodation and more sustainable temporary accommodation.
- 4.7 The Homelessness Code of Guidance was updated in July 2020 to clarify priority need in relation to rough sleeper cases. Following this update the service continued to assess cases in line with this guidance, with legislation and by taking into account supply and resources in providing accommodation. Support is provided to each and every approach even if accommodation had not been provided once the national restrictions had eased. The considerations made in providing accommodation were to ensure the Council stopped continuous placements being made for any new cases that approach stating they are at risk of, or that are currently rough sleeping. The number of rough sleeper cases placed when the report was brought before Executive in July 2020 stood at 48 cases. The number and cases reported at this time is not static and the placement numbers have fluctuated throughout this period.
- 4.8 Following the introduction of a second national restriction on 3 November 2020 the Council now have 26 rough sleepers placed in accommodation and in order to meet additional demands the Council is utilising accommodation at two Stevenage Bed and Breakfast providers and additional accommodation at a provider outside Stevenage and based in Stansted which was a hotel utilised during the first national restrictions. The hotel

based outside of Stevenage had proved to be a proactive provider during this first period and the Council have continued to use them during the second national restrictions where they have arranged a shuttle service for residents to access the local pharmacy to collect their prescriptions, and the hotel have provided food. The Council have Rough Sleeper outreach workers working with Emerging Futures, and the Council's No More Service providing a physical presence at the hotel to engage with those placed. Prior to the 3 November 2020 there were only 6 rough sleepers in nightly let accommodation as the Council been able to accommodate the remaining cases in Council owned emergency accommodation or house into the private rented sector.

- 4.9 As detailed at 3.9, out of the 26 rough sleeper cases currently accommodated there are 9 cases previously identified to be sleeping rough and returned to rough sleeping at the end of July 2020, along with 5 cases that have been re-accommodated from 3 November 2020 and these cases are identified for intensive outreach work through Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) revenue funds. The Council has utilised the support worker funds to enter into arrangements with Emerging Futures and the No More Service who will focus on the drug and alcohol, mental health and offending behaviour support needs for the rough sleeper cases identified.
- 4.10 In order to move on the Council's rough sleeper cohort, the Housing First project identified in the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (HRSS) has been brought forward and the Council was successful in its funding bids for the next steps revenue and capital grants with MHCLG. Some of the initiatives put in place using the NSAP revenue funding is for deposits and incentives for those low to medium risk rough sleeper cases that can be housed through a Housing First approach within the private rented sector, with ongoing floating support. The Council's proposals through the Next Steps funding will assist these single homeless cases and any future cases. There are 1692 households on the waiting list and there are 941 of these cases needing single accommodation evidencing that 55% of cases on the waiting list are waiting for 1 bedroom properties. Single homelessness is not an isolated one off issue which is evident by the ongoing placements that have been required during both national restrictions with new applicants being identified since 3 November.
- 4.11 It is important to recognise the legal context at 6.0 of this report and financial implications at 5.0 of this report in relation to the Council's interventions in this area, as they have important implications for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. The Council has various statutory housing duties and the resources for remedying these have to be accounted for in accordance with the relevant legislation that is detailed below.
- 4.12 Where the Council has a duty to house an individual under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), then that cost is to the HRA. It is also possible to use section 9 of the Housing Act 1985 to provide housing accommodation, by building or acquiring properties and then letting those properties through the HRA. If the powers under Part 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (section 9) were used for the provision of temporary accommodation,

i.e. where a duty to house an individual had not been established, the role of the HRA would be limited to solely being a landlord function and all other costs and additional services would have to be funded from the General Fund and this accommodation is under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

