



Policy and Resources Committee - 4 December 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.

2.0 Homelessness statistics

- 2.1 The table at 2.2 shows the number of homelessness applications made to East Northamptonshire Council under the legislation during 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 and for the first half of 2017/18, together with the number 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	266	314
2016/17	135	59	44	281	340
Qs1 & 2 2017/18 (Prediction 2017/18)	85 (170)	45 (90)	53	148 (296)	193 (386)

- 2.3 The figures demonstrate the considerable continuing upward trend in the numbers of homeless applications and acceptances.
- 2.4 The number of homelessness preventions also continues to increase. 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 and in the first half of 2017/18.

Reason for homelessness	2016/17	Qs1 & 2 2017/18
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	10	7
Other relatives/friends no longer willing to accommodate	2	1
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	6	6
Violent breakdown of relationship with partner	7	1
Other forms of violence	1	0
Harassment, threats, intimidation	1	0
Mortgage repossession	0	0
Rent arrears – registered provider	0	0
Rent arrears - private sector	1	0
Loss of rented through termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	24	25
Loss of private rented other reason	5	3
Left hospital	2	0
Other reason	0	2
Total	59	45

2.7 At over 50% of cases, loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies continues to be 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, 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. Figures are not yet available for the current financial year.

Financial Year	Total Housing Benefit Cost	Subsidised by DWP	Not subsidised	Homelessness budget B & B Costs	Total Cost of B&B to ENC
2014/15	£17,261	£6,460	£10,801	£877	£11,678
2015/16	£8,500	£3,694	£4,806	£1,393	£6,199
2016/17	£22,149	£8,337	£13,812	Est £1,615	Est £15,427

3.4 The significant increase in the cost of B&B from 2015/16 to 2016/17 is likely to continue in 2017/18 and beyond as a result of the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The council has resolved to increase the Homelessness B&B budget in 17/18 to £5,000 in recognition of the anticipated increase.

3.5 It should be noted that this information is also reported to the Housing Policy Working Party and the statistics in paragraph 2.2 to Scrutiny. As it is not normal procedure for information only reports to be presented to this committee, it is proposed that the information contained in the report should be circulated via quarterly Member Briefings with reports to this committee only when there is a further significant change in activity that may require additional resources or changes in policy.

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 cost 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. The Council recognises this increased demand on homelessness and temporary accommodation budgets and is actively working to forecast future trends in demand in order to instigate mitigating actions to minimise the potential cost increases.

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 steady increase in the level of homelessness and B&B costs in the district and to agree the receipt of this information by Members Briefing in future unless there is a significant change in position that requires additional resources or policy changes.

(Reason – to ensure that councillors are aware of the changing situation in respect of homelessness and of the consequent impact on the delivery of the council's homelessness services)

Legal	Power: Localism Act				
	Other considerations: Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 Homelessness Code of Guidance Homelessness Reduction Act				
Background Papers: Finance Sub Committee 6 February 2017 Item 9					
Person Originating Report: Carol Conway, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager ☎ 01832 74(2078) ✉ cconway@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 17 th November 2017					
CFO		MO		CX	