

Agenda Item 9

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Ward (s) affected	All	Key Decision	No
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Subject	Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020, Six Month Review
RECOMMENDATION	
The Executive is asked to note the progress made to achieve the actions in the Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020.	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
<p>The Homelessness Act 2002, requires local authorities to publish a five year homelessness strategy. Mole Valley District Council's (MVDC) third strategy was approved by the Executive on 3 February 2015. This report provides an update on the progress made during the first six months of the strategy. When the strategy was approved the Executive Member confirmed that it would be subject to annual review by the Scrutiny Committee and their first annual report will be March 2016.</p> <p>The key achievements and trends from the first six months of strategy are detailed in the report below.</p>
CORPORATE PRIORITIES: COMMUNITY WELLBEING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support individuals and families who find themselves unintentionally homeless so that education and employment are not put at risk. <p>Homeless households are offered temporary, private rented and permanent housing association accommodation close to their employment and children's schools if it is available. When households are placed outside of MVDC every effort is made to move them back to the area as soon as it is practically possible.</p>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002, requires local authorities to publish a five year homelessness strategy. The Council's third strategy was approved by the Executive on 3 February 2015. This report provides an update on the progress made during the first six months of the strategy. When the strategy was approved the Executive Member confirmed that it would be subject to annual review by the Scrutiny Committee and their first annual report will be March 2016.

2.0 PROGRESS

- 2.1 Progress is detailed in the strategy action plan attached at Appendix 1. The key achievements to date are summarised below.

2.2 Key Achievements

- Five Surrey authorities (Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, Runnymede, Surrey Heath and Tandridge) have come together to undertake peer reviews to achieve the first stage of the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) standard for homelessness services. Peer reviews at Mole Valley and Surrey Heath have been completed. The pass rate for the peer review is 60% and MVDC achieved 72%. Surrey Heath also passed their review. The next steps for Mole Valley are to implement an improvement plan relating to the recommendations in the review and to complete the ten challenges to achieve the National Practitioner Standard for Homelessness. In the meantime peer reviews will be undertaken in the other partner authorities.
- The NPSS has confirmed that MVDC's score is above average for a district council. The service was commended on the corporate commitment to tackle homelessness, partnership working including a joint approach to problem solving and a successful private rent scheme.
- Launch of the East Surrey Outreach Service for sofa surfers and single homeless people, which will be available for eighteen months funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government funding. This service has worked with 52 clients across East Surrey and has successfully helped 25 to find secure accommodation.
- Launch of Local Pad, which is software to monitor the Council's Rent Bond Scheme and an on-line service to private landlords.
- No 16 and 17 year olds have been placed in bed and breakfast.
- 40 new affordable homes for rent (29) and shared ownership (11) have been completed.

2.3 Monitoring Statistics

Key homelessness statistics so far for 2015/16 compared to 2013/14 and 2014/15 are given below.

	2013/14	2014/15	April to August 2015
Nos. New Housing Options Cases¹	276	270	81
Nos. Homelessness Preventions²	80	96	47
Nos. Homelessness Applications	65	84	48
Nos. Homelessness Acceptances	29	28	28
Main reason for Homelessness	End of private sector tenancy	End of private sector tenancy	End of private sector tenancy
As at -	31 March 2014	31 March 2015	31 August 2015
Nos. in Bed and Breakfast	16	15	12
Nos. of Families in Bed and Breakfast Over 6 Weeks	3	0	0
Total in all Types of Emergency Accommodation	37	39	40

The statistics show the following trends.

- The main reason for homelessness continues to be the end of assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector.
- The number accepted as legally homeless has increased.
- The numbers in bed and breakfast have reduced since mid July and there were no families living in bed and breakfast for more than six weeks during July and August.

¹ New cases seeking advice

² Cases where advice on housing options has been given and homelessness has been prevented

Appendix I HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2015/20 –October 2015 Update

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Reinforce the corporate commitment to the National Practitioner Standard for Homelessness across MVDC's services	To confirm MVDC's commitment to the Standard	Approval of the Homelessness Strategy by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Executive	Executive and SMT	The Standard cannot be met if this commitment is not made	2014/15	Executive approved a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness on 3 February 2015. The Council's corporate commitment to Homelessness was commended in the Peer Review.
Consult the National Practitioner Team on how to achieve the Standard, which includes conducting a peer review of the homelessness service and achieving the ten Standard challenges.	To highlight areas where improvement is required and enable the Council to meet the Standard	Pass with 60% the peer review exercise with other local authorities and complete the submission of evidence for the ten challenges	Housing options team; appointed consultant; other local authorities; stakeholder agencies	That the Standard is not reached and that service requirements are below that of other Surrey local authorities	2014/16	Consultation meeting held on 20 April and involved the Housing Team and peer review partner local authorities. The peer review was undertaken in July and a score of 72% was achieved, which was above the average range of

