

Subject:	Next steps - Rough Sleeping and Accommodation during Covid 19 Pandemic and Recovery Report		
Date of Meeting:	7th October 2021 22 nd September 2021 – Housing Committee		
Report of:	Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities Relevant Executive Director		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 As we move toward easing and removal of lockdown measures and ending of Covid-19 restrictions, this report provides a further update on key areas of action and issues arising as follows.
- 1.2 Following our successful bids for funding under the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP), we continue to work closely with Government on securing further funding and support for verified rough sleepers in the City through future Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme grant (RSAP), Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and other funding routes
- 1.3 We have been successful in bidding under round one of the RSAP for funding to support the purchase of an additional 12 properties for Housing Led Support (to complement the 18 to be purchased from the agreed Housing Revenue Account budget) plus an additional 30 units under 10-year leases for Rapid Rehousing Scheme. Both purchases require budget and borrowing approval. The borrowing will be paid for by the future rental streams.
- 1.4 Under the terms of our NSAP funding bid, we prioritised rough sleepers, including those placed in emergency accommodation under Everyone In during the pandemic, for reconnection or move on to: NSAP funded accommodation; commissioned supported accommodation; or the private rented sector. However, owing to significant pressures arising from the pandemic we continue to accommodate significant number of households to whom we owe a statutory accommodation duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act in our remaining emergency accommodation. In light of this we are seeking approval to extend some of the short-term emergency hotel provision we acquired beyond the current approved term limit of October 2021.
- 1.5 In preparing for the winter, we are also identifying hotel accommodation and seeking approval for its retention for use under our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol provisions (SWEP). It is proposed to follow the same type of provision as for last winter and in the light of guidance from MHCLG. Accommodation

would be available from October as per government recommendation in the event the weather declines and remains available until the end of March when the risk of severe weather subsides. The accommodation will only be activated when triggers are reached and will be ended upon its subsidence in the way that SWEP has been activated in the past.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Housing Committee:

- 2.1 That Housing Committee note the low number of verified rough sleepers and that the Council will continue to seek to offer accommodation to all verified rough sleepers where this is permissible within the Council's powers to consolidate this achievement.

That Housing Committee recommends to Policy and Resources Committee:

- 2.2 To approve a capital budget of £2.800m to be included in the HRA Capital Investment Programme 2021/22 financed by HRA Borrowing of £2.100m funded by the rental stream and an MHCLG contribution of £0.700m. This is for the purchase of 12 new homes to deliver a Housing Led Support scheme for higher need rough sleepers.
- 2.3 To approve a capital budget of £3.240m be included in the General fund Capital Investment Programme 2021/22 for the acquisition of 30 properties on 10-year leases to deliver Rapid Re-housing for lower need rough sleepers. This will be funded by a contribution from MHCLG of £1.163m and will require borrowing of £2.080m, funded by the rental stream.
- 2.4 To approve the extension of emergency short term hotels from October until March 2022 in light of continuing pressures of those to whom the council owes a statutory accommodation duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act in emergency accommodation.
- 2.5 To agree to use the remaining 2021/22 Contain Management Outbreak Fund (COMF) grant (estimated at £1.615m) to support the continuing pressures caused by the pandemic of those in emergency accommodation to whom the council owes a Housing duty.
- 2.6 To agree to the acquisition of a hotel to deliver in the region of 15 - 20 rooms to enable provision for the SWEP between October 2021 and March 2022.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Next Steps Accommodation Programme (Covid 1 and 2)

- 3.1 The NSAP Report, considered at previous Housing Committees set out in detail the specifics relating to the amount of grant awarded and the conditions associated with that grant. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have been clear that the grant funding is ringfenced to meet the needs of people accommodated as of 30th September 2020 and for those who are subsequently verified as rough sleepers as set out in the report to

