

**Report to: Communities Committee, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: ANNUAL HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE 2022/23**

**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 2022/23; 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.
- 2.3 The Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2022-2025) was adopted by Council in January 2023 with a Worcester City action plan outlining the priority areas of work surrounding homelessness and rough sleeping in the City. The strategy will remain under review to ensure that it meets the needs of Worcester along with the Worcester City action plan which will be reported to this committee through the scorecard. An update of delivery of the action plan has been attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 2.4 A Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper group has been established to oversee delivery of the strategy with local arrangements in Worcester also being established to ensure scrutiny of delivery of the Worcester City action plan.
- 2.5 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'.
- 2.6 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 2**.

### **3. Service Demand**

- 3.1 The past twelve months have been challenging in respect of demand on the homelessness service. In 2022/23, the service received 2,002 approaches for homelessness assistance (131 more than 2021/22) which led to 814 homeless applications being taken (78 more than in 2021/22). The team accepted 377 prevention duties (an additional 40 than 2021/22) and 437 relief duties (53 less than in 2021/22) where prevention could not be achieved.
- 3.2 The biggest cause of homelessness was family no longer able or willing to accommodate (328) with the end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies being the second most common cause (267) which saw a significant rise of 73 from 2021/22. 171 presentations related to people who were homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse which is a comparative number to 2021/22 (167) though remains high. Worcester City Council employs two Domestic Abuse Housing Solutions Officers to specifically work with this group of individuals to provide specialist advice and support.
- 3.3 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 a rough sleeper housing solutions officers to support and intervene specifically with this group of people to seek stable and sustainable housing solutions.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, there were 77 households in temporary accommodation, up from 68 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 3.7 In addition to general needs accommodation, inline with previous delegation, the authority are pursuing the acquisition of 10 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.

3.8 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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, there were 3,293 applicants on the housing register, an additional 719 from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 with 363 affordable allocations to Registered Providers during the year, 76 fewer than during 2021/22. We have therefore seen a significant increase in demand over the year alongside a reduction in supply.

#### **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 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 which will be focussed around the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and action plan

4.4 Maximisation of housing options remains a key priority including both affordable housing as well as good quality private rented accommodation.

4.5 The allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grant is outlined as follows:

<b>B/fwd</b>	<b>935,705</b>
Homeless Prevention Grant 2023/24	- 489,617
Outreach Officers x 4.5 FTE	162,000
DV Coordinator-County wide post	4,550
County Intelligence Officer Post-County wide post	4,550
Customer/Business Support Officer	31,200
TA Placement Officer (0.5 FTE)	15,600
Additional Housing Solutions Officer post	31,200
Contribution to Worcester City Lettings post	13,368
Contribution to Private Sector Housing Technical Officer post	20,000
Additional Property Standards Officer (Private Sector Housing)	44,000
System Support Costs	6,340
Housing First	56,048
Contribution to General Fund (Staffing costs)	489,000
Single Person HOPEs contract	70,000
Worcestershire Nightstop Mediation	15,000
Intervention and Transition Team post	35,000
Park Street Management costs	35,562
Severe Emergency Weather Protocol (SWEP)	40,000
<b>C/fwd</b>	<b>351,904</b>

## **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 2022/23, Worcester City Council received a homeless support grant of £474,097 and a subsequent exceptional one-off winter top up of £74,897 which was all fully allocated.

The 2023/24 Housing Prevention Grant allocation to Worcester City Council is £489,617.

### **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 2**).

### 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.

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<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Appendix 1- Worcester City Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeper Action Plan update</b> <b>Appendix 2- Homelessness Annual Report 2021/22</b>