

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT

1. Meeting:	Cabinet
2. Date:	21st May 2014
3. Title:	Scrutiny Review - Homelessness
4. Directorate:	Resources All wards

5. Summary

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review relating to Homelessness. The review was undertaken by members of the Improving Places Select Commission. The report and recommendations were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, at its meeting on 25th April 2014.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet receives the report and recommendations

Reports back its decision on the recommendations to OSMB within two months of this meeting.

7. Proposals and Details

The need for this work was identified as part of the service review and improvement process by Neighbourhoods and Adults Services and was referred to the Improving Places Select Commission for the review to be undertaken. Members were also concerned about the implementation of the new Welfare Reform policy.

Work by the review group consisting of Council Members, Officers and a co-opted member, began in August 2013.

Information was gathered from customers, members, stakeholders along with statistical data from the Housing Options Team and the Income Team in relation to the effects of Welfare Reform. A visit to two crash pads was completed by the review group and a valuable input to the review was contributed by the tenants.

The review has been carried out alongside the renewal of the Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 with findings and recommendations incorporated into the Homelessness Strategy 2014 to 2018. This strategy is still to be finalised and approved by Cabinet.

The scope of the review included

Short Term Focus

Improving information for clients who are faced with homelessness, along with a better understanding of the 28 day rule.

Temporary accommodation was concerned with;

Availability and quality of temporary accommodation and the overall customer experience of using the service.

Crash pads,

- their locations and
- standard of and service available to the customers.

Longer Term Focus.

Sub Regional Collaboration, is concerned with the number of bedspaces/direct hostel spaces available.
Out of hours emergency phone service.

The following three points were introduced into the scope of the review after it had begun.

To identify plans to re-populate the town centre(s) via empty properties, flats over the shops etc.

The partnership with private sector landlords to improve housing choices and the potential impact on the prevention of homelessness.

An update on efforts to enforce and improve standards within the private rented sector.

- 7.1** The findings from the report are shown in Section 4 of the review and give a detailed explanation of “Homelessness” along with some statistical data regarding rent arrears and the bedroom tax.
- 7.2** The recommendations from the review are detailed in Section 6 and include areas for further work to be undertaken. A summary of the recommendations is listed below.

Raise awareness of the “28 day rule”

Trends relating to rent arrears in relation to Welfare Reform to be reported to Improving Places Select Commission.

Improved communications between the Private Sector Housing Officer and the Homelessness Team in relation to improving work with private sector landlords, increasing support to tenants and reducing the number of empty properties in the borough.

Further exploration at regional level at officer and member level into the option of increasing bedspace provision.

Homelessness as an issue is considered at the planning stage of any future regeneration schemes in the borough.

For the Council to explore how it invests in property and assets with the aim of reducing homelessness and out of authority

8. Finance

The recommendations in this report relate to use of existing resources more effectively.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There is a risk that interventions will be short term and not achieve a sustainable impact. To avoid this, we will need to ensure that any new approaches are properly embedded within the council and partner agencies.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Homelessness Strategy 2014 -2018 currently being updated

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The report has been circulated to key individuals that participated in the review for their comments and to check for factual accuracy.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 24th April 2014

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