monmouthshire
sir fynwy

SUBJECT:	**HOMELESS BRIEFING REPORT & EMERGING PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE DELIVERY OF HOMELESSNESS**
MEETING:	**ADULT SELECT**
DATE:	**20TH October 2020**

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 This report is subsequent to the report received by Cabinet on 27th May 2020. The report will be the first of two reports. This first report provides a briefing on the current homeless situation in Monmouthshire, advises of new Welsh Government homeless guidance (which includes the requirements to establish a Homeless Transition Plan) and how the Council has and is proposing to respond. The briefing updates on current priorities and considerations for the future delivery of homelessness to meet both existing and anticipated future homeless need.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To receive a presentation on homelessness in Monmouthshire.

2.2 To receive an update on the Housing Support Grant Programme

2.3 To consider the current risks, pressures and challenges relating to the current provision and range of homeless accommodation and housing support homeless applicants.

2.4 To consider and comment on emerging proposals for the future delivery of homelessness in Monmouthshire that will meet the requirements of the proposed Phase 2 Transition Plan. **See Appendix 1.**

2.5 To consider the proposals in relation to the re-commissioning of the Housing Support Grant programme

2.6 For officers to continue to develop the evolving Phase 2 Transition Plan and proposed individual initiatives within the Plan, including identifying the necessary resources.

2.7 To receive a second follow up report at the next committee report with a finalised Transition Plan for pre-Cabinet scrutiny.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the Councils legal duties in respect of homelessness. Due to the Covid-19 circumstances, Welsh Government issued supplementary homeless guidance requiring the Council to house those who are rough sleeping or displaced as a result of the emergency for public health reasons. The Council has implemented the guidance and an overview of the position at 2nd October 2020 is provided in **Appendix 2.**

3.2 Welsh Government have subsequently issued **Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support**. This sets out Welsh Governments future homeless policy, which will be delivered through a three-phase plan:

- Phase 1: March to August 20 – Current Covid-19 crisis management
- Phase 2: July 20 to March 21 – Response to crisis and transition
- Phase 3: January 21 to March 22 – Move to 'New Norm' (WG Vision)

3.3 The 'New Norm' continues to require homeless prevention to be the priority. But where prevention isn't achievable, homelessness should be **brief** and **non-repeated**. The core of the Welsh Government policy is Rapid Rehousing and to provide long-term accommodation with support if needed, to help people retain it and to thrive. The Phase 2 Guidance requires the Council to:

- Continue to support those placed in temporary accommodation and anyone still to be placed
- Prepare a Transition Plan setting out the provision of more sustainable accommodation.
- Improve the quality and availability of temporary, permanent, semi-permanent and supported accommodation. There is an emphasis on the provision of self-contained accommodation and a range of types. **See Appendix 3** sets out Welsh Governments accommodation standards for accommodation provided through Phase 2 Grant funding.

  Welsh Government policy discussions are increasingly making reference to *'temporary homes'* rather than temporary accommodation.

3.4 A summary overview of the current situation is:

- At 2nd October there were 102 households (85 single people) in temporary accommodation, that need moving to other accommodation. The number typically in temporary accommodation has quadrupled.
- Many of these applicants have a need for both specialist accommodation and specialist housing support, which largely isn't currently available.
- Arising issues with placements is not un-common and the risk of placement breakdown is relatively high. Unfortunately, not all support needs can be currently met through the existing Housing Support Grant Programme (there is a need to re-commission, which isn't scheduled until April 2023). This has been compounded by Housing Option Team staff capacity issues over the last six months, which have impacted upon temporary accommodation management. The recent appointment of a temporary Senior Accommodation Officer has helped to improve the situation. helpful but management challenges continue and two temporary Accommodation Assistants started on 1st October 2020.
- On the basis of the current situation, anticipated future needs and the requirements of Welsh Government the need for the following has been identified:

  - **Rapid Re-housing** for all homeless applicants (currently approximately 25% of vacant general needs properties are made available to homeless applicants)

    In the short to medium term the proportion of lets to homeless applicants needs to increase.

