

Decision Maker: **RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY
DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: **Tuesday 5 November 2019**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: **HOUSING PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Contact Officer: Lynnette Chamielec, Assistant Director of Housing
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Chief Officer: Sara Bowrey: Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 Members requested a summary of the work undertaken by the Housing Needs service and an update of the key performance statistics.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS are asked to note and where appropriate comment on the contents of this report

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: N/A
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable:
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Supporting Independence: Further Details
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Individual schemes reported separately.
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost and Non-Recurring Cost
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Operational Housing
 4. Total current budget for this head: £11m
 5. Source of funding: Services contained Housing Needs Revenue Budget
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Approximately 6000 new approaches to the service per annum. Ongoing Register of approximately 3500 households.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Housing Department provides a range of statutory housing services to Bromley residents.
- 3.2 This includes the provision of a Housing Register, housing options, advice and homelessness support, temporary accommodation, allocation of accommodation through private sector procurement and the maintenance of nomination rights with Registered Providers (housing associations), money advice services, tenancy sustainment, a support and resettlement service, specialist young people's integrated housing and social work service and the management of two traveller sites.
- 3.3 **Headline statistics (full details in body of report):**
- 250 homeless approaches each month
 - 3451 households on the Housing Register
 - 250 new applications to the Housing Register each month
 - 1600 households in temporary accommodation
 - 950 households in nightly paid accommodation
 - 208 social housing moves undertaken (April-September 2019)
 - 52 private rented moves undertaken (April – September 2019)
- 3.4 As requested this report focuses on the services relating to housing advice, homelessness, the housing register and Allocations. It should be noted that in October 2019 the Housing Improvement service; which is responsible for work pertaining to empty homes, the allocation of disabled facilities grants and improvement works to sustain and make safe accommodation also transferred to the Housing Needs Department. Those service areas are not covered for the purpose of this report.
- 3.5 More detailed analysis of any areas that Members wish to review in more depth can be brought back as requested.

4.1 SERVICE PROFILE/DATA ANALYSIS

- 4.1 The key area of pressure facing the service is the number of approaches from households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and who subsequently go on to require assistance with temporary accommodation.
- 4.2 The original analysis on levels of demand for temporary accommodation (TA) demonstrated a net increase in placements of 25 per month of which in excess of 20 were being placed into nightly paid accommodation (NPA) due to lack of alternative supply. Since this time mitigating actions have reduced the current net increase in TA to an average of 15 per month, 5 of which are placed in NPA
- 4.3 The pressures on homelessness and TA have been caused as a result of the following key issues:

- High levels of parental evictions; lack of affordable move on options for households.
- Increased homeless arising from loss of rented accommodation due to affordability.
- Reduction in housing association lettings (re-lets and virtually no new build supply) creating a lack of move on from TA
- Reduced suppliers offering TA on models other than NPA
- Lack of affordable supply (affordability gap between income/benefit and rental levels)
- Cost of incentives required to secure positive prevention or relief solution
- Inability to access private rented accommodation which offers an affordable solution to homelessness leaving households in the system for longer periods of time
- Inability to secure accommodation locally and reduced quality – increase in refusals/legal challenges and administration of placements

4.4 Changes brought about since the introduction on the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (which came into effect on the first of April 2018) have seen an increase in the number of approaches to the service. Under the requirements of the Act each approach requires a more intensive and sustained level of casework intervention:

April 2018 – Sept 2019	
Total Approaches under HRA	4348
Average approaches per month	250
Cancelled HRA not pursued – non-attendance/application not progressed	463
Withdrawn/case closed without further action following initial advice/triage	550
Ineligible - no recourse to public funds	118
Not homeless within 56 days	524
Immediately homeless	521
Homeless within 56 days – prevention duty	2172
Homeless – relief duty including TA offer	743
Homeless Acceptances	480

