

---

# To review the prevalence of homelessness in West Berkshire and to review the impact of the Council's activity over the winter period

---

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission on 9 July 2019
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Hilary Cole
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	19 June 2019
<b>Report Author:</b>	Sally Kelsall
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	n/a

---

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 A report was brought to this Committee on 9 October 2018 outlining the Council responsibilities for tackling homelessness and in that report, details were provided of the new legislation, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) which was implemented on 1 April 2018. At that time, the Council provided additional revenue funding to address the new responsibilities contained within this legislation as well as new burdens funding provided by the Government.
- 1.2 The report also contained details of the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding received from The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 following the launch of the Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 and details of the progress with the variety of projects supported by that funding. The aim of this report is therefore to provide an update to the HRA and RSI projects.
- 1.3 In addition, the Homelessness Strategy Group (HSG) developed a short term winter strategy for 2018/2019 as well as other longer term projects. This report will provide an update of the review of this winter plan and the outcomes for homeless and rough sleepers within West Berkshire and implications for future years moving forward. Further information will be provided of the position with the development of the Housing and Homelessness Strategies.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the contents of the report are noted and that the outcomes of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and RSI funding initiatives and resultant approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping are approved.

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** In February 2018, the Council agreed additional funding towards new posts to support the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act when implemented in April 2018. In addition, Government funding has been awarded to West Berkshire under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to tackle rough sleeping i.e. £212,000 for 2018/2019 and

£264,820 for 2019/2020 for a variety of projects. A further £102,500 has been awarded for a further 2 workers to work specifically with single people. The MHCLG funding lasts until March 2020, so there would be issues if this funding was removed and an exit strategy would have to be developed.

- 3.2 **Policy:** The Council has legal obligations to reduce homelessness and has a Housing Strategy, and Homelessness Strategy which includes a Rough Sleeping Strategy and Rough Sleeping Plan as well as a Tenancy Strategy. Policies which come under those strategies include the Allocation Policy. There are additional protocols between the Council housing services and other internal and external services such as the Young Persons Protocol, Prison Release, and Hospital Discharge etc. The Homelessness Strategy introduced the "Duty to Refer" which is a statutory duty for external agencies to refer to the Local Authority in the event of a person requiring services under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 e.g. prison services, hospital discharge.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** The Council approved additional staff for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, partly funded by grant (new burdens, flexible homelessness reduction grant and homelessness grant). There are additional staff resources to be covered by the RSI grant, mostly employed by external agencies such as Two Saints. The grant covers a Homelessness Reduction Co-ordinator recruited to manage the RSI project and report to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This post will assist to co-ordinate all agencies involved in rough sleeping to meet the Government's ambitions of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it by 2027.
- 3.4 **Legal:** There are legal implications of not complying with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 such as legal challenge.
- 3.5 **Risk Management:** The RSI funding will be closely monitored by a Homelessness Reduction Co-ordinator who will report to the MHCLG on a monthly basis. The HSG has worked in partnership to develop a short term strategy for rough sleepers for the winter of 2018/2019. A review has taken place of the winter plan which will feed into the winter plan of 2020/2021 with lessons learned and taking all risks into consideration.
- 3.6 **Property:** The Council has a programme of purchasing property to be used as temporary accommodation to reduce the need for Bed and Breakfast

3.7 **Other:**

#### 4. Other options considered

4.1 The report is for information only.

## Executive Summary

### 5. Introduction / Background

- 5.1 The Council has statutory duties to provide housing advice and address homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) was implemented in April 2018 as an additional obligation on the Council to prevent and relieve homelessness and the Council provided additional revenue funding to address the new responsibilities as well as new burdens funding provided by the Government.
- 5.2 The Council has also been awarded funding under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 following the launch of the Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 5.3 The Homelessness Strategy Group (HSG) developed a winter plan for rough sleeping and is now carrying out a review of the winter plan for 2018/2019 with a view to making recommendations for the coming winter.
- 5.4 The purpose of this report is therefore to provide a summary of the housing services work following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, progress with the RSI project as well as the outcome of the winter plan 2018/2019. Information will also be provided about the strategic work on-going as well as the re-organisation of operational meetings.

### 6. Proposals

- 6.1 The report will provide detail of the outcomes of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as well as details of the allocation of grant funding from the RSI from the MHCLG which is £212,000 for 2018/2019 and £262,000 for 2019/2020. There are a number of projects which have to be put in place very quickly in order to be ready for this winter. There are proposals for the Council to develop the Homelessness Strategy and to bid for funding opportunities from the Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy which was launched in August 2018.

### 7. Conclusions

- 7.1 In the past 18 months, there have been a lot of changes in the delivery of housing services, both to households at risk of becoming homeless and rough sleepers. The strategic focus of the HSG has assisted all parties concerned to work together constructively and with positive outcomes. The development of this group, reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board is in line with Government proposals and will work to develop both the short term and longer term homelessness and rough sleeping strategies.
- 7.2 The outcome of the RSI projects will assist with strategic work into future years and shape the Housing and Homelessness Strategies due to be developed.

### 8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Supporting Information
- 8.2 Appendix B – West Berkshire's Homeless Reduction Act Statistics