- Housing Committee on 18th November 2020. This funding contributed towards emergency accommodation up to June 2021.
- 3.2 Policy and Resources Committee on 3rd December 2020, agreed to the continuation of the accommodation offer for those people assessed as at risk of rough sleeping who presented after 30th September 2020 during the pandemic. This group are not covered by NSAP Government funding and so we termed them as Covid 2 to distinguish between the funding sources.
 - 3.3 In line with proposed easing and ending of national Covid-19 restrictions and opening up of the council's usual homeless prevention and housing options services, Housing Committee in March 2021, agreed that by 21st June 2021, the accommodation offer to those at risk of rough sleeping, (the Covid- 2 cohort), made for the duration of the pandemic is ended where no accommodation duty is owed by the council.
 - 3.4 The number of people that have been accommodated and still need to be moved on are 167 as of 5th September 2021. Based on current projections these will be moved onto more settled accommodation by the end of October 2021. To achieve this, we are prioritising this group for move on options.
 - 3.5 Newly accommodated verified rough sleepers in emergency accommodation are no longer counted in this total as from 25th July but subject to separate recording and reporting. Whilst continuing to seek to offer accommodation to all verified rough sleepers where this is permissible within the Council's powers, in line with the no second night out approach our aim is to accommodate verified rough sleepers in commissioned accommodation not emergency accommodation where possible. Our focus is therefore on enabling the capacity in commissioned services to provide for this group.
 - 3.6 Separately we have received additional resources to provide for rough sleepers under RSAP round one, RSI4 grant award and Ex-Offender PRS access grant. This funding enables in addition to No Second Night Out, funding to develop 30 beds for the "Off the Street" Offer aimed at entrenched rough sleepers. Provision is through transitioning a building from an existing service to deliver 30 beds and is anticipated to be fully mobilised in November, following the completion of move on of people accommodated under Covid. Current provision stands at 11 of the 30 beds as of 14th September 2021. Together the total provision to enable people to move from the street will amount to 81 bed spaces.
 - 3.7 Under the RSAP round 1 funding, the MHCLG awarded £0.700m towards a £2.800m scheme to enable the purchase of 12 new homes to be used for Housing Led Support for rough sleepers with complex needs. The remainder of the purchase costs (£2.100m) will be paid for by borrowing. This will augment the HRA capital budget (£4.0m) for 18 homes previously approved at Budget Council as part of the HRA Capital Programme 2021/22.
 - 3.8 The RSAP round 1 funding also awarded £1.163m towards purchasing a further 30 properties under 10-year leases for Rapid Rehousing scheme aimed at lower need rough sleepers. The acquisition will cost an estimated £3.240m funded by the grant and £2.080m in council borrowing. Therefore, this report requests approval to add both schemes to the HRA Capital Programme. In both cases the

borrowing will be paid for by the future rental streams. Further financial details of both of these RSAP schemes can be found in the financial implications at section 7 below.

- 3.9 To enable availability in the commissioned accommodation to move rough sleepers off the street and prevent NSNO and 'Off the Street' offer from silting up, move on pathways have been developed. These encompass support and funding to move to: -
- private rented accommodation.
 - assistance to move from supported accommodation into private rented thereby freeing up supported accommodation for those who need to move in.
 - Increase in Housing First under NSAP by 30 units to create a total of 60.
 - A further 30 units of Housing Led support will be delivered in 21/22 (18 funded via Housing Revenue Budget and 12 via RSAP)
 - 30 units acquired under 10-year leases for a Rapid Rehousing Scheme for rough sleepers who have a lower support need.
 - Finally, 40 bedspaces in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) will be delivered by September 2021.

3.10 The Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, Eddie Hughes on 5th July 2021 announced the Government's commitment to ending rough sleeping by the end of this parliament. We are working with our advisors at MHCLG to revise our Action Plan aligned with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, to build on the work undertaken during the covid pandemic and develop the broad partnerships, including with public health; voluntary and faith sector to find tailored solutions to anyone who has, is, or will, sleep rough. There are several themes using the funding provided by MHCLG comprising Homelessness Prevention Grant, RSI4 grant and Ex Offender PRS access to target prevention and early intervention and support to enable people to move away from the street.

3.11 Total Figures

We are continuing to focus resources on improving homelessness prevention and move on but there are still challenges with identifying suitable move on options for everyone. The table below shows the number of people who remain accommodated under Covid provisions.

Numbers accommodated	30 st Sept 2020	15/02/21	31/03/21	06/06/21	25/07/21	04/09/21
Covid 1	369	191	148	111	75	43
Covid 2	0	207	234	208	149	124
Total	369	398	382	319	224	167

We have a detailed move on plan in order to monitor progress which is reported to the Homeless Reduction Board.

3.12 Supply of accommodation

We are continuing to identify supply to enable the remaining people to move on as follows:

- 3.12.1 Private rented accommodation - We are working with landlords and agents to increase supply and offer support to both landlord and tenant to ensure the accommodation is sustained. As of 4th September 2021, 120 people had been moved into suitable private rented accommodation.
- 3.12.2 Housing First - Home Purchase Policy has been expanded to purchase an additional 30 properties used as Housing First. These purchases have all been completed and properties refurbished and re all let by the end of August 2021.
- 3.12.3 Supported accommodation - An average of 3 units a week becomes available and ready to nominate into. Those ready to move on from supported accommodation are being assisted to do so to facilitate this pathway. Clarion/St Mungo's acquired 25 units of supported accommodation, this forms part of the NSAP grant. These units are now mobilised and let.
- 3.12.4 Social Housing - During the pandemic, due to the restrictions and difficulties undertaking work on empty homes work, there have been relatively few properties to let. This is now starting to improve as set out below. This table provides an overview of all social housing lets.