- 4.13 The single rough sleepers that have been accommodated by the Council are unlikely to fall within any specific housing duty, such as under section 188 or 193 of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore are being supported through the Council's general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Therefore these costs will also have to be resourced through the General Fund.
- 4.14 Since 3 November the Council have been offering accommodation to all who were rough sleeping or imminently threatened with rough sleeping in line with the "Protect" directive. This has been provided in local hotels and the Council are currently working to convert suitable properties for rough sleeper use. These 15 rooms expected in December 2020 will be utilised for cold weather emergency placements. By utilising these units as they become available the Council hope not to have to make use of bed and breakfast accommodation of cold weather provision. In the Medium term the Council are moving forward with more secure housing options and developing client support networks
- 4.15 During the period 23 March to end of July 2020 the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators had been able to visit and communicate with the clients on a daily basis. They have begun to develop personalised support plans and establish referrals to other professional services. These personalised support plans cover the clients' housing, health and specific clinical wellbeing needs. The plans seek to identify pathways into new housing options for individuals, based on their capacity to sustain particular housing, the risks associated with independent or shared living, as well as the availability of housing opportunities.
- 4.16 In summary, Pathway One is intended for individuals who can manage or have managed to live independently before, but have recently been forced to sleep rough. They will be assisted to secure private sector accommodation and either establish or sustain support networks.
- 4.17 Pathway Two is for those that display a higher level of need, as a result of more frequent or sustained levels of rough sleeping that has caused them to lose support networks and become isolated. These individuals will need a greater level of support.
- 4.18 Pathway Three is for clients who display acute levels of need and require intensive, crisis intervention measures, usually in a managed supported housing, or hostel schemes, in order to manage complex challenges.
- 4.19

SUPPORT NEED	Housing Options	Estimation of Numbers
<p>Pathway one: Low support needs with established professional and clinical support networks</p>	<p>Secure accommodation directly into Private rented sector or via temporary stay in Council Emergency Accommodation /Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA) if time does not permit</p> <p>Consider shared accommodation with Floating Support.</p>	<p>There are currently 8 clients which have been assessed as suitable for 'pathway one'</p> <p>This will be the persons are now in PRS or pending PRS lets</p>
<p>Pathway Two: Medium level support needs with greater connections and referrals to professional support needed</p>	<p>This is for those that experienced a sustained level of rough sleeping and require far more support.</p> <p>Consider shared TA/EA via staffed Council premises or independent accommodation with higher frequency of multi-agency support before finding alternative private sector or Council/Registered Social Landlord accommodation subject to eligibility</p>	<p>There are currently 8 clients whose needs are classed as suitable for 'pathway two'</p>
<p>Pathway Three: High level client needs that require the most intensive support due to addiction or underlying clinical issues</p>	<p>Seek specialist partner agency accommodation such as that offered by the Haven hostel for a sustained period before move on accommodation is sought.</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 10 clients in this category</p>
<p>Reconnected (No longer in TA)</p>	<p>Through support, and professional agency referrals it is possible on occasions to secure reconciliation between family networks.</p>	<p>2 reconnected with their children due to being accommodated in Stevenage</p>
<p>Unsuccessful and showing signs of disengaging (No longer in TA)</p>	<p>Sadly, due to violent anti-social behaviour and other criminal activity some clients disengaged, have been evicted or were taken</p>	<p>2 evicted</p>

SUPPORT NEED	Housing Options	Estimation of Numbers
	into custody by the Police	

- 4.20 Whilst the analysis provided above hugely under-represents the time required to develop personalised interventions that support staff have been delivering, with huge effort and skill, it does help to highlight that the Council will need to secure more accommodation and support resources to help cater for the increased needs of the clients involved.
- 4.21 Increased accommodation resources will be needed to cope with providing the interim pathway accommodation to the group of rough sleepers that are not eligible for long term secure housing support from the Council. The demands from accommodating rough sleeper cases has caused a knock on impact for the overall EA/TA placement figures with numbers in bed and breakfast being the highest in the Council's history.
- 4.22 The Providing Homes teams and Development team continue to work together to increase the temporary and emergency accommodation available to the Housing Options team to accommodate individuals on a temporary and interim basis. This includes the proposal to build a 21 bed local authority hostel with a 12 bed move on Housing First project on site. This accommodation will however not be available for 2-3years.
- 4.23 In the short term, the Housing Options team had granted additional direct offers of accommodation to people owed a prevention, relief or main duty in order to free up emergency accommodation for rough sleeper cases to move into.
- 4.24 Clients that can manage their own tenancy with minimal support have been assisted with funds from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme grant, to help secure private sector accommodation. The Housing Supply team have assisted 26 cases of rough sleepers during the first national restrictions into PRS accommodation. The Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators initially support cases and then the Housing Supply Co-ordinators will continue offering support to these clients once housed into the PRS to support them to help sustain their tenancy.
- 4.25 In the event that further accommodation resources are needed for rough sleepers, they will be requested for a time limited and defined purpose, in connection with this current crisis. They will be further subject to the accounting and appropriation regulations governing any transfer of resource from the General Fund and HRA and officers will seek approval in accordance with constitutional and statutory processes.
- 4.26 Other options under consideration for increasing the supply of accommodation include; repurposing existing Council general needs stock and retail buildings, further open market acquisitions or repurposing some existing HRA new build schemes, and entering into reciprocal arrangements with specialist providers to create additional move on accommodation in