  - **Housing First** accommodation for homeless people with chronic health & social care needs (not currently available)

- **Emergency Multiple Needs supported accommodation** in the North and South (interim arrangement in the North in place, facilitated by a non-specialist concierge type supervision)
- **Dedicated Young Persons supported accommodation** for those with higher needs that can't be accommodated in existing accommodation (not currently available)
- **Step-down accommodation for young people** as their needs reduce (not currently available)
- **Self-contained emergency family accommodation** (not currently available)
- **Dedicated Move-on accommodation** to ensure the Council meets the 'rapid-rehousing' requirements. Not available beyond day to day turnover of social housing
- **Assertive Outreach** (often referred to as Critical Time Intervention) support for those without accommodation eg sofa surfing (interim arrangement in place)
- **Dedicated temporary accommodation support** to help applicants manage their accommodation and minimise placement breakdown (an interim goodwill arrangement is in place with a support provider).
- **Intensive Re-settlement support** to help applicants to move into permanent accommodation and provide reassurance to landlords (an interim goodwill arrangement is in place with a provider).
- **Substance misuse support** (not currently available through the homeless service). Substance misuse is often a factor relating to placement breakdown.
- **Mental health support** (not currently available through the homeless service). Mental health is often a factor relating to placement breakdown.
- The need for the homeless service delivery to be based on a **Psychologically and Trauma informed** service (not currently in place).
- With the exception of the emergency family accommodation in Monmouth (currently being used as Multiple Needs accommodation), the Council's temporary accommodation has a generic designation. Nor is it supported.
- There is a need to provide **self-contained accommodation**. Much of the accommodation is shared as oppose to being self-contained
- There is no consistent standard applied to homeless accommodation.

3.5 The Council's emerging and evolving Phase 2 Transition Plan and recommendations, as detailed in **Appendix 1**, which *will aim* to address the identified issues listed above in **3.4**. A request for homeless grant funding was made to Welsh Government to meet the homeless needs identified. The outcome of the bid was the following funding, which is available until 31st March 2021.

Revenue

- Substance misuse liaison worker - £19,000 [Partnership with Gwent Drug & Alcohol Advisory Service]. This project has started.
- Accommodation Assistants x 2 - £30,736 [MCC]. These staff started 1st October 2020.
- Housing First support - £32,460 [Partnership with Pobl]. This ppproject has started

- Assertive Outreach workers x 2 - £48,000 [Partnership with Llamau]. One appointment has been made.
- VAWDASV Crisis worker x 0.5 - £12,000 [Partnership with Cyfannol]. This project has started.

Capital

- Contribution to the development of Emergency Young Persons supported accommodation - £298,464 [Partnership with Melin

Unsuccessful Bids

- Private sector landlord incentives - £30,000 [MCC]
- Contribution to additional costs relating to re-modelling of existing floating housing support contracts to create Temporary Accommodation & Intensive Re-settlement Support - £40,000 [Partnership with Pobl]
- Temporary Trauma Informed Worker x 0.5 £12,000 [Partnership with suitable provider]
- Conversion of family hostel to self-contained accommodation - £90,000 [MCC]
- Purchase of property to provide additional homeless accommodation - £125,000 [MCC]

3.6 Whilst this funding is welcomed, its availability only supports the Council until 31st March 2020. There is no assurance of Welsh Government funding for 2021/22. This is particularly relevant in respect of the revenue funded support arrangements which will cease on 31st March 2021.

Housing Support Grant

3.7 As mentioned in **Paragraph 3.4,** the Council's Housing Support Grant Programme is highly relevant in relation to both helping to meet the needs of homeless applicants and meeting the Guidance of Welsh Governments Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support. In March 2020, due to the current COVID pandemic, it was agreed at Programme Board that the planned review of HSG services and subsequent re-commissioning of HSG services, should be initially delayed until 2021/22. But with a view to keeping a watchful eye on the consequences of the ever changing landscape due to the current unpredictable situation caused by the pandemic. The review is important to ensure current contracts are aligned with current needs and priorities of the citizens of Monmouthshire.

3.8 In light of the increased COVID infection rate and the fact that Welsh Government Administration is due for re-election in 2021, this leaves a high degree of uncertainty in respect of the new Administration's policy and financial envelope for the HSG programme.

3.9 Furthermore, from a Housing Support Grant commissioning perspective, it is felt that the current need does not reflect what is believed will be the future need for Monmouthshire when the current situation has become more stable. Following consultation with WG Official it was agreed in their view that 2021/22 would not be an appropriate time to undertake a full re-commissioning of Monmouthshire's HSG Programme. It was felt that the level of uncertainty with a new Administration taking into account both the unrealistic demands on current providers to complete a full tender process in the midst of the pandemic and the desire to issue five year contracts with an option to extend by two years(WG

Guidelines) would be currently untenable. It is therefore proposed that the new re-commissioning schedule be set to issue contracts from 1st April 2023.