	Properties advertised	Properties let
Jan	22	37
Feb	75	42
Mar	48	68
Apr	45	34
May	31	43
June	57	58
July	123	30
Total	401	312

Challenges include opening up of economy, reduction of covid regulations and tourism starting again.

The table below provides information on the lets to the different priority groups across all social housing lets up until the end of March 2021.

Group (target allocation)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Jan 2021 - July 2021	Total	Overall percentage across all years
Homeless (40%)	306 (42%)	285 (40%)	230 (40.5%)	179 (47%)	140 (45%)	1140	42%
Transfers (25%)	190 (26%)	168 (24%)	138 (24.5%)	78 (21%)	57 (18%)	631	24%
Homeseekers (25%)	209 (28%)	177 (25%)	126 (22%)	64 (17%)	69 (22%)	645	24%
Council's interest (10%)*	30 (4%)	72 (10%)	75 (13%)	55 (15%)	46 (15%)	278	10%
Total	735	702	569	376	312	2694	

*This group is people nominated by Children's services and Adult Social Care, which also includes those for Housing First. We have housed 2 Housing First applicants in 2021 so far - one in Jan 2021 and one in March 2021.

The allocations data above adheres closely to the targets set out in the Allocations Plan during its period of operation. However, the target for properties advertised to accepted homeless in temporary accommodation was increased to 80% owing to the pandemic and the exceptional challenges upon the Local Authority.

3.13 Referrals and Reconnections - A total of 34 reconnections have been achieved as of 4th September 2021 for this specific group. However, in total since March 2020 there have been 149 reconnections, and since April 2021 there have been 33. This includes all reconnections by our commissioned services.

As previously advised in earlier reports, there are challenges with statutory reconnections as we must ensure there is suitable accommodation for the person to be referred into and the receiving local authority require evidence that the person has a local connection with them. This can be difficult if people are reluctant to be reconnected. To improve performance on local connection, we have established a cross agency team, which includes Housing colleagues co-located at First Base Day Centre and at No Second Night Out (NSNO). There are potentially 26 people who could be reconnected depending on establishing robust evidence to support a referral. We have expanded resources to enable reconnection following successful award under RSI4 to increase by 2 officers and a budget to assist with expenses to enable reconnection.

3.14 Housing Options -

Overall, the Housing Options service is seeing more people face to face in line with the relaxation of restrictions. This is occurring in hotels in addition to expanding capacity to see some people in the Customer Service Centre by appointment only, to refocus as the service recovers onto prevention.

In 2020/2021 the council prevented 598 households from becoming homeless, this compares with the previous year 2019/2020 when 791 households were

prevented from becoming homeless. Whilst numbers are lower than 2019/20, conditions were significantly more challenging during the pandemic. However, evictions from private rented accommodation were paused due to the Government moratorium on evictions, which was extended until 20th September 2021. In preparation for preventing eviction, we have written to all known landlords and letting agents to appeal to contact us prior to eviction so we can intervene and try to resolve or enable alternative accommodation to be identified. The Housing Options service is preparing for post pandemic changes in service demand, especially in relation to recovery of services from the impact of the pandemic and preparing for refocus on intensive prevention work. In quarter 1 2021/22, 397 households were prevented from becoming homeless which compares favourably with 2020/21.

3.15 Decanting short term hotels.

Alongside moving on people accommodated under Covid is the necessity to decant the additional hotels acquired during the pandemic. Policy and Resources in March 2021 Report agreed to extend hotel provision until the beginning of October 2021. In working towards this goal, the decant of a large hotel was achieved 21st May 2021. This will bring the total handed back as at the end of August to 159, with permission requested to retain rooms as set out below decreasing through to March 2022. Moving people on this scale necessarily puts pressure on resources both in terms of the accommodation needed to move people into and for the staffing to support such moves.

The clients in Covid 1 and 2 groups are projected to have moved on by November 2021. However, prioritising available suitable move on accommodation to this group, has reduced the move on options for other groups including those we have statutory accommodation duties towards, hence the need to extend the short-term hotels for these clients.

	start	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Hotel accommodation units	351	278	219	192	192	192	184	166	136

It is difficult to forecast a reduction between November and April 2022. The risks of a demand led service are being managed and a risk action plan is in place. We will continue to report progress regularly to the Homeless Reduction Board.