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						<p>scores for equivalent councils For those areas of recommendation, an improvement plan will be put in place and progress will be reported on this action plan and the next steps taken to achieve the ten challenges</p>
<p>Ensure that there is a robust plan in place for the implementation of Universal Credit. This will cover: how we support people to apply for benefits; arrangements for monitoring Universal Credit payments and the rent contribution; how to arrange for housing payments to be paid to direct to landlords; and knowledge on how to help households apply for a range of benefits</p>	<p>To minimise the impact of welfare reform on the most vulnerable and have a planned approach with the HomeChoice Plus scheme</p>	<p>Making contact with local links within the DWP to ensure simple easy dialogue and communication on vulnerable cases</p>	<p>Housing Options, DWP and Housing Benefit</p>	<p>Rent arrears could accrue; financial hardship could occur; landlords through the HomeChoice Plus service could be lost and homelessness could occur</p>	<p>2015/16</p>	<p>Confirmation on the detail of implementation awaited from the Department of Work Pensions (DWP). A meeting took place in June with the DWP and a second one is confirmed for October.</p>

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Licensing and accreditation of private rented sector landlords	To ensure good quality private rented sector provision within Mole Valley and elsewhere and ensure a professional HomeChoice Plus service	Consider schemes already in place both locally and nationwide to affiliate too; consult with the landlords forum regarding this.	Housing Options, Environmental health, local landlords	The HomeChoice Plus scheme becomes stagnant and poor quality private rented sector accommodation is allowed to occur	2016/17	This will be progressed later during the five year strategy period.
Implement Local Pad software	To update our private rented sector landlord and property database and provide a forum for local landlords	On receipt of development timetable and demonstration system share with landlord focus group before full implementation	Housing options	Rent deposit bond and rent in advance information is subject to inaccuracies. Gas safety certificates are not highlighted as needing to be renewed.	2014/15	Launched on March 2015 Completed
Ensure that clients are referred to support services.	To ensure clients benefit from a range of services that may meet their needs	Staff to be aware of all services and how to make referrals	Housing Options	Clients are not supported and may fail in accommodation and become homeless	2014/15	Monitoring of referrals to Parashoot, East Surrey Outreach Service (eSOS) and the Employment, Training and Housing Options

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						Service (Ethos) is undertaken on a monthly basis and involvement is noted on client files
To monitor and promote the use of the Housing Options Wizard	To ensure clients make maximum use of the wizard to help prevent homelessness early	Promote from time to time on the MVDC website and magazine	Housing Options	Clients delayed in seeking advice	2015/16	Use of the Wizard is monitored at monthly Housing Options team meetings. Further promotion of this will be made in telephone calls with the department and through the MVDC website, publications and screens in reception. Awareness with partner agencies will also occur through stakeholder team meetings and emails
Ensure that all clients have a written summary of the advice they are given	To ensure all clients receive clear understandable	Staff to be trained on how to incorporate this practice in their	Housing Options	Clients forget the advice they have been given by the Council and are	2015/16	Housing options cases are provided with a written summary

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	advice	day to day work		unclear of their rights		of the advice given. Advice available from housing options wizard is also confirmed in writing. The peer review has identified some areas for improvements in these areas and they will be reflected in the improvement plan and implemented
<p>Seek to adopt a no second night out approach to rough sleepers within Mole Valley by writing a new policy and reconnection criteria to help clients return to those areas where they have a local connection under the homelessness legislation and can therefore obtain the most comprehensive housing options. And collaborate with the parallel four-borough initiative taking place in east Surrey,</p>	<p>To ensure that no household has to spend a second night on the streets, that households have access to the best options available to them and that MVDC meet the Standard</p>	<p>Write a new policy in conjunction with the Surrey- wide re-connection policy developed by Guildford and already in operation.</p>	<p>Housing Options; Other Surrey authorities; Pitstop; Leatherhead Start; Health; supported housing providers; Respond; SaDas</p>	<p>That an individual could become entrenched in rough sleeping and suffer a deterioration in health</p>	<p>2015/16</p>	<p>Department of Communities and Local Government Single Homeless People funding has been secured for the East Surrey Outreach Service (eSOS) to support rough sleepers and sofa surfers across the East Surrey area. The service started in May 2015 and is</p>

