

Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review - Homelessness

Recommendation	Cabinet Decision <i>(Accepted/ Rejected/ Deferred)</i>	Cabinet Response <i>(detailing proposed action if accepted, rationale for rejection, and why and when issue will be reconsidered if deferred)</i>	Officer Responsible	Action by (Date)
1. That the Homelessness Section should undertake work to raise public awareness of the '28 day rule'. Specific awareness raising/training should be undertaken with elected members to increase understanding of the implications of these changes.	Accepted	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Awareness raising/training has been included in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan under the Priority 3 – Providing Quality Information on all Housing Options, action points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver training to Elected Member's and colleagues on all aspects of homelessness • Develop a Homelessness Prevention Pack for customers offering advice where to get help • Increase opportunities to self-serve and access information on the website or locally 	Jill Jones	March 2015
2. Information and trends regarding rent arrears in relation to Welfare Reform "bedroom tax" should be monitored and reported to members at the Improving Places Select Commission meeting on a half yearly basis by the Homelessness Manager.	Accepted	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendations</p> <p>The information and trends regarding rent arrears are monitored by the Income team. The reports requested will be presented by the Business and Commercial Programme Manager, during the forthcoming year, and then be subject to review.</p> <p>The Rent Policy will be subject to a Scrutiny Review.</p> <p>In the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan Priority 5 – Reducing the risk of people becoming homeless due to financial difficulties, action points are:</p>	Paul Elliott	March 2015

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement changes to the Allocation policy (Sandra Tolley) • Implement a new Rent Policy (Paul Elliott) • Ensure early intervention and prevention is offered through advice to tenants and joint working 		
3.The Private Sector Housing Officer to explore the option of issuing a newsletter to private sector landlords to promote the benefits of the private rented sector and how they can contribute to reducing homelessness.	Rejected	<p>Cabinet amends this recommendation to offer an alternative method of communication with private sector landlords</p> <p>Previously a landlord newsletter was produced with private sector support funding but this is no longer available.</p> <p>It is anticipated that other methods of communication, i.e. Council website, landlord forums and the landlord accreditation will offer ample opportunities to promote the benefits of the private rented sector and how they can contribute towards reducing homelessness. See also 4 below</p>	Paul Benson	December 2014
4. Improve communications between the Homelessness Team and private sector landlords via the Private Sector Housing Officer, holding regular meetings and being proactive in reducing the number of empty properties.	Accepted	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>In the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – Priority 6, Helping more people to access and sustain private rented accommodation, the action points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Landlords to encourage them to provide information on available empty properties to the Housing Options team • Promote intensive tenancy support to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness • Facilitating Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspections to improve standards 	Paul Benson Lianne Hancock	March 2015

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The homelessness team encourage the customer to consider private sector accommodation to alleviate their homelessness. 		
5. The Homelessness Section continue to explore potential partnership options to address the lack of bed space provision, particularly for women and young people who need additional support.	Accepted	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>In the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – Priority 2, Ending Rough Sleeping in Rotherham and Priority 4, Reviewing the provision of temporary accommodation the actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to ensure we provide advice and support for rough sleepers Work with partners to access accommodation Support bids from the voluntary sector for Fair Chance Funding Submit a sub-regional bid for funding to assist single homeless households access accommodation. Apply the ‘No Second Night Out’ protocol Assess the availability of temporary accommodation/direct hostels in Rotherham and the sub-region Work sub-regionally to access bed spaces Review the suitability and success of supported and move on accommodation 	Jill Jones	March 2015