3.16 The most recent forecast for Temporary Accommodation at month 4 assumes that the emergency hotel accommodation will overspend by £3.100m and the Housing Service are urgently working on a financial recovery plan to reduce this. Current projections expect that this action will reduce the overspend to at least £2.600m and this forecast will be revised for month 5 in the coming weeks and reported to P&R Committee on 7th October 2021 where further details will be available. Therefore, this report is recommending that Policy & Resources Committee agree to the remaining £ 1.615m in Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant to support this overspend.

3.17 Out of Area placements

The council has for many years had to use some emergency short term accommodation outside the city due to the capacity of the market within the city. However, as previously reported following the outbreak of the pandemic and the increasing need for emergency accommodation, these figures escalated to a peak of 330 in Eastbourne and Lewes areas. We have worked hard to identify

additional accommodation within the city and have managed to reduce numbers down to 234 as of 10th September 2021. We are committed to continuing to reduce our need to make placements outside of the city to a pre-pandemic level, taking into account some clients will need to be placed out of borough for their own safety, and to reduce our overall need for Temporary and Emergency accommodation as we refocus on prevention.

Funding for 2021/22

3.18 Aside from core funding, there are other main sources of grant as follows:

- a) Homelessness Prevention Grant – as previously notified to Housing Committee this is a combination of the previously called Flexible Homeless Support Grant and Homelessness Burdens Funding. These grants are awarded by MHCLG based on previous figures of homelessness and temporary accommodation. It is primarily to fund the management element of temporary accommodation that was removed from the housing benefit several years ago, and in addition to improve prevention and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.
- b) Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) 4. This is bid for through submissions that aim to support people to move on from rough sleeping. For 2021/22 there is a new element for prevention and early intervention which is very welcome. We bid for a total of £2.8M for various interventions to support single homeless people and prevent homelessness and have been awarded the full amount. This is ringfenced to those projects in the bid.
- c) MHCLG awarded additional funding in April of £0.5M for the continuation of housing rough sleepers up to June 2021.
- d) Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) – This is for capital schemes that can be delivered in 2021/22 or early 2022/23 with revenue support until 2023/24. There are 3 dates for submission. The first was 29th April 2021, with further opportunities in July and in September. In April we submitted a bid for 2 schemes as follows:
 - i) Housing Led Support. This is to provide 30 x 1 bed properties of which the funding for 18 had already been agreed from the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 which includes £1.200m direct revenue funding to fund 30% of a new £4.000m budget included in the capital programme with the remainder being funded from HRA borrowing, ensuring the borrowing required can be repaid from the new rental income. The remaining 12 x 1 bed properties require capital grant which we have bid for under the RSAP. Revenue support costs for all 30 properties have been requested similar to those of Housing First model provided under NSAP. As of the 6th September we had completed 4 purchases; with a further 10 properties under offer, 2 of which should complete later this month and 6 being assessed.
 - ii) Rapid Rehousing Scheme. This is to deliver 30 x 1 bed or studio properties obtained under 10-year leases with aligned support provision and aimed at those with lower needs to quickly move people into.

We have been successful in being awarded grant to provide these schemes and are planning the acquisition and delivery to be achieved by 31st Dec 2021.

We have submitted a further bid for the final tranche of bidding which we anticipate hearing the outcome of in October 2021. MHCLG advised that the capital had mostly been allocated and so our final bid is for revenue only schemes.

- e) Protect Funding - As previously notified to Housing Committee in March, we successfully bid for funding jointly with Health partners; this is working well as follows:
- A Preventing Admissions Worker is based at A&E to work with rough sleeping people.
 - 5-bed unit 'Step Down' from hospital service operational to enable patients who are ready to be discharged but are of no fixed abode and require clinical support to be safely discharged.
 - An expanded peripatetic Protect team to offer clinical support to medically vulnerable people in emergency accommodation and supported accommodation.
- f) Ex Offender Private Rented Access scheme – MHCLG awarded grant funding to enable 10 ex-offenders who do not come under statutory duties to move into private rented accommodation. Funding was awarded at two thirds of that bid for but will enable the moves and a support worker. We are currently sourcing that accommodation with the aim of delivering by end March 2022.