3.10 This proposal will ensure that the HSG programme is fully appropriate to the needs of Monmouthshire and its citizens. As mentioned above the proposed timescale will also align with Welsh Government elections and it is considered this will provide greater certainty around policy and future funding intentions.

3.11 In order to support the Homelessness Agenda and WG Guidelines following a review of current service provision it is proposed that the Council continue to deliver the current model as adapted to meet the additional needs created by the pandemic. Providers from a number of projects have worked alongside their existing clients to provide support to clients' housed in Temporary Accommodation throughout a number of properties in Monmouthshire eg B & B's, hotels etc

3.12 To be able to support the HSG 'Remodelling of HSG Services' to service homelessness, four projects would be amalgamated to provide two different types of service:

- Temporary Accommodation & Resettlement Team – this is a floating support service which will support all clients in temporary accommodation and Move On properties to sustain their tenancy
- Tenancy Support Team – this is a floating support service which will initially support all the existing clients from all four projects, Gateway referral clients and may have capacity to support any overspill from Temporary Accommodation & Resettlement Team.

3.13 However, to be able to deliver this service from April 2021, HSG have to manage a shortfall in funding of over £66k. HSG can cover this deficit by de-commissioning one service within HSG and are currently seeking advice from legal to ensure the de-commissioning process is followed correctly.

3.14 In addition to the general operational and strategic issues raised in **Paragraph 3.4,** the increased need for homeless accommodation has and continues to significantly impact on Options Team staffing. As the level of accommodation increases together with the needs of residents, housing management responsibilities have also increased eg sign-ups; inspections; support visits; resident welfare; voids; rent arrears; repairs; maintenance; responding to complaints etc.

3.15 Staff are operating at capacity and there is a need to ensure staff are fully supported in relation to the change in need and nature of the working environment, which at present is highly demanding and reactive. (The situation has been compounded by the need for some staff to self-isolate and work at home). The issue of staff capacity and the change in the working environment is presenting challenges such as:

- Maximising homeless prevention and minimising the numbers needing to be offered temporary accommodation
- Keeping on top of day to day priorities and maintaining procedures
- The ability to working pro-actively and plan, particularly in relation to proposed initiatives.

- The ability to react at pace and making appropriate judgements
- Asking staff to work flexibly and outside of their substantive roles
- The ability to respond quickly eg to complaints and increase on site management. There is a need for accommodation staff to increase their presence at accommodation

3.10 This increases risks relating to tenant welfare, safeguarding, property condition and neighbour/community issues.

3.11 It is, therefore, considered appropriate to review the current staffing structure to ensure that it fully meets the homeless needs of the Council. The focus will be to ensure homeless prevention is operating to maximum effect to minimise the number of people coming through that need accommodation. A focus will also be to ensure that sufficient capacity and flexibility within the Options Team to meet the current and projected needs of the service.

3.12 The staffing review is also relevant in relation to both the new Welsh Government policy and the expected down-turn in the local economy. The projected demands on the service are expected to increase, particularly in relation to families as the UK Government Furlough scheme ends and private sector evictions and the on-going need for accommodation.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 There are no negative implications with this proposal. However, should it not be possible to implement all of the proposed recommendations it could possibly impact on the Council's abilities to meet its safeguarding responsibilities. **See Appendix 4.**

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 The following options are available:

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
Option 1: The <u>recommended option</u> is to continue to develop the Phase 2 Transition Plan, identify resources and to continue to develop individual proposals to increase the scope and quality of the Councils homeless service which meet the requirements of Welsh Government. This option includes the proposal to re-commission the Housing Support Grant Programme in 2023	The benefits include aiming to: Support Welsh Government policy Contribute to the well-being of applicants Increase the range and number of units of temporary accommodation including the provision of on-site support Introducing designated/ring-fenced permanent move-on accommodation.	The main risk is financial risk due to additional expenditure that the Council will need to incur to help fund the changes. This, however, will be mitigated against through the use of existing funding sources and where possible/appropriate, claim back expenditure from Welsh Government. Although, there is no guarantee that claims will be successful. Welsh Government funding has been secured for a number	It is likely that some of the proposals may be delayed or not be viable to implement due to funding implications. The need for appropriate housing support services to be in place is critical. These are needed immediately.

