

SUBJECT:	HOMELESS TRANSITION PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE
MEETING:	ADULT SELECT COMMITTEE
DATE:	25TH MAY 2021
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To provide an update on the current homeless position in the County and progress with the Homeless Transition Plan as agreed by Cabinet in March 2021 as part of the adoption of the Social Justice Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 To consider the current risks, pressures and challenges relating to meeting local homeless need and providing accommodation for homeless applicants.

2.2 To consider and comment on the progress with implementing the Homeless Transition Plan.

2.3 Adult Select Committee to scrutinise progress by receiving a further update in six month's time.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has experienced a significant increase in demand for homelessness accommodation, as Welsh Government guidance required the Council to ensure nobody had to sleep rough or was at risk of sleeping rough. This issue has been exacerbated due to citizens not being able to stay with family or friends.

3.2 Welsh Government subsequently issued **Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support** setting out future homeless policy requiring the Council to:

- Continue to support all current and future accommodation placements;
- Improve the quality and availability of all types of homeless accommodation; and to
- Produce a Homeless Transition Plan setting out the provision of more sustainable accommodation (the Plan was adopted by the Council in March 2021).

3.3 Future policy seeks to transform Council homeless services, working to a 'New Norm' of:

- Homeless prevention to be the priority but where not achievable, homelessness to be 'Brief and Non-repeated;'
- Councils needs to work towards 'Rapid Rehousing' and to provide long-term accommodation with support if needed, to help people retain it and to thrive.

3.4 The current homelessness situation in Monmouthshire continues to be extremely challenging due to the lack of temporary and permanent accommodation and the continuing level of need for homeless support. The situation is broadly consistent with the position [statement](#) provided to Cabinet in March 2021. The headline overview is:

- Placements in temporary accommodation and B & B are not declining yet and the average stay in temporary accommodation is longer than normal due a lack of suitable alternative accommodation move on accommodation e.g. existing temporary accommodation is at capacity and the supply of permanent accommodation vacancies is insufficient to meet demand.
- Social letting vacancies were lower for 20/21 due to tenants not being able to move, thereby impacting on property turnover
- There continues to be a significant proportion of applicants who need specialist accommodation and specialist/intensive housing support; and
- The management of temporary accommodation continues to be intensive.

3.5 The table below provides a summary contextual overview:

Indicator	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	01.02.21	11.05.21
Cumulative No. of individual homeless contacts	835	783	619	-	-
No. in temporary accommodation	21	-	144	130	146
No. in B & B	0	10	59	73	76
No. of B & B Placements	36	57	389	-	44
% of households threatened with homelessness, successfully prevented.	67%	Not recorded	35%	-	-
Total Homesearch Lettings (includes OAP lettings)	471	461	371	-	-
Total Homesearch General Need Lettings	-	-	246	-	-

Total 1 Bed Lettings	-	-	86	-	-
% of Homesearch properties allocated to homelessness	16.1%	21.3%	37.8%	-	-

3.6 Although the current position as at 17th May 2021, continues to be challenging, the Council is making positive and tangible progress in terms of delivering the Homeless Transition Plan and increasing both accommodation and housing support options. Key areas of achievements include:

3.7 Homeless Staffing

- Additional funding was approved by Cabinet in March 2021 as part of the MTFP, to increase the Homelessness budget in order to provide additional staffing to strengthen homeless prevention, accommodation acquisition and management. Recruitment is currently being undertaken with completion anticipated by August 2021.

3.8 Homeless Accommodation – Temporary & Permanent

- Table One below provides an overview of the current profile of homeless accommodation availability and a net gain of additional units secured during 2020/21. The table below includes four units of newly developed self-contained emergency family accommodation for the South of the County by Monmouthshire Housing.