supported housing schemes. These proposals were detailed in the next steps funding bid which is set out in the Council's long term response below.

LONG TERM RESPONSE: MOVING FORWARD WITH A HOUSING FIRST APPROACH

- 4.27 The need for flexible accommodation that helps to support an individual and allow professional practitioners to efficiently deliver their services plays a huge part in ensuring successful housing and personal outcomes for clients. This kind of service is best built and delivered through a new purpose built hostel in Stevenage and would be similar to the service successfully operated by the Stevenage Haven. The Council's Housing teams will investigate if the demand and opportunity (in terms of land, multi-agency support and funding) is there to deliver such a service.
- 4.28 The Council's existing HRSS sets out an ambition to justify and resource a 'Housing First' model service. This would allow the Council to grant a stable offer of accommodation to those who would otherwise struggle to gain access to long term appropriate accommodation. The model sees housing as the first 'stepping stone' to recovery and long term sustainment and that, through support and engagement, it can be a powerful catalyst in changing clients' lives and reducing rough sleeping substantially in the long term. Trialled in over 75 schemes in the UK, it is a model that has huge success.
- 4.29 It is important to realise that the success of these schemes depend on the level of wrap around support that is provided to clients with highly complex needs. Therefore this will require a level of commitment from a range of agencies in the planning, delivery and continued operation of such a scheme.
- 4.30 Investigations have been made into the commitment to a Housing First model by engaging with key partners including Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and their commissioned support providers and the Haven.
- 4.31 The funding opportunities included the £105 million short term revenue grant to help local authorities implement a range of support interventions for people placed into emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic and until the end of financial year 2020/2021. Further the £433m long term capital funding grant was brought forward to help Local Authorities deliver 6000 new homes over a 4 year period.
- 4.32 The Council submitted proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding bids and were successful in these bids and have been issued with funds from the revenue and capital grant as follows;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial profile for short-term & intermediate projects (Revenue funding) 	
<p>Total revenue funding issued from Next Steps Accommodation Fund 2020/21 (9.1 - 9.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £80,115 For Emergency Provision £96,325 Security and CCTV £35,000 Support workers funded in full 	<p>£333,740.00</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £122,300 for PRS deposits and incentives 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial profile for capital-funded supported move-on accommodation 					
Total net capital funding issued for capital-funded supported move-on accommodation (premises) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversion works at 1 property offering 5 units Modular units offering a max of 16 units 3x support workers 	£1,038,910				
Support costs	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td><i>Annual net cost 2021/22 – 2023/24</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>£51,392</td> <td>£182,000</td> </tr> </table>	2020/21	<i>Annual net cost 2021/22 – 2023/24</i>	£51,392	£182,000
2020/21	<i>Annual net cost 2021/22 – 2023/24</i>				
£51,392	£182,000				
Total net revenue funding requested for capital-funded supported move-on accommodation (support linked to premises)					

4.33 Oversight and delegated approval to progress the design for the capital schemes will be sought through the Housing Development Executive Committee.

WORK PROGRAMME-

4.34 In order to transition the Council's response from immediate relief to one that seeks a more sustainable and longer term solution, a range of actions will need to be undertaken. The table below summarises the actions and priorities officers will be taking forward over coming weeks:

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
Co-ordinated Work by the Rough Sleeper Workers & No More service to complete Support Plans and the assessment of Client capacity for	To identify suitability of individuals ability to live independently or in supported accommodation and identify the correct move on pathway into more	10 July 2020	Support plans have been completed on all clients which are currently housed and are completed within 24 hours of a

