



Report to: Communities Committee, 20th July 2022

Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes & Communities

Subject: ANNUAL HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE 2021/22

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report;**
- 1.2 That the Committee note the contents of the Annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Report 2021/22; and**
- 1.3 That the Committee endorse the proposed allocation of resources.**

2. Background

- 2.1 The City Council has a statutory duty to prevent homelessness and to provide assistance to people threatened with or who are actually homeless under the primary legislation of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- 2.2 In 2002, the government amended homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 to strengthen the assistance provided to priority needs groups and to make it a requirement for local authorities to have a homelessness strategy. The Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-2022) is currently in the process of being renewed and will be brought to Communities Committee in November 2022.
- 2.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a significant reform to homelessness legislation placing duties on local authorities to intervene earlier with an enhanced prevention duty extended from 28 to 56 days and a duty to relieve homelessness for those who are already homeless by helping them to secure accommodation. In addition, it placed a duty to provide services to all individuals affected and not just those in a 'priority need'.
- 2.4 There is no legislative or statutory requirement to produce a homelessness report however in order to inform the Committee of the extent of demand, response and activity of the homelessness service, an annual report has been produced and is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3. Service Demand

- 3.1 The past two years have been unusual and particularly challenging for homelessness services and have seen significant shifts in the nature of people seeking help, advice and support leading to less of an ability to intervene and prevent their homelessness.

- 3.2 In 2021/22, the service received 1,871 approaches for homelessness assistance which led to 736 homeless applications being taken. The team accepted 337 prevention duties and 490 relief duties where prevention could not be achieved.
- 3.3 The biggest cause of homelessness was family no longer able or willing to accommodate (300) with the end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies being the second most common cause (194). 167 presentations related to people who were homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse. Worcester City Council employees two Domestic Abuse Housing Solutions Officers to specifically work with this group of individuals to provide specialist advice and support.
- 3.4 Rough sleeping is one of the most visible sides of homelessness though accounts for a small proportion of those affected by homelessness. Worcester City has a number of entrenched rough sleepers of between 4-6 individuals who receive regular support and engagement from the Council and partner agencies. The Council has two rough sleeper housing solutions officers to support and intervene specifically with this group of people to seek stable and sustainable housing solutions.
- 3.5 Worcester does also see influxes of rough sleepers from out of the area who are either drawn to the range of established services in the City or passing through in transit to elsewhere. It is recognised that these individuals often have multiple and complex needs and require intensive engagement and support as well as highly individual and bespoke approaches to seeking to resolve their homelessness.
- 3.6 Worcester City Council offers an enhanced model of No Second Night Out to enable people without accommodation immediately and for 28 days with associated support to give an opportunity to support move on to alternative accommodation.
- 3.7 During the pandemic, two government funded schemes operated to support people who may not otherwise be eligible into accommodation; 'Everyone in' and 'Protect and Vaccinate'. These schemes indicated that the provision of temporary accommodation and associated support for individuals who may not otherwise be eligible, could have a significant impact on rough sleeper numbers.
- 3.8 The homeless service manages 12 units of temporary accommodation and has access to a further 22 properties owned and managed by Platform Housing Group. Demand for temporary accommodation exceeds this provision and there remains a reliance on B & B/ Hotel accommodation for any shortfall. The number of households in temporary accommodation fluctuates and on 31st March 2022, there were 68 households in temporary accommodation.
- 3.9 In addition to general needs accommodation, in line with previous delegation, the authority are pursuing the acquisition of an additional 8 units of accommodation to be used as Safe Houses for individuals who are homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse.

In order to do this, the Authority will be entering into a lease arrangement with a Registered Provider based on cost neutral model of delivery and it is anticipated that this will reduce the subsidy loss of the in more expensive and less suitable temporary accommodation.

- 3.10 The availability of safe, sustainable and affordable accommodation remains one of the biggest challenges in responding to homelessness with demand being significantly greater than supply. On 31st March 2022, there were 2,574 applicants

on the housing register with 439 affordable allocations to Registered Providers during the year.

