

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

18th October 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Homelessness Performance Quarter Two 2016/17

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ellie Kershaw
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the performance for quarter two 2016/17

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Communities, Housing and Environment	18 th October 2016

Homelessness Performance Quarter Two

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The council has a statutory duty to provide housing advice and assistance, the scale of which will depend on each household's individual circumstances. Homelessness has been rising over the past few years, both locally and nationally. This has naturally led to an increase in work and expenditure for the council. It is therefore important that the Committee is kept apprised of up to date information.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Over the past five years, Maidstone has seen a year on year increase in homelessness applications, from 84 in 2010/11 to 630 in 2015/16. The Committee therefore requested that quarterly information be provided concerning homelessness and the work that the council is undertaking.
- 2.2 Between April and June of 2016, 212 households have met the threshold to make a homelessness application. 208 decisions were made. In the same quarter in 2015/16 there were 178 decisions made. There have been 357 decisions made this year so far compared to 313 at the same period last year. It is reasonable to assume at this stage that there will be a significant annual increase, with 630 decisions having been made in the whole of the last financial year.
- 2.3 The Homelessness code of guidance suggests that where possible decisions should be made within 33 days. In quarter one 57% were made within this timeframe. This increased to 66% in quarter two, which, when taking into account the volume of decisions made represents a great deal of hard work on the part of the Housing Advisers. They have also managed to reduce their caseloads to 20-30 per adviser. Whilst this is still higher than is preferable, it is a significant improvement on the 30-40 each was holding at the end of last quarter.
- 2.4 The high number of homelessness applications continues to impact on the amount spent on temporary accommodation. In July and August £221,308 was spent on temporary accommodation (gross) against profiled budget of £128,082 resulting in an adverse variance of £93,226. In the whole of quarter two last year this was £224,581 against a profiled budget of £143,450 resulting in an adverse variance of £81,131. However, work which has been carried out between the Housing and Revenues and Benefits Teams means that the amount that can be recovered through a reasonable charge to clients has increased quite significantly from September of this year.
- 2.5 Across the quarter, the % of charges that have been recovered for rent in that quarter stands at 87%. This is a decrease on last quarter. However, a large proportion of the shortfall is due to housing benefit claims awaiting

assessment and monthly payers, whose contributions do not show at the date of writing this report.

- 2.6 There are currently 101 households in nightly paid temporary accommodation with a further 12 in long term temporary accommodation. 59 of these households are owed the main housing duty, meaning that the council will continue to accommodate them until a suitable tenancy can be identified for them. The remainder will be accommodated until such time as their enquiries are complete, leading to either them also being owed the main duty or in their accommodation being ended after a reasonable period of notice. There are no households with children residing in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 2.7 102 preventions were recorded in this quarter. A prevention is where someone threatened with homelessness does not become homeless and the authority has had some part in the reason why. For example, this could be liaison with friends, parents or a landlord, assisting the household to make an application for a discretionary housing payment or helping with a bond to secure a new property. This high number is due in part to some high figures from the Single Homeless Support Officer, but also to all open preventions on the system having been assessed in the past few weeks. A number were identified where prevention work had been undertaken, but the system had not been updated to reflect this. However, annually this means the figure now stands at 129 against a target of 150, which, when taken in conjunction with the increase in homelessness decisions is an excellent result.

3. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Report is for information only.

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities		[Head of Service or Manager]
Risk Management		[Head of Service or Manager]
Financial		[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing		[Head of Service]
Legal	The Council has a statutory Duty with regards to homelessness. This	Interim Deputy Head of Legal

	monitoring process enables the committee to remain aware of the current performance.	Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment		[Policy & Information Manager]
Environmental/Sustainable Development		[Head of Service or Manager]
Community Safety		[Head of Service or Manager]
Human Rights Act		[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement		[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]
Asset Management		[Head of Service & Manager]