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
independent living	suitable accommodation		presentation.
To detail a planned programme of reducing the use of Hotel accommodation to minimal levels before 1st August.	<p>To ensure effective use of resources and that the most suitable accommodation is made available to clients</p> <p>Housing Operations Manager Providing homes supported by seconded resource</p>	17 July 2020	Work has been carried out to free up existing EA/TA and repurpose unused housing stock for temporary use as EA/TA/
To develop a Housing First Business Case and appraise development options for the provision of new emergency and temporary accommodation. To develop governance approval routes in line with Council and statutory requirements	To establish new schemes, or repurposed schemes with appropriate council authority. This may include new Executive and Council approvals for the development of temporary/emergency Accommodation.	November 2020	<p>Work is underway on 4 properties to create more temporary/emergency accommodation:</p> <p>These properties will create an estimated 25 new units to ease current pressures on EA/TA and reduce the reliance on B&B and hotel usage.</p> <p>Further to this, land has been allocated for the creation of 8-16 modular units to provide further EA/TA accommodation. Work is underway to ensure these units are delivered as quickly as possible.</p>
Work with partners to analyse hostel supported housing move on performance in Stevenage.	<p>To ensure effective use of partner resources and to give partners reciprocal support in helping Stevenage residents.</p> <p>The Council will be working with partners to see what more can be done to improve move on rates through hostels and supported housing and to assess whether there are more people currently within</p>	Aug 2020	Work is on-going to enhance working partnerships with supported housing and support. Work has been done to understand the areas which clients need the most support to target support providers in these areas. NSAP revenue project in place with

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
	the hostel and supported housing system who would qualify to access private rented accommodation with tailored support packages.		Emerging Futures an No More Service for work until end of financial year 2020/2021. Arrangement to be put in place for successful capital revenue support over a 3 year period
Submit grant applications for Government Funding as and when they are announced (outlined above)	To secure capital and revenue funding for new supported schemes in Stevenage.	September 2020	Funding bid competed by Providing Homes and the Housing Development Team was successful for revenue and capital grant funding. Additional grant funding to be applied for, for rough sleeper provision until Housing First units are available.
Bring Business Case for long term provision of Housing First schemes back to Exec	To agree a long term provision for tackling rough sleeping	April 2021	Conversations are taking place with HCC relating to support, review of current spends and Development
Continue to lobby Government to be able to build new genuinely affordable council homes and for greater resources to support the vulnerable during this difficult period.	Council wide role.	Ongoing	Money available through the next steps funding bid for capital funding over a 4 year period and can apply each year. Application to be made for 2021/2022 when window opens. HCC are reimbursing for support costs.

4.35 In reviewing progress of the above work plan there are some successful outcomes detailed below;

CASE STUDY 1

- 4.36 The Council's Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators were aware of client A prior to 23 March 2020, but police contacted the team regarding this client during the first national restrictions as he was found sleeping rough at Fairlands Valley. He was difficult to find and engage for a short while but once engaged was accommodated at the Holiday Inn Express. The client struggles with reading and writing so the Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator (LS) worked closely with him in order to complete his housing register application, help him obtain relevant documents & identification, apply for jobs and also helped in re-connecting him with his daughter. This helped the client maintain engagement and a positive attitude. The rapport built up meant when things became difficult or stressful for the client he could speak to the Council's Officer about these. The Housing Supply team sourced a home in the private rented sector with him and then were able to assist him to move in successfully. The client was then able to have his daughter stay with him and he also managed to obtain employment.

CASE STUDY 2

- 4.37 Client B was an entrenched rough sleeper for around 8 years. Around 4-5 years ago he was staying at The Haven with his now ex-partner when they were offered a tenancy in the private rented sector. The relationship subsequently broke down and the client was back to sleeping on the streets. He was accommodated through during March - July 2020 in the Holiday Inn Express however consistently broke the curfew and was evicted for this. The Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators and Police began to see him regularly begging and rough sleeping resulting in him being moved on. The team continued to engage with this client and completed a referral to The Haven, where he was then offered a bed space but missed the interview to secure this due to his difficulty with time keeping. The team arranged for another interview which they attended with the client and he was successful and moved into the Haven the next day.
- 4.38 The work that has been completed by the Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators during this year has been invaluable and has really made a difference to the lives of those who had been sleeping rough in Stevenage.