3.19 Government Rough Sleeping Snapshot

The Government's Rough Sleeping Snapshot in England: Autumn 2020. reported on 25.02.21 that Brighton and Hove had the third largest decrease nationally and the highest decrease outside of London with 27 people sleeping rough on 17th November 2020, a 69% decrease. In May 2021 a count was undertaken that reported 16 people sleeping rough in the city. In July 2021 the latest count reported 28 people sleeping rough in the city. This compares favourably with a count of 56 for the same period in 2020 and needs to reflect that this is the peak time of year for people sleeping rough in the city. If we are to sustain these low numbers of rough sleepers it is essential that we continue to upstream our homeless prevention work, and also continue to seek to offer accommodation to all verified rough sleepers where this is permissible within the Council's powers as soon as they are identified (avoiding the risk of entrenchment on the streets with the associated health risks) through the no second night out (NSNO) service and our Off-Street Offer funded through the RSI 4 grant. While we used our homeless emergency accommodation as part of the 'Everyone In' pandemic response, as we move out of the Covid-19 emergency provisions, we will utilise services funded and commissioned for rough sleepers. We are working with MHCLG to refresh and keep under review our Action Plans to achieve the aim of ending rough sleeping by the end of this parliament. We need to ensure that move on pathways are robust and aligned to prevent accommodation becoming silted up. The performance and outcomes against the

Homeless and Rough Sleeping strategy are regularly reported to the Homeless Reduction Board.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

We could terminate all the additional short-term hotels but as we have not resolved the move on options the impact will be to expand spot purchase accommodation, which is more expensive and likely out of area, which creates tensions with our neighbouring authorities.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 None at this time but we will be seeking feedback from customer, partners and providers next year as part of a review of the service going forwards.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 We have focused our move on options to people accommodated under Covid 1 and 2 to maximise the number moving on.

6.2 While focusing resources on those in Covid 1 and 2 cohorts, we have also retained high numbers of households to whom we owe a statutory housing duty in emergency accommodation. We therefore need to extend some of the hotel provision while we continue to recover and transform the service to refocus on prevention and enabling move on options following resolving the requirements of those accommodated under pandemic provisions.

6.3 The pandemic has changed the landscape of homelessness and there are further changes anticipated as the full impact emerges and we see implications on loss of accommodation in different groups, particularly those who were previously employed. Future planning and resource allocations will need to focus on the prevention of homelessness through early intervention.

6.4 We are also committed to building on the successes achieved with regard to rough sleepers and achieve the end of rough sleeping by the end of this parliament, by focusing on prevention and moving rough sleepers through the expanded commissioned services.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

7.1 The Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RASP) grants have been awarded for 2 separate schemes. The first is for the purchase of 12 new homes to be used for Housing Led Support for rough sleepers with complex needs. The council were awarded £0.700m towards a £2.800m scheme for which budget approval is being sought. If approved, the remainder of the costs (£2.100m) will be paid for by HRA borrowing. The rental stream from the properties has been calculated to pay for the borrowing costs and any management and maintenance. Therefore, this scheme should be cost neutral to the council and

the HRA. The council has also been awarded £511,800 to pay for the revenue support costs for these tenants up to the end of 2023/24.

- 7.2 The council have also been awarded £1.163m in capital grant towards the acquisition of 30 properties on 10-year leases for a Rapid Rehousing Scheme aimed at lower need rough sleepers. The acquisition will cost an estimated £3.240m funded by the grant and £2.080m in council borrowing. Therefore, this report requests approval to borrow £2.080m which will be paid for by the rental stream over the ten-year period. This should be cost neutral to the council.
- 7.3 Although both schemes above are calculated to be cost neutral to the council, as with any housing scheme of this nature there are some financial risks involved. Both schemes are predicated on the clients placed being eligible to claim LHA levels of housing benefit or having the means to pay this level of rent. We have had to make assumptions for voids and rent collection for both of these schemes and so there if voids or bad debts are higher than estimated, there could be some revenue costs that will need to be managed within current budgets. These risks are assessed as low at his time.
- 7.4 The report also requests that Housing Committee recommend to P&R committee to agree the use of the remaining 2021/22 Contain Management Outbreak Fund (COMF) grant (estimated as £1.615m) to contribute towards the current forecast overspend of £2.6m on General Fund Temporary Accommodation. This is to support the continuing pressures caused by the pandemic of those in emergency accommodation to whom the council owes a Housing duty.
- 7.5 The council does not have a budget to provide for hotel type accommodation for Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). Pre pandemic, congregate accommodation was used which meant that the costs could be contained within current budgets. As there is now a need to provide hotel type accommodation, the Targeted Budget Management (TBM) forecast as at month 5, (reported to P&R Committee), will include an estimate of £0.140m for 15-20 rooms for the six months October to March. It is anticipated that the running costs will be contained within the £0.070m budget set up for this purpose.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 13/9/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 . There are no legal implications save that where there is grant funding there will be conditions attached which will have to be complied with.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court

Date: 1.9.21

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out