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<p>to ensure the most effective use of resources and to avoid duplication</p>						<p>provided by Stonham. The reconnection policy is under review. The service has worked with 52 clients and helped 25 find a home. 12 of these have been in Mole Valley of which 4 have been rehoused into permanent or supported accommodation.</p>
<p>Ensure that all vulnerable clients housed in supported accommodation have a housing pathway</p>	<p>To ensure that vulnerable care leavers have a pathway that will allow them to succeed in living in independent accommodation</p>	<p>Improve procedures to ensure a pathway is included for all cases</p>	<p>Housing options and partner agencies</p>	<p>That vulnerable clients fail when houses in independent accommodation and become homeless</p>	<p>2015/16</p>	<p>Quarterly meetings of the Leaving Care Team, Youth Support Services and Housing ensure that pathways for individuals are agreed. This also occurs with Stonham housing on a quarterly basis. This target needs to expand</p>

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						to include all vulnerable groups in living supported accommodation. Work is also being undertaken with accommodation providers to ensure that there is an understanding that social housing is not the only option for their clients.
<p>Provide a 'flat mate' function through our HomeChoice internet pages to help single people and couples to find rooms to rent within and outside the district</p>	<p>Increase the availability and ease of access for single people and couples to find affordable accommodation in Mole Valley in the private sector</p>	<p>Develop Localpad to include a flatmate search option</p>	<p>Housing Options</p>	<p>That non statutory homeless households have limited housing options available to them and become homeless</p>	<p>Qtr 4 2015/16</p>	<p>This will be focussed on in the last quarter of the year.</p>
<p>Signpost clients facing mortgage repossession to the Getwise service, CAB for money advice and other appropriate support services</p>	<p>To help prevent repossession</p>	<p>Ensure staff know how to refer to these services</p>	<p>Housing options</p>	<p>Risk of repossession</p>	<p>2014/15</p>	<p>Since 1 April 2015 there have been no approaches from households facing mortgage repossession. In the previous year there were three</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
						and all were referred to the CAB for money advice where this was needed.
Refer clients facing mortgage repossession to government schemes available	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer staff to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	2014/15	Since 1 April 2015 there have been no approaches from households facing mortgage repossession. In the previous year there were three and it was inappropriate to refer them to government schemes because of the reasons for repossession. The government schemes have since finished and this action will not be progressed.
Negotiate with mortgage lenders to prevent homelessness where possible	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer staff to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	2014/15	Since 1 April 2015 there have been no approaches from households facing mortgage repossession. In the previous year

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
						there were three and because of the reasons for the repossessions it was not appropriate to negotiate with the mortgage lenders.
The Homelessness Strategy to be reviewed annually by the Scrutiny Committee.	To ensure the Homelessness Strategy is delivered	Report progress annually to the Scrutiny Committee	Housing Options Manager	The Standard and strategy actions are not achieved	March 2016	The first annual review will be March 2016
To ensure where possible that bed and breakfast accommodation is not used for 16 or 17 year olds and that emergency beds through Surrey County Council and Surrey nightstop are fully utilised.	To ensure 16 and 17 year olds are not inappropriately housed in bed and breakfast	Work with partners and ensure the multi-agency panel meets to make best use of the accommodation available for young people	Housing options	Young people are inappropriately accommodated	Throughout the strategy period	For the first six months of the strategy no 16 and 17 year olds have been placed in bed and breakfast.
Complete the acquisition of additional self contained emergency accommodation units	To prevent the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households with a priority need	Purchase properties on the open market	Housing Options and Property team	Households will need to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation until alternative accommodation is available in the private rented sector or in	2014/15	Seven units acquired. A small balance remains on the capital programme and consideration is to be given to acquiring another property

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
				Council managed emergency housing.		
Look to source nightly stay and bed and breakfast placements in Mole Valley or the surrounding areas	To restrict the need for the use of bed and breakfast accommodation outside the district	Contact local providers in Mole Valley and discuss availability, provision and requirements. Work with other Surrey local authorities to identify providers	Housing options and other Surrey authorities	Households are placed in bed and breakfast or nightly stay accommodation outside the district and away from support networks	May 2016	One bed and breakfast establishment in the district has been identified and is used when appropriate and available. Further establishments are hopefully to be secured through a procurement exercise. A report will be produced regarding this for the end of January 2016.
Ensure that no household with dependent children is in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks	To provide suitable accommodation options for homeless households and prevent the Council breaching the Homelessness	Source greater numbers of nightly stay accommodation; discharge duties to all suitable homeless clients who are able to sustain accommodation	Housing options	The Council is in breach of the Homelessness Suitability of Accommodation Order 2013	Annual	This is monitored weekly. In the first quarter of 2015/16 there were seven households whose stay was over six weeks. The average of these was 62 days (9 weeks).