ACCOMMODATION OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.39 There have been a range of development opportunities identified through the close working between Development and Providing Homes which will provide the proposed Temporary Accommodation and Housing First units some of which has been funded through the capital grant and some of which has been funded through the council's Open Market Acquisitions programme;
- 4.40

Project	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Funding
---------	---------	-----------------------	---------

<p>Site 1– 8/9 units.</p>	<p>This will be managed by the Temporary Accommodation team. Property completed and schedule of works have been completed. dedicated office space and staff and security provision. 2 Additional TA Officers will manage these units.</p>	<p>Works due for completion in December 2020/ January 2021</p>	<p>Property funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020</p>
<p>Site 2 – 5 rooms in property and 16 modular units proposed in the grounds of the property.</p>	<p>Garden has been portioned off for development land and for the placement of modular units- discussions with the Haven to manage the site once available.</p>	<p>Works underway on the main property, with an expected handover December 2020.</p>	<p>Funding through NSAP capital grant</p>
<p>Site 3 – 6 rooms in property.</p>	<p>Shared facility accommodation to be managed by the Temporary Accommodation team- 2 additional TA Officers will manage these units</p>	<p>Works underway and expected handover date end of November 2020.</p>	<p>Funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020</p>
<p>Site 4 – 5 rooms in property</p>	<p>Shared facility accommodation to be managed by the Temporary Accommodation team- 2 additional TA Officers will manage these units</p>	<p>Being worked on and scheduled for handover from the end of November 2020.</p>	<p>Funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020</p>

--	--	--	--

- 4.41 These projects will provide 24/25 additional units with the proposal to have an additional 8-16 modular units that it is proposed will be managed by the local provider Haven First.
- 4.42 As detailed at 4.21 the Housing Development team have also identified a site for the potential of a new hostel providing 21 bed spaces with a supported move on housing provision on the same site giving 12 self-contained bed spaces. These plans are being reviewed and will be brought to the Executive in due course.

IMPLICATIONS

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications during 3 November to 2 December and the coming winter months:

- 5.2 This Executive report shows the current and projected expenditure for bed and breakfast accommodation and confirms the proposals for our provision over the coming winter months. A further report will be brought before the Executive to provide a Business Case overview for our medium to long term provision.
- 5.3 On 27 March 2020 the 'Everyone In Directive' came into force and across the country, rough sleepers were provided with temporary accommodation in order to offer the opportunity to self-isolate. Once the national restrictions began to ease, Local Authorities were advised to follow the guidance, taking into account the supply and resources available to each Council. For accommodation costs until 31 July 2020 the Council spent £398,025. The total eligible amount that could be claimed from Housing Benefit, assuming a 100% recovery rate, would be £338,742. However this required all rough sleepers with the help of the housing service to complete claims, which proved challenging in some cases, leading to less than 100% of the projected recovery to be reclaimed
- 5.4 Grants were issued to Local Authorities to support the cost of accommodation, with a separate grant to upper tier authorities to cover the cost of support required. The Housing service have completed claims for support costs; food, transport, floating support from the 'No More Service' and other associated expenditure until July 2020, which totalled £78,853. A further grant claim of £47,360 has been summited to cover further outstanding support costs between July and October 2020 and there is an estimated £22,000 still to claim up to December 2020.
- 5.5 From the original calculations the projected net cost to the Council for accommodating rough sleepers and the support costs associated with this between 27 March 2020 and 31 July 2020 was **£150,502 (expenditure net of housing benefit and grant)**.

- 5.6 What is important to note is that during the period of national restrictions not only has there been an increase in placements for rough sleepers, but also an increase in the number of cases required to be accommodated under s188/s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
- 5.7 The Housing Benefit reclaim rate has not been at a 100% and this is mainly due to the nature of some short stays by applicants and the lack of engagement, from some clients, in providing the required information. The current recovery rate is estimated at 57%, but this could change as the majority of claims for the year are still to be processed.
- 5.8 As at 13 November there were 47 households placed into bed and breakfast accommodation with 16 of these cases being rough sleepers. The table below shows current ledger expenditure of £529,899 on rough sleeper and B&B costs and this has been offset by grant funding and housing benefit payments of £259,509, leaving a net cost of £270,390.

