



## Policy and Resources Committee 5 June 2017

### Homelessness Monitoring Statistics and Temporary Accommodation Costs

#### Purpose of report

This report provides councillors with details of the level and causes of homelessness in the district of East Northamptonshire, together with Bed and Breakfast costs.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 6 February 2017, the Finance Sub-Committee received a report concerning the increasing pressures in the district in respect of homelessness. It was agreed that quarterly reports would be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee to enable any increases and trends to be monitored.
- 1.2 This is the first such report and provides East Northamptonshire's homelessness figures for the last 3 years i.e. 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17. Further reports will be submitted as figures become available, subject to committee report and publishing deadlines, anticipated to be September and December 2017 and March 2018.

#### 2.0 Homelessness statistics

- 2.1 The table at 2.2 shows the numbers of homelessness applications made to East Northamptonshire Council under the legislation during 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, together with the numbers of acceptances i.e. those to whom the council accepted a full duty to provide accommodation. It also details the number of homelessness preventions undertaken through the Housing Options Contract.

2.2

East Northamptonshire Council Homelessness Statistics					
Year	No. of Homeless Applications	No. of Homeless Acceptances	% of Applications Accepted	No. of Homelessness Preventions	Acceptances plus Preventions
2014/15	114	42	37	242	284
2015/16	125	48	38	240	288
2016/17	135	59	44	281	340

- 2.3 Whilst the numbers of applications and acceptances are relatively low compared with other districts in the county there has been a significant upward trend in the 2 years between 2014/15 and 2016/17, with an 18% increase in applications (from 114 to 135), and a 40% increase in acceptances (from 42 to 59).
- 2.4 It can also be seen that the number of homelessness preventions is substantial. It is the prevention work undertaken by the Housing Services and Housing Options Teams which has kept the homelessness applications and acceptances figures relatively low over the last few years, due to early intervention which prevents homelessness occurring. A more accurate picture of the work undertaken on homelessness in the

district can be judged by adding the acceptances and preventions together, as in the end column at 2.2.

2.5 Reasons for homelessness are varied. The table at 2.6 below shows the reasons for homelessness of those accepted as homeless during 2016/17.

2.6

<b>Reason for homelessness</b>	<b>Number</b>
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	10
Other relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate	2
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	6
Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	7
Other forms of violence	1
Harassment, threats, intimidation	1
Mortgage repossession	0
Rent arrears – registered provider	0
Rent arrears - private sector	1
Loss of rented through termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	24
Loss of private rented other reason	5
Left hospital	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

2.7 It can be seen that relationship breakdown and the loss of insecure accommodation, such as with family and friends, are significant causes of homelessness. However, the more worrying trend recently is the loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies, which is now the highest single cause of homelessness in the district. This is largely due to landlords deciding to sell their properties both as a result of an upturn in the housing market and less beneficial tax arrangements. In addition, fewer new properties are becoming available in the private rented sector as a result of the tax changes, and in particular the increase in stamp duty for landlords purchasing property.

### 3.0 Temporary accommodation costs

3.1 There is limited temporary accommodation in the district and homelessness prevention work reduces the need to provide it. When it is necessary, we try wherever possible to avoid the use of bed and breakfast, particularly as it is not always available in the district.

3.2 The council currently provides grants through the Homelessness Prevention Grants Fund to temporary accommodation projects at High Street South, Shoemaker Court and the Night Shelter, all in Rushden, totalling £32,494 in 2017/18. (The accommodation at the Recovery House also receives grant funding but is longer term in nature). High Street South and Shoemaker Court are used for priority cases in preference to bed and breakfast, whilst the Night Shelter provides accommodation when the council has no duty. Housing benefit costs for rent and service charges at these supported projects are also subsidised by the government.

3.3 The table below details what Bed & Breakfast has cost the Housing Benefit and Homelessness budgets over the last 3 years:

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Total Housing Benefit Cost</b>	<b>Subsidised by DWP</b>	<b>Not subsidised</b>	<b>Homelessness budget B &amp; B Costs</b>	<b>Total Cost of B&amp;B to ENC</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	£17,261	£6,460	£10,801	£583	£11,384
<b>2015/16</b>	£8,500	£3,694	£4,806	£1,048	£5,854
<b>2016/17</b>	£22,149	£8,337	£13,812	Est £1,615	Est £15,427

- 3.4 It can be seen that there has been a significant increase in the cost of B&B from last year to this year. The provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act will further add to the costs of temporary accommodation. A report providing more detail on the increased duties and costs to be incurred will be brought to the next meeting of this Committee.

#### **4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 4.1 This report is purely for information and requires no decision from committee. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The council has a statutory duty under the housing and homelessness legislation to accommodate households found to be homeless and in priority need and to prevent homelessness where this is possible. Those homeless but not in priority need are due a lesser duty but this still includes the provision of advice and assistance to find accommodation. The council's duties will be increased when the Homelessness Reduction Act is implemented.

#### **6.0 Risk Management**

- 6.1 There is a risk that homelessness will increase in the district and that the council will have to pay the additional costs associated with the risk. The council's risk register includes RM PLN 014 – 'Increase in Homelessness Applications'. The risk score has recently been increased to 8 in recognition of the additional homelessness pressures, leading to a 'very high' likelihood of an increase.

#### **7.0 Resource and Financial Implications**

- 7.1 Further increases in homelessness in the district and changes to legislation will continue to place additional pressures on available funding and may lead to additional staffing costs to process the increased level of applications and deliver the increased duties, together with increased temporary accommodation costs.

#### **8.0 Constitutional Implications**

- 8.1 There are no constitutional implications arising from the report.

#### **9.0 Customer Service Implications**

- 9.1 Any increase in homelessness applications will have an impact on the number of calls and visits to both the council's and the housing options contractor's offices. The council will need to ensure that adequate services are provided to meet our statutory duties towards people who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness.

#### **10.0 Corporate Outcomes**

- 10.1 The prevention and relief of homelessness contributes to the following corporate outcomes:
- Good Quality of Life – the reduction of homelessness improves quality of life and reduces the health and social problems associated with homelessness
  - Good Value for Money – homelessness prevention saves the council money in the longer term by limiting the costs of temporary accommodation

## 11.0 Recommendation

- 11.1 The Committee is recommended to note the increasing level of homelessness and B&B costs in the district and the further pressures anticipated as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

<b>Legal</b>	Power: Localism Act				
	Other considerations: Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 Homelessness Code of Guidance Homelessness Reduction Act				
<b>Background Papers:</b> Finance Sub Committee 6 February 2017 Item 9					
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<b>Date:</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2017					
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