<p>6. Explore the above and other potential opportunities for joint service provision sub regionally via the South Yorkshire Leader's meeting.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>To take forward this suggestion of working sub-regionally it is proposed that the issue of lack of bed spaces is raised at the South Yorkshire Leader's meeting to consider how this aim can be achieved.</p> <p>In the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan - Priority 4, Reviewing the provision of temporary accommodation, one of the actions is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify how a customer may access a bed space sub-regionally <p>This action will allow us to explore this possibility.</p> <p>A paper needs to be prepared by the Homelessness Manager and this will be presented initially to the South Yorkshire Leader's meeting by the Leader to brief the group on Rotherham's suggestion to allow access to hostel spaces sub-regionally, and gain their view – if accepted then further work will be carried out at the sub-regional homelessness group.</p>	<p>Jill Jones</p>	<p>March 2015</p>
<p>7. Develop a coherent, cross service approach to tackling empty properties within the Rotherham Borough utilising existing resources</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation</p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – Priority 6, <i>Helping more people to access and sustain private rented accommodation</i> encourages landlords to offer up available empty properties to the Housing Options team.</p> <p>Council Tax empty property lists will be used to identify those private rented sector properties that have been utilised to support the Council's homelessness programme.</p>	<p>Tom bell</p>	<p>March 2015</p>

		<p>Private empty property owners will be informed of opportunities to offer their properties for letting, either as landlords or to letting agents who will manage them on their behalf, to assist in meeting the homelessness demand.</p> <p>We have approval to utilise Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's) and Enforced Sale proceedings to assist with bringing empty properties back into use, these methods will be included into a new Empty Property Policy which will support their use as an intervention to prevent potential homelessness.</p> <p>We will provide support to Revenues and Benefits to enable empty property owners to access assistance/schemes offered by the Council and third parties i.e. HOPE, which may help bring empty properties back into use.</p>		
<p>8. Consider ways to provide tenancy support to private sector tenants within the Rotherham Borough.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation</p> <p>There is already provision for tenancy support within all housing sectors which is provided by Supporting People floating support services.</p> <p>In addition, to prevent failed tenancies in the private rented sector, the Tenancy Intervention Officers who are part of the Homelessness team will provide intensive support at the start of the tenancy as required, and will intervene if tenants or landlords have issues which may put the accommodation at risk at any time.</p>	<p>Jill Jones</p>	<p>March 2015</p>

		<p>In the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan - Priority 6, Helping more people to access and sustain private rented accommodation, two of the actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that private sector tenants are supported to sustain their tenancy • Develop and implement services to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness • Review the paper bond scheme and consider other appropriate alternatives such as a guaranteed rent scheme for the first month of the tenancy 		
<p>9. The Homelessness Manager to arrange implementing the suggested improvements to the crash pad provision</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>In the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan – Priority 4, Reviewing the provision of temporary accommodation, the action points are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake reality checks of temporary accommodation • Carry out a 6 monthly review of crash pads, location, standards, and information available to the customer when they arrive <p>The above actions are now implemented</p> <p>In addition we will consider feedback from customers of their experience whilst in temporary accommodation, and respond to suggestions to improve our services</p> <p>Regular inspections of the properties and the provision of support for occupants are embedded in the service. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of information for occupants about the local area • Visit twice per week to check occupancy and 	<p>Jill Jones</p>	<p>March 2015</p>

		<p>offer advice about resettlement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check vacant crash pads every 2 weeks to ensure that they are safe and secure • Individual gardens maintained during summer • £30k investment during last 2 years to redecorate and re- carpet 		
10. The Neighbourhood Investment Team to look at building provision to both prevent and tackle homelessness in future regeneration schemes at the planning stages and consider ways that this could incorporate an extension to the HOPE project or other similar projects.	Accepted	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strategic Housing and Investment Service will consider the implications of property acquisitions and the re-housing need when undertaking future regeneration schemes. • If Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's) are utilised in a new Empty Property Policy, the Strategic Housing and Investment Service will consider the opportunity to provide accommodation for homelessness clients. 	Tom Bell	March 2015
11. For the Council to explore how it invests in property and assets with the aim of reducing homelessness and out of authority placements.	Accepted	<p>Cabinet accepts this recommendation</p> <p>The Strategic Housing and Investment Service don't have a budget but will explore opportunities to assist Key Choices to apply for external funding to invest in property and assets with the aim of reducing homelessness and out of authority placements</p>	Tom Bell	March 2016