	Actual Apr-Oct	Projected Nov-Mar	Total 2020/21
Expenditure			
Accommodation and Food Costs	437,086	381,832	818,918
Security Costs	86,477	100,000	186,477
Transport and Other	6,336	15,108	21,444
	529,899	496,940	1,026,839
Income			
HCC Grant for Food and Support Costs	(42,648)	(69,820)	(112,468)
Initial Government Grant	(11,250)	0	(11,250)
Housing Benefits	(69,611)	(347,551)	(417,161)
Use of Homeless Support Grant	(136,000)	0	(136,000)
	(259,509)	(417,371)	(676,879)
Net Cost	270,390	79,570	349,960
Current Projections 2020/21			
Original Budget			80,000
COVID Impact Assessment Projection			312,530
			392,530

- 5.9 A projection has been made for the rest of the year and this allows for outstanding invoices and an estimate of housing benefit claim payments. It also estimates future demand and the impact of increased Council owned capacity over the coming months. The current projected net cost for the year is **£349,960** and this compares to the costs including the Council's COVID loss projections of **£392,530**. Key to meeting this projection is the ability to recover 57% of accommodation costs from housing benefits. The majority of benefit claims have yet to be processed and this continues to be a risk going forward. However, there are two further income sources that would help to mitigate lower housing benefit payments. Firstly, the Government have said that they would consider the use of severe weather payments to be applied to the second period of national restrictions costs and this will be calculated after

2 December 2020. Secondly, it is possible to add a charge for security that could be supported by benefit payments and this is currently being reviewed.

- 5.10 On 3 November 2020 the second national restrictions came into force for a period of 31 days. In order to ensure that the Council was able to offer accommodation to rough sleepers and to those cases rough sleeping the Council block booked accommodation with 3 hotels and this is reflected in the projections in the table above.

Costs associated with arrangements during the SWEP period “Severe Weather Emergency Provision” for rough sleepers and s188/s193 placements

- 5.11 The MHCLG guidance for providing SWEP has been to avoid shared facility/ night shelter style provision in order to stop the spread of COVID. The previous SWEP provision has included shared sleeping spaces at the Haven First accommodation site and using local churches. As these will not be viable options during this pandemic the Council’s proposals for rough sleeper provision from 3 November and during SWEP is as follows;

- Out of area B+B provider: 10 single room block booked at £49 per night for 31 nights from 5th November 2020 totalling £15,190, and evening meal for all –total £3,100 (food cost will be covered by HCC as agreed with the County)

The total eligible maximum amount claimable from housing benefit for this 31 days period is £13,990, however it is unlikely this will all be recouped due to the issues identified above This will leave a minimum net cost of **£1,200**

The provision of the service will be as follows:

- HCC to fund food costs and costs for transport.
- Hotel is offering a shuttle service to the local pharmacy to collect prescriptions, but CGL will also provide support for this.
- No More Service and Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators will be visiting the accommodation every day to engage with those placed.

- 5.12 Officers are expecting accommodation sites 3 and 4 (offering 10 rooms) to be ready for use in December 2020 and plan to utilise these future Housing First provision schemes to provide SWEP accommodation. The 5 rooms, at site 2 will be ready for use in December 2020, which can be utilised for SWEP pending the works for modular units to begin. These additional 15 bed spaces will reduce the need to use B&B accommodation.

- 5.13 For the 188/193 cases the proposal is as follows;
- Stevenage B+B provider 1: £40 per night for 15 cases; £600 per night-(12 weeks) total £50,400
 - Stevenage B+B provider 2; £60per night for 12 cases; £720 per night-(12 weeks) total£60,480

Total **£110,880** for 27 placements for 12 weeks.

Where the applicant qualifies for full HB room costs the total housing benefit would be **£102,102.84**. However, it is worth noting that it may not be possible to recover 100% of the eligible costs These figures are under constant review,

particularly the amount of benefit support that can be claimed, and are likely to change as more detailed case information becomes available.