4. Proposed allocation of resources for 2022/23

- 4.1 Prevention remains a key priority for the homelessness service and we recognise the value in preventing people from being put at risk and facing homelessness. Where prevention is not possible or unsuccessful, swift and supportive intervention work will be undertaken.
- 4.2 We recognise that some individuals face homelessness on multiple occasions and that some individuals are more at risk of tenancy failure. Therefore will be exploring opportunities to provide greater support, advice and intervention before tenancies commence.
- 4.3 The Council is seeking to further develop its approach to delivering individual, bespoke and innovative options and solutions to address rough sleeping in the City. Examples include funding a detox programme with move on arrangements into accommodation, the use of pod accommodation and the support and facilitation of therapeutic, meaningful activities.
- 4.4 We need to balance a strategic approach to the prevention and response of homelessness but ensure that we maintain the focus of individuals throughout service delivery.
- 4.5 Maximisation of housing options remains a key priority including both affordable housing as well as good quality private rented accommodation.
- 4.6 The allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is outlined as follows:

Brought forward from 21/22	1,049,913
Homeless Prevention Grant 22/23	474,097
Support workers x 4 +0.5 FTE	148,185
Outstanding cost to cover Young Persons Housing Solutions Officer role	5,000
Housing Solutions Officer (Domestic Abuse) to 31/3/23	32,910
Customer/Business Support Officer for Temporary Accommodation	30,000
Accommodation Officer(proposed from 1/10/22- not yet recruited)	16,465
Tenancy Sustainment Officer (proposed from 1/10/22- not yet recruited)	16,465
Pre tenancy training officer 18.5 hrs (proposed from 1/10/22- not yet recruited)	8,233
Additional Generic Housing Solutions Officer	30,000
Contribution to Worcester City Lettings Post	12,854
Fixed Term Property Std Post/City Lettings (proposed from 1/10/22- not yet recruited)	22,160
Property Standards Officer Post	31,658
System Support costs	6,140
Housing Solutions staffing costs	350,000
DV Coordinator-County wide post	4,375
HOPEs contract-extension	51,605

CCP-Park Street	48,246
SWEP Cold Weather Fund	40,000
Worcester City Lettings support costs	2,000
Total allocation for 2022/23	856,296
Carry forward to 23/24	667,714

5. Implications

5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

The authority receives grant funding to support the through the Homeless Prevention Grant which has the following conditions:

1. To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
2. Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention, and reduce the use of unsuitable B&Bs for families.
3. Ensure service financial viability of services by contributing to the costs of statutory duties, including implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act and supporting with the costs of temporary accommodation

In 2021/22, Worcester City Council received a homeless support grant of £464,362 and a subsequent exceptional one off winter top up of £97,366 which was all fully allocated.

The 2022/23 Housing Prevention Grant allocation to Worcester City Council is £474,097.

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 placed a duty on local authorities to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness and to take reasonable steps to help those who become homeless to secure accommodation. The Act introduced a change to the point at which a person is classed as being threatened with homelessness from 28 days before a person is likely to become homeless to 56 days. It requires local housing authorities to provide new homelessness services to all people in their area and also expands the categories of people who they have to help to find accommodation and give advice to.

5.3 Risk Implications

The provision of a homelessness services is a statutory provision and includes duties around the prevention and response to homelessness. Failure to deliver and provide a comprehensive homelessness service could result in an adverse impact on the health and wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness.

5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

This report supports all the themes in the new City plan

- Stronger and connected communities
- A prosperous city

- A healthy and active city
- A heritage city with a 21st Century culture
- Enhancing and sustaining our beautiful city for future generations.

5.5 Equality Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed in association with this report however a breakdown and analysis of those approaching the homelessness service and their protected characteristics has been provided within the Annual Homelessness Report (**Appendix 1**).

5.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no additional human resource implications resulting from this current report.

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

None identified in this report.

Ward(s): **All Wards**
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Background Papers: **Appendix 1- Homelessness Annual Report 2021/22**