

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

25 January 2018

COUNCILLOR ADRIAN LAWRENCE - CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

For the period 16 November 2017 to 25 January 2018

Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Home Choice

There are 982 live applications -

1 Emergency
172 High
282 Medium
527 Low

46 people have been rehoused in December.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

In line with government requirement we measure homelessness in a number of different ways. The trend over the last 3-4 years has seen a worsening situation – mirroring many parts of the country. One measure of homelessness are those rough sleeping. Of all those that we include as being homeless or threatened with being homelessness – those sleeping outside account for only a small proportion. In years gone by these numbers rarely exceeded 0-5 when we undertake snap shot count on a given day in November. In November 2016 we saw one of the most significant increases in rough sleepers anywhere in the country – where 42 people were recorded as sleeping rough. This year we will report a figure of 9. Sleeping rough is a very dangerous thing for anyone to do and tackling this problem remains a high priority whatever the numbers are. Our evidence collected in November 2017 revealed that 63 people on one night had no accommodation. Some of these people were sofa surfing, in institutional settings like hospital, or in emergency beds/ shelter – therefore the numbers vulnerable to and at risk of rough sleeping remain high. Our efforts will remain focussed on tackling this issue.

The reasons for the increase in homelessness and rough sleeping in our area and across much of the country are complex. A National Audit Office report published in September last year pointed to a number of these factors in

particular the break in the link between housing costs and Housing Benefit levels. Another factor highlighted was that many of the services that have helped prevent homelessness have declined. These include drug and alcohol recovery services, as well as mental health support, and particularly those services that directly help prevent homelessness housing related support services (allocated in two tier areas to county council and termed 'Supporting People' funding). These have reduced on average by 59% across the country.

New Legislation

The Homelessness Reduction Act – represents the most significant changes since the first legislation came in in 1977. The Act's main purpose is to ensure that everyone who approaches a local authority because they are either facing homelessness or actually homeless should receive some assistance, whether they are in priority need or not, and irrespective of whether they may be considered intentionally homeless. This significantly broadens the categories of household that the Councils need to take to reasonably secure accommodation for, and creates a number of new duties around preventing and relieving homelessness.

The act addresses concerns raised that the existing legislative framework leads to a significant majority of homeless people - often single, and non-priority not receiving any help from a housing authority (priority need – e.g. vulnerable, or are pregnant, or have dependent children).

With the new legislation has come some additional funding. The Council will receive £238K over three years. Plans are being implemented for additional staff. A Training strategy is being implemented and new procedures and new IT systems are being further developed to accommodate the changes

New Homelessness and rough Sleeping Strategy

The Council is working on a number of initiatives that cover accommodation and shelter provision and support services, Summary:-

- New self-contained temporary accommodation
- Funding to ensure existing hostels/ supported housing projects continue in light of Supporting People funding reductions
- New rough sleeper outreach service
- New floating support service
- Additional temporary shelter/ mobile shelter options

- Improving access to private rented sector

The impact of the problem of homelessness in our community, as well as the implications of the new legislation for the way we work necessitates some new thinking, and different approaches. It is proposed therefore that new Homelessness and rough strategy is devised and implemented this year.

Meetings Attended

Cabinet
E&C
Various meetings with officers
Portfolio Meetings
LAHC
Freebridge liaison meeting