- 5.14 HCC have reimbursed the Council for support costs claimed for up to July 2020 and officers are due to submit support cost claims for the period July-November 2020 shortly. HCC have also confirmed that they will continue to reimburse SBC for support costs until the end of the financial year.
- 5.15 Following the first lock down the robust action plan was due to supply 24 Housing First units by the end of the financial year. However the second national restrictions meant further B&B has had to be put in place before the additional units are available. This means there is a requirement to place rough sleepers into bed and breakfast accommodation initially for a four week period in order to ensure that every person has the opportunity to self-isolate during the lock down. 6.15.
- 5.16 It is important to note that at 27 November 2020 the Council had 55 cases placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, which is the highest number of placements to date. There are 17 rough sleeper cases placed with 36 placements accommodated under section 188/s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This shows the impact of COVID 19 on all homelessness groups and just rough sleeping. Therefore the general pressure on temporary accommodation places looks likely to remain

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The legal requirements in relation to the General Fund and the HRA are detailed within this report and were included in the report brought to Executive in June 2020.
- 6.2 Where the Council has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, it has a duty to make such inquiries as are necessary in order to satisfy itself:
 - Whether the applicant is eligible for assistance (this will depend on their immigration status) and
 - If so, whether the Council owes any duty (and if so, what duty) to the applicant under the Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”).
- 6.3 Under Section 189A of the HA 1996 where the Council is satisfied that an applicant is both homeless/threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance, it has a duty to carry out an assessment of their circumstances and then try to agree with them what steps they need to take to ensure they have and can retain suitable accommodation and what steps the Council needs to take under the HA 1996.
- 6.4 The Council owes the “full housing duty” under S193 to applicants who are:
 - eligible for assistance and
 - homeless, and not intentionally homeless and
 - in priority need

6.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a number of new duties for Local Housing Authorities which are designed to try to prevent or deal with homelessness at an early stage meaning that the total time that applicants are open to the Housing Options team is over a much more substantial period of time and a decision relating to the s193 duty cannot be reached until the 56 day prevention and 56 day relief duties have expired.

6.6 The Housing Options service has a current caseload of 689, which averages 86 cases per full time member of staff. This includes those who are seeking housing advice. The demand for the service has grown significantly since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and has continued to show year on year growth. Approaches to the service are detailed below;

- During 2018 /19 there were 1314 approaches to the service (equates to 25 approaches per week)
- During 2019/20 there were 1571 approaches to the service (equates to 30 cases per week) which is a year on year increase of 20%

6.7 Our records show that there has also been an increase in approaches during this financial year compared to last;

Approaches to Housing Options		
Period	Number	Percentage Increase from last financial year
Jan-March 2020 (pre COVID-19 restrictions)	471	36% increase on same quarter last year
April- June 2020 (during Lockdown 1.0)	381	Static on last year
July-Sep 2020	369	Static on last year
Oct 2020	149	81% increase on same quarter last year
November 2020 (during Lockdown 2.0)	116	68% increase on same quarter last year

6.8 It is important to note that despite many restrictions being in place to ban evictions, to stop all non-essential moves taking place and for the country being under national restrictions from March until July 2020 the service still received the same number of approaches compared to the same quarter last financial year.

6.9 In March 2020 the average caseload per full time Housing Options Officer stood at 60 case per officer. At today's date the average case load stands at 86 cases per full time officer showing a 69% increase.

6.10 The eviction ban was lifted in October 2020 and the expectation is that this will have a substantial impact on the numbers of cases approaching the service for assistance. In order to prepare for this consideration is being given to how

the Flexible Homeless Support Grant “FHSG” can be used to support this increased demand.

- 6.11 For the last financial year 525 preventions were achieved which is approx. 10 preventions per week which would not have been possible without the funding from the FHSG for these posts managing the sheer volume of cases approaching the service. The FHSG funds a substantial amount of staff within the service and we await the announcement from Government for the next financial year’s allocations.

7 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 7.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Officers do not consider that the recommendations above will have an adverse impact on those with protected characteristics but this will be kept under review as proposals are developed.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024. (Stevenage Borough Council). Available at:

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/15953/21310/167267/224752/Homelessness-Rough-Sleeper-Strategy-2.pdf>

COVID 19- Provision of Night Shelters

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters>

9 APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - Executive report July 2020
- Appendix 2 - Everyone In directive by Dame Louise Casey 26/3/20
- Appendix 3 - Housing First Overview
- Appendix 4 - MHCLG Protect Programme (electronic appendix – link below)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-launches-protect-programme-the-next-step-in-winter-rough-sleeping-plan>