



**South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council**

**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio Holder  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Housing

1 April 2014

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## **Update on the provision of Temporary Accommodation**

### **Purpose**

1. To update the Portfolio Holder on the provision of temporary accommodation.
2. This is not a key decision as it is for information only.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder notes the actions taken to date and the current provision of temporary accommodation to assist those who are statutorily homeless.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. Report is for information and the Portfolio Holder is asked to note the progress made to date.

### **Background**

5. The Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for homeless applicants who are eligible for assistance and in priority need. This will be only a short term duty for those considered to be intentionally homeless, however, in the majority of cases applicants are not intentionally homeless and the duty to provide temporary accommodation remains until this is discharged through an offer of permanent accommodation.
6. The Council are required to produce a homeless strategy every 5 years. A new homeless strategy was approved in October 2013 and took into account the change in the economic climate and, following a change in government, new housing policy and changes to the benefits system which have and are expected to continue to have a high impact on the housing advice and options service. The Council has seen an increase in homeless applications and those needing temporary accommodation, at the same time as homeless prevention is becoming more difficult due to the difficulties accessing the private rented sector.

	Ave quarterly figure 2012/13	Ave quarterly figure 2013/14 (3 quarters)
Homeless applications	38	48
Homeless acceptances	26	36
Households in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter	42	50

7. One of the main objectives of the homeless strategy is to ensure there is sufficient accommodation available to people who are, or who may become, homeless.
8. The Council wish to avoid using B&B accommodation wherever possible. Not only is this very expensive, it provides unsuitable accommodation for families with children and adds to the distress of becoming homeless.

### Considerations

9. The following information provides details of the actions taken, to date, to ensure there is sufficient temporary accommodation and minimal use of B&B.
10. **Development of Robson Court** – work has commenced on site. This will increase the capacity to 30 (from 20) units and provide better quality self-contained accommodation for homeless households. (In the interim alternative provision has been secured from ex-service personnel accommodation located nearby in Waterbeach).
11. **Empty Homes Scheme** – Ten properties have been purchased under the empty homes scheme for use as temporary accommodation.
12. **Casework management** – Officers are actively managing cases in order to discharge our duties and free up temporary accommodation.
13. **Discharge of duty policy** – this was approved in Oct 2013 and enables the Council to discharge its homelessness duties into the private rented sector. (It is not anticipated that this will be necessary in many cases, as many households are already assisted into the private rented sector prior to a homeless application as a means to preventing their homelessness).
14. **Homeless prevention** – Despite the difficult market conditions the housing advice service has increased the number of homeless preventions through the private rented sector. (In 2012/13 the average quarterly figure for homeless prevention was 33 households, compared to the current year where the average is 40)
15. **Use of council properties as temporary accommodation** – Where appropriate Council properties are being used as a form of temporary accommodation in order to minimise the need to use B&B. This is usually where the property cannot be let permanently as we also need to maximise the number of properties that can provide permanent homes. The number of Council owned properties used to provide temporary accommodation has risen from an average of 19 properties at the end of each quarter in 2012/13, to an average of 29 at the end of each quarter in 2013/14.
16. **Working in partnership** – Officers have continued to look for opportunities to work with partners to address our temporary accommodation needs. Examples include the use of temporary accommodation located in Royston when the local Council were

unable to fill the vacancies and developing a protocol with Cambridge City Council to use each others temporary accommodation vacancies as an alternative to using B&B.

17. With both homeless applications and homeless prevention cases increasing, it is clear the service is seeing an increase in demand, however, over the past two quarters the numbers of households in temporary accommodation has remained steady.
18. Expenditure on B&B has reduced considerably when compared with the previous financial year. The average monthly spend on B&B during 2012/13 was £8,314, this has reduced considerably in the current financial year to £2,082 (up to the end of Jan)

### **Options**

19. Report is for information

### **Implications**

20. The successful use of homeless prevention techniques and the increased supply of good quality temporary accommodation has helped hold down the use of bed & breakfast accommodation in South Cambridgeshire. This means that a better quality service is provided to homeless applicants and the Council has saved many thousands of pounds of potential expenditure.

### **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

21. Report is for information and no consultation has taken place.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

#### **Aim 6**

22. Increase the supply of temporary accommodation, prioritising council-owned properties whilst not restricting options in other sectors.

### **Background Papers**

Homeless Strategy 2013-2018

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