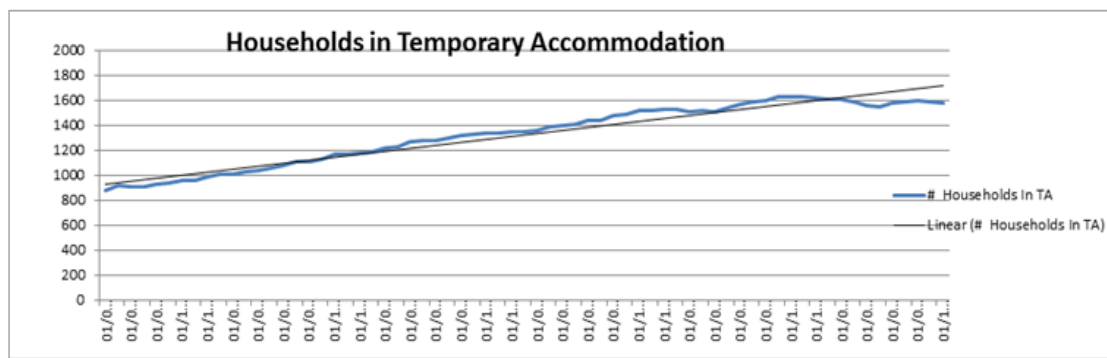
4.5 A review of casework and intervention reveals around 80% of cases require a cash intervention; paying off rent arrears/topping up rent/incentive, deposit and rental top up to maintain existing or secure alternative accommodation. Overall the average intervention cost is in excess of £3,000 per household. Many local authorities are paying incentives far in excess of this to increase prevention and relief rates however this does not produce any real financial savings over the cost of nightly paid temporary accommodation or offer sustainable long-term solutions.

Such interventions must be carefully balanced so as not to inflate the market or mismanage the expectations of private landlords.

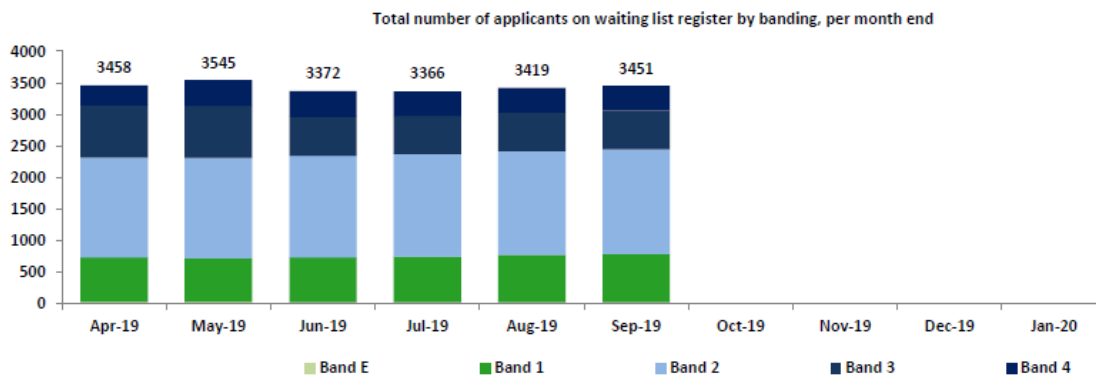
- 4.6 Increasing pressure is also being placed on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to sustain tenancies well beyond what could be considered a reasonable period and in turn means that this resource cannot meet new levels of need as they are presenting.
- 4.7 Numbers in temporary accommodation have continued to rise. Due to the current lack of affordable, local accommodation approximately 70% of households in temporary accommodation have been placed outside of borough boundaries. Whilst the focus on prevention work and alternative supply has started to slow up the rate of increase it remains that there are over 900 households, some 1800 children, in nightly paid accommodation.

1. Temporary Accommodation Data:

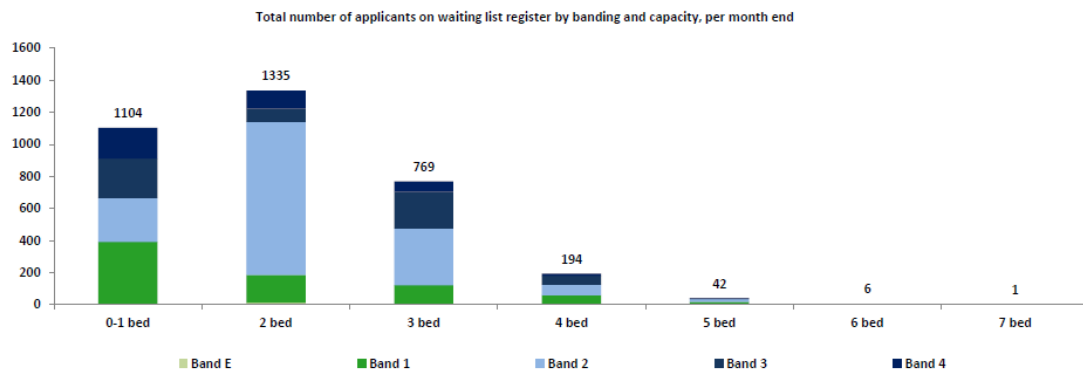
1/4/2014	1/4/2015	1/4/2016	1/4/17	1/4/2018	1/4/2019	Current
879	1038	1265	1401	1509	1558	1578



- 4.8 Numbers on the Housing Register have remained relatively stable, however it should be noted that Bromley has a restrictive Register which primarily only grants access to those whom the Council has a statutory duty to assist. Whilst this approach was taken to manage expectations in light of the limited number of properties that are available for letting this potentially has an impact on the number of households that present as homeless and the sustainability of communities where there is a high density of social housing. Of the 1494 applications that were made between April and September 2019 only 40% were included on the Housing Register.