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	Suitability of Accommodation Order 2013.	into the private rented sector to free up Council owned emergency accommodation units; Closer monitoring through monthly reports to Executive				Some of these households requested to remain in the establishment due to imminent moves to more permanent accommodation. Since mid July there have been no families who have remained for more than six weeks. One bed and breakfast establishment is converting many of its units to self contained, so that families are not living in accommodation with shared facilities, which has contributed to the figure reducing to zero.
Develop an average of 50 new affordable homes per year	To ensure that there is a flow of new affordable homes to prevent	Work with local housing associations to enable new	Strategic Housing Manager	Stagnation of the social housing and emergency accommodation	Annual	40 homes have been completed to date in 2015/16. Further

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	bottle necks of households waiting for accommodation	homes and provide financial investment where needed		and inevitable use of bed and breakfast if homelessness prevention measures have been exhausted		completions in the year will depend on the speed of development at the Middlemead scheme in Bookham.
Assist those affected by the Social Sector size criteria (spare room subsidy) to find lodgers through advice on advertising of rooms available	To prevent financial hardship to those households affected by this welfare reform whilst also assisting non priority households with accessing lodgings	Consider development of LocalPad to allow advertisement of rooms to let; promote HomeChoice Plus to these potential landlords.	Housing options	Financial hardship is caused to those affected by the social sector size criteria (spare room subsidy), leading to rent arrears and homelessness; non-priority households have fewer housing options available to access	2015/16	Detailed work will be undertaken in quarter 4 of 2015/16. There will be a focus on lodgings and property shares through the Home Choice Plus scheme. Advice is currently given on individual options cases.
Work closely with The Pitstop to provide a short term directed and focused service to those homeless or socially excluded service users and to reconnect to areas where a local	To ensure that the service does not lead to an increase in homelessness within Mole Valley and helps individuals to	Write a new policy in conjunction with the Surrey- wide re-connection policy developed by Guildford and already in	Housing Options, Pitstop, Other Surrey authorities; Leatherhead Start; Health; local hostel and	Pitstop becomes an organisation where homeless individuals congregate and do not progress into accommodation.	2015/16	The Pitstop has been occupying temporary premises and is in the process of reviewing its overall service and has

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connection is held	move on and ensure that service users are reconnected to areas where they have a local connection and are able to access the most amount of services. To prevent service users to Pitstop rough sleeping in the Mole Valley area.	operation. Offer training opportunities to Pitstop staff to ensure understanding of options and housing / homelessness issues	supported housing providers; Respond; SaDas	That service users of Pitstop rough sleep in Mole Valley. That options available from the areas that they have a local connection are not accessed and utilised.		temporarily closed. This action is therefore on hold. The reconnection policy will be reviewed by the eSOS partnership.
Consider closer links with the Surrey Credit Union	To ensure that the effects of welfare reforms are minimised for households and that the need by service users for unauthorised financial systems such as loan sharks is minimised within the district. To investigate the use of jam jar accounts	Discussions with Surrey Credit Union regarding referrals for clients	Housing Options and Surrey Credit Union	That households borrow money from other sources at high interest rates and suffer financial hardship	2015/16	Work will progress in quarter 4 2015/16 in the year.

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<p>Speak with local banks regarding the possibility of ring fencing monies for rent once universal credit begins</p>	<p>To minimise the effect of welfare reforms such as universal credit for households who need assistance with budgeting and to give greater security to landlords within the private rented sector</p>	<p>Visit local banks and discuss ways of referring and assisting clients set up jam jar accounts.</p>	<p>Housing Options,</p>	<p>That Universal Credit leaves households with budgeting problems in financial hardship and that rent is not paid leading to homelessness</p>	<p>2015/16</p>	<p>Work will progress in quarter 4 2015/16.</p>