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
	Increasing the type of specialist housing support for homeless people. Increasing other specialist support eh health related, in addition to housing support Strengthening the management of placements and reduce the risk of placement failure. This will also benefit the priorities of other statutory agencies. Supporting the well-being of staff. Some proposals will provide cost benefits and help to mitigate against particular areas of expenditure eg B & B use.	of proposals until 31st March 2021, but at present there is no funding for 2021/22. Potential opposition from the local community in respect of some proposals There may be a 'second wave' of homelessness relating to a down-turn in the economy and possible unemployment relating to issues such as relationship breakdown and rent/mortgage arrears. The Housing Support Grant needs to be re-commissioned to ensure it meets the needs of the homeless service and local support needs. Re-commissioning is currently scheduled for April 2023. One provider is supporting the Council through a goodwill arrangement	
Option 2: To develop the Phase 2 Transition Plan but not to pursue with proposals that don't attract external homeless related grant funding	The Council will be able to make some changes and improvements to homelessness, but the impact and benefits would be limited.	Whilst there would be changes and improvements made to the homeless service, there would continue to be gaps in service provision and the needs of certain groups would not be met The risk of placement failure will be high Potential impact on the community Potential impact on staff well-being The Housing Support Grant needs to be re-	Whilst seeking to support local authorities as much as possible with grant funding, Welsh Government expectation is that local authorities explore the use of all other funding options The need for appropriate housing support services to be in place is critical. This is needed immediately

Option	Benefit	Risk	Comment
		commissioned to ensure it meets the needs of the homeless service and local support needs. Re-commissioning is currently scheduled for April 2023.	
Option 3: Do nothing and continue with the existing accommodation and housing support arrangements	There are no benefits to this option in the knowledge that the needs of existing homeless clients will not be adequately met. Nor will the needs of future applicants.	The Council won't be meeting the requirements of Welsh Government as per recent policy guidance There will be a high risk of placement failure, which potentially impacts on staff time, lost income, other agencies and the local community. Long-term the well-being of applicants and assistance to live independently will not being adequately supported The risk of placement failure will be high Potential impact on the community Potential impact on staff well-being Potential impact on other agencies, such as the Police	This is not considered an option

6. REASONS:

6.1 The Council has a duty to prevent and respond to homelessness under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

6.2 The Council is expected to support and comply with Welsh Government Guidance - Coronavirus (COVID-19): local authority support for rough sleepers April 2020 and Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 There no resource implications with this report per se due to its status of being a briefing report for Adults Select Committee. The report does, however, seek to highlight there will, however, be potential resource implications with the finalised Phase 2 Homeless Transition Plan and individual projects currently being considered. These are highlighted in the presentation and **Appendix 5** and are the subject of on-going discussions. The follow up report to this report will provide an opportunity for the Committee to fully scrutinise final proposals and associated resource implications

7.2 The overview of grant funding in **Paragraph 3.5** is only available until 31st March 2021. There is a risk that all of these projects may not be able to continue into 2021/22. It, however, would be appropriate to review the position nearer the time.

7.3 There are current resource implications relating to Covid 19 and homelessness, such as B & B expenditure and the need to meet the requirements of Welsh Government. The current in year budget projections are not reflected in this report as they have been reported separately through the Council's Month 5 budget monitoring procedures.

7.4 The current demand and requests on the Housing Support Grant are exceeding the WG Grant allocation of £2.1 million and prioritisation and short/medium/long term plans need to be in place. There is concern that the Council's Housing Support Grant Programme will not be able to meet all of Monmouthshire's housing support needs and the Council may my not be able to fund all services required.

8. CONSULTEES:

8.1 Chief Officer Enterprise; Head of Placemaking, Housing, Highways & Flood; Families First Programme Manager; Housing Options Team Manager Flexible Funding Strategic Manager; Finance Manager; Cabinet Member for Community Development & Social Justice; Cabinet Member for Enterprise & Land Use Planning; Homeless Relationship Welsh Government

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS: Welsh Government; Coronavirus (COVID-19): Local Authority Support for Rough Sleepers; Welsh Government Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support.