4.9 The highest demand remains from households requiring two bedroom accommodation:



4.10 Lettings to Housing Association vacancies have continued to drop. Between April and September 2019 just 208 properties were let via Bromley Homeseekers. 18% (38 properties) were let to tenants of Clarion Housing Association through their transfer quota.

Total lettings by bed size, waiting list code and average waiting time		0 Bed		1 Bed		2 Bed		3 Bed		4 bed		5 bed +		Total	Av. waiting across all bed size
		No. of lettings	Av. waiting	No. of lettings	Av. waiting	No. of lettings	Av. waiting	No. of lettings	Av. waiting	No. of lettings	Av. waiting	No. of lettings	Av. waiting		
Band E	EH					3	995	2	161					5	661
	ER					3	286	2	171					5	240
	ET			4	159	6	487	3	661	1	252			14	414
Band 1	1H	3	246	23	211	3	318	3	948					32	293
	1R	3	763	19	773	4	626	1	1654	1	297			28	766
	1T	1	167	5	196	7	876	4	1733					17	836
Band 2	2H	5	553	26	571	35	1526	18	1184					84	1099
	2R					1	199							1	199
	2T														
Band 3	3H			2	564									2	564
	3R	2	120	8	436	2	985							12	475
	3T	1	539			4	819	2	579					7	710
Band 4	4H			1	716									1	716
	4R														
	4T														
Totals		15		88		68		35		2				208	771

4.11 Whilst extensive work has been undertaken to engage the private rented sector the numbers being sourced are insufficient to meet the demand presenting. In 2018/19 we assisted 145 clients to secure private rented accommodation. Procurement has slowed and between April and September 2019 only 52 households were assisted into private sector accommodation; of these 46 properties were utilised to prevent or relieve homelessness and the remaining 6 were offered to households in discharge of the full housing duty.

5. IMPACT

- 5.1 In the last 5 years there has been a 100% increase in the use of temporary accommodation and costs have risen by 58%
- 5.2 Current predictions show cost pressures rising to around an additional £7m per annum by 2022/23 compared to the 2018/19 budget to fulfil statutory duties in relation to homeless and the provision of temporary accommodation.
- 5.3 Costs are expected to rise by up to £10m per annum within the next 5 years.
- 5.4 Waiting times continue to increase. The average homeless household requiring two bedroom accommodation will wait in excess of 4 ½ years to secure a move via the Housing Register.
- 5.5 There has been a significant and continued pressure on the number of approaches to housing services. The focus on prevention work has achieved positive results, with roughly 10% of the total number of initial approaches going on to be accepted as homeless, and this continues to be reviewed and expanded through the increase of early intervention work and visits and attendance at outreach surgeries.
- 5.6 Work is being undertaken to carry out benchmarking, review demand and explore opportunities through the re-building of the South East London Housing Partnership.

6. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

- 6.1 Housing services were the subject of 118 complaints during 2018/19, 66 (56%) of which were responded to in a timely way. The majority of complaints were in relation to Housing Allocations and Housing Options. A total of 52 complaints (44%) were upheld or partially upheld:

	2016 – 17	2017 – 18	2018 - 19	% on prev. year
Complaints	126	112	118	+5%
Percentage responded to on time	52%	65%	56%	-9%
Percentage fully upheld	11%	19%	27%	+8%
Percentage partially upheld	14%	8%	17%	+9%
Ombudsman cases	19	10	11	+10%
Ombudsman cases upheld	6	4	5	+25%
Financial consequences	£5,500	£4,550	£6,150	

- 6.2 The largest number of complaints were in relation to issues with temporary accommodation of which 8 (19%) were fully upheld, and a 'lack of action' of which 13 (35%) were fully upheld.

Service	Complaints	No. fully upheld	% fully upheld	No. partially upheld	% partially upheld
Staff conduct	8	1	13%	3	38%
Disputed decision	7	1	14%	0	0%
Inadequate information	8	3	38%	2	25%
Lack of action	37	13	35%	6	16%
Quality of service	14	6	43%	1	7%
Temp. accommodation	43	8	19%	7	16%
Behaviour of third party	1	0	0%	1	100%
OVERALL	118	32	27%	20	17%

- 6.3 The reasons for the rising levels of complaints are in line with the escalations in demand and growing levels of dissatisfaction with TA conditions due to NPA market; this is one of the many drivers for the Council seeking to take control through the sourcing and development of in borough accommodation in order to provide an alternative supply. Across London all boroughs are seeing an increase in the levels of complaints and Ombudsman challenges.
- 6.4 Despite the often distressing and challenging circumstances in which the teams work they do receive a significant amount of positive feedback:

Sent to the Allocations Team in October:

"I cannot thank you both enough for your efforts in securing this temporary accommodation for myself and my daughter. I would very much like to thank you both in person in the future. This is such a lifeline at such a difficult and sensitive time.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I will remain grateful forever."

Sent to the Housing Management Team in October:

"I just wanted to say thank you again for taking the time to come to visit my flat. It really helps to know that there are people out there that understand my situation, and do want to help if they can.

Thank you for being so polite, professional, friendly and helpful, and for not judging me!"

Sent to the Housing Options Team in September:

"I appreciate your concern and your ability to listen to the message that is trying to be conveyed.

I also know it is difficult for front line staff as they are not always empowered to make difficult decisions (especially when the request is something out of the ordinary) and that we are all working in an environment where resources are tight..... Once again, an appreciative thank you for going above and beyond."

7. WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN

- 7.1 With the support of Members the Housing Transformation agenda is pursuing a number of regeneration and development opportunities in order to deliver high quality and local temporary and permanent accommodation. Work is being undertaken to review the entire temporary accommodation stock in order to ensure that as new schemes are brought online the Council is able to review and realign stock so that it meets the needs of clients whilst also improving the quality and affordability of accommodation.
- 7.2 As a result of feedback received through the implementation of the Homeless Strategy work has been undertaken to increase early intervention services in order to identify risk factors before homelessness is imminent. This includes working closely with partners Housing Providers through the Bromley Federation of Housing Associations and having fast track referrals for households at risk of losing their home.
- 7.3 We are re-designing the offer for private sector landlords and agents and reviewing the way in which we tap into this market. The team have for example, attended auctions and through this route recently made contacts which allowed them to source approximately 10 new build properties for allocation (these are currently in the process of being tenanted).
- 7.4 Multi-Agency work is being actively pursued. A Homelessness Forum was held recently and attended by Council staff, the police, local charities and housing providers. Work is also being

undertaken with local churches, learning shops and other Local Authorities in order to share best practice, develop new services and enhance existing ones.

- 7.5 Steps are being taken to address mismatches in supply and demand. Applications for general needs, sheltered and extra care housing will shortly be amalgamated into the remit of the Housing Needs service. This will ensure that there is one route to secure housing through the Council.
- 7.6 Additional funding has been sought to create an under-occupation support role. This is being funded for an initial 12 month period to scope existing demand and the barriers preventing households from securing more suitable accommodation with a view to supporting households and increasing the flow of family sized social housing.
- 7.7 Funding has been applied for the provide additional support over the winter period in order to engage with entrenched and returning rough sleepers in order to confirm the demand from this cohort and review the services required in order to source and sustain accommodation.
- 7.8 A Housing Strategy has been devised and is currently out for consultation. Once finalised this will set out our vision for the next ten years. The Strategy includes how the housing work streams fit in with the Council's other key priorities and how we aim to deliver the priorities we have identified. These priorities include; the creation of more homes. Better quality, more affordable homes. The prevention and tackling of homelessness and the supporting of vulnerable people.
- 7.9 A review of the Allocations Scheme and lettings plan is scheduled to begin January 2020 in order to ensure that this is fit for purpose and re-designed to create more movement in stock.
- 7.10 Going forward it is proposed to present the key performance data on homelessness and temporary accommodation at each PDS meeting with a more detailed annual report alongside the portfolio plan.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report however, the actions set out within the performance areas of this report cumulatively aim to maximise the prevention of homelessness and minimise the use of temporary accommodation resources in the most cost effective and efficient way.

9 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The housing objectives are set out in the relevant business plans these objectives are compliant with the statutory framework within which the Council's Housing function must operate and incorporate both national requirements and local priorities.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children / Personnel Implications / Legal Implications / Procurement Implications.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]