10. AUTHOR: Ian Bakewell, Housing & Communities Manager

11. CONTACT DETAILS: Ian Bakewell **Tel:** 01633 644479 **E-mail:** **ianbakewell@monmouthshire.gov.uk**

Appendix 2

Overview of Use of Temporary Accommodation in Monmouthshire – 2nd October 2020

Current Temporary Accommodation Placements
At present the Council is providing temporary accommodation for 102 households (mainly single people under pensionable age), all of whom need to be moved-on and re-housed as soon as possible

Nos. in temporary accommodation at 2nd October 2020 needing move-on - 102:

- **In temporary accommodation** – 102 (85 singles – mainly single males)
    - Includes 17 families

- **Nos in B & B** – 49. (46 – single people)
    - Plus 2 - Night-Shelter

- **Young People 16-24** – 39
    - 4 x 16/17 year olds: 1 in B & B; 1 in shared; 2 x NFA
    - 14 in B & B.
    - Mental health issues – 33 (85%)
    - Pending x 10

- **Multiple needs**
    - Housing First need - 6
    - B & B – 29
    - Shared – 11

- **Pending cases** and awaiting accommodation (effectively a waiting list)
    - 46

In addition to the 102 needing temporary accommodation, the Council continues to provide accommodation to other households who have been prevented from becoming homeless using the Council's private leased, managed and shared accommodation.

The Council is currently in discussions with local housing associations about the possibility of securing additional temporary accommodation

Social Housing
Since March 2020, the level of housing association vacancies has dropped significantly due to tenants not moving and the availability of operatives to prepare voids ready for re-letting. The few vacancies arising have helpfully been prioritised for homelessness by the housing associations. This has facilitated a small number of move-on. The level of vacancies, however, has been, limited and has effectively resulted in clients bottle-necking in temporary accommodation.

The back-log of housing association voids as now been cleared and properties are now beginning to be advertised through Monmouthshire Homesearch. The number of social housing voids coming through and the rate of move on continues to be extremely low.

The Council is currently in discussions with local housing associations about the possibility of new social housing being ring-fenced as new permanent accommodation.

Emergency Family Accommodation
At the start of the crisis, the Council was able to move on families and a decision was made to use the Councils emergency family accommodation in Monmouth as multiple needs accommodation for single people. In order for the property to operate appropriately it was necessary to establish 24 hour supervision. The supervision provided effectively operates as a concierge service.

The property continues to operate temporarily as a multiple needs hostel for four residents under the said supervision.

The Council also has a 6 person property in the South of the County which has been acquired for the Council by Monmouthshire Housing for use as Emergency Family Accommodation. It, however, hasn't been possible to sign up to a lease with Monmouthshire Housing and use the property due to on-going discussions with local residents. A meeting, however, is scheduled for 20th August 2020 to progress this.

B & B
Historically the Council has struggled with Monmouthshire based B & B. Pre-Covid 19 the Council was using four out of County B & B's plus two in Monmouthshire.

The current situation is:

- Thirteen B & B's have been secured in total.
- Discussions are currently in progress in relation to a potential new B & B in the south of the County.
- An on-going risk is that as Covid-19 restrictions start to ease, owners may want to revert back to their normal use, typically tourism. Owners, however, have informally indicated that they are all willing to continue supporting the Council until at least November 2020.

Whilst the above is relatively good news in terms of B & B, they are operating at capacity and the ability to place people sensitively can be challenging.

There has been a need to deliver meals to some applicants in B & B due to the proximity being away from supermarkets or due to the lack of food preparation facilities. This has been funded by Welsh Government Homeless Hardship Grant.

Private Leased
The Council has secured four additional units of leased accommodation from private landlords and a housing association.

Unfortunately, five landlords have given notice and the Council will need to hand back 5 units in the near future.

An increasing risk is that private landlords are approaching the Council about additional rent payments similar to a local market rents. There is concern that further landlords may give notice.

The Council is in discussion about additional leasing schemes through local housing associations

Shared Housing

The Council has secured an additional shared property from Monmouthshire Housing Association providing 5 units of accommodation.

Monmouth Market Hall

This office space has been earmarked to provide emergency night-shelter accommodation, equipped with camp-beds as a contingency measure. This is currently in use for two applicants under 24 hour supervision. The expectation of Welsh Government is that such accommodation is no longer appropriate or acceptable.