Table One: Homeless Accommodation Availability

Type	Ownership	Units	Change in Units 20/21
Interim Multiple Needs (Former family hostel)	MCC	4	-1
Private leased scheme (including new emergency family accommodation)	Private Landlords or RSL's	56	+12
Shared housing - leased	Private Landlords & RSL's	70	+14
Managed	Private Landlords	33	No change
Low-cost homeownership	MCC	1	No change
Supported lodgings	Private landlord	1	No change
Young Persons Accommodation	Pobl	21	No change
Housing First	Pobl	3	+3
Social Housing - Permanent	RSL's	37.8%	+16%

In addition to the above the following accommodation is pending:

Type	Ownership	Units
Shared emergency family accommodation – south. Leased	MHA	6 Persons
Housing First	Pobl	1 unit
1 bed flats - low needs	Melin	8 units
1 bed flat – low need	Pobl	1 unit
1bed flat – low need	Private L/L	1 unit
Private leased	Private L/L x 2	2 units
Re-modelling of existing young person's accommodation – low to high needs	Pobl	

3.9

Housing Support

Through re-modelling and additional funding from Welsh Government, the Council's Housing Support Grant programme is delivering the following additional provision:

- Dedicated Temporary & Resettlement Accommodation Support to specific premises and to enable continuity of support in accommodation- Pobl;
- Substance Misuse Assertive Outreach Worker – Gwent Drug & Alcohol Service working in partnership with providers whose clients have complex needs which includes alcohol and/or drugs dependencies.
- Mental Health Social Work role - this is a new role which will be integral to the work of HSG to ensure that individuals with complex needs, who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention, have appropriate services and support that will reduce the need for a higher tier of intervention at a later stage. This will also strengthen how early intervention and prevention services (universal and tiers 1 & 2) can be better supported by a Mental Health Social Work professional to continue providing support to clients who are extremely chaotic and complex with challenging behaviour. The Mental Health Social work role will sit in the Community & Partnerships Development Team structure, as part of the HSG team, and will focus on working with a wide range of service providers and communities to keep service users well and thriving in a place and out of statutory services where possible. It also anticipated that this role will also identify when a service user requires statutory intervention and will ensure that they get the right help at the right time by the right agency, very much 'bridging the gap' between non-statutory and statutory services to ensure timely and appropriate help and support is provided to the most vulnerable individuals. [This isn't operational as yet]
- Assertive Outreach Workers x 2 which also incorporates rough sleepers- Llamau;

- Mental Health Support Worker – this role will work closely with the Mental Health Social Worker and HSG/Gateway to support individuals referred via the Gateway with mental health issues in order to help them maintain their accommodation and prevent these individuals moving into a crisis situation; [Not operational as yet]
- Cyfannol – Additional support provided for the dispersed housing in relation to individuals who are or have suffered domestic violence and/or abuse;
- Housing First- this initiative which has been proven in other areas of Wales and will now support up to 5 individuals who have very complex needs where other services have struggled to meet their individual needs across the county of Monmouthshire
- Young Persons Supported Housing (Low to High Need) – Pobl
 - Following a robust evaluation and needs analysis the existing provision has been restructured to allow young people with High, medium, and low needs to be accommodated and supported without having to move out of county and B&B.
 - A joint scheme with Children’s Services due to come online with effect from June 2021;
- Housing Intervention Panel (HIP)- this partnership of multi-agency professionals has continued to go from strength to strength, this has been embraced by the fact that there is now a full-time coordinator in place and a recent review showed positive outcomes for individuals as a direct result of this multi-agency group and the subsequent actions that were identified. This function is integral in the ongoing work to ensure that both Housing Support Grant and Children’s and Communities Grant (Early Help Panel) are integrated and their work supports each of the grant streams rather than working in isolation.

3.9 Whilst the Council has made positive progress, the following are key priorities of the Transition Plan that still need attention:

- **Homeless Prevention** – there is an on-going need to review procedures and support staff to ensure that every opportunity is taken to prevent homelessness and minimise the need for accommodation;
- **Multiple Needs Accommodation** - the proposal to develop the Council’s hostel accommodation needs to be reviewed due to a proposed property purchase falling through. Discussions have started with a housing association. Also, there is currently insufficient Housing Support Grant available to fund the necessary support;
- **Self-Contained Family Accommodation North** – the Council is currently working with a Melin Homes in respect of a proposed development;
- **Low Needs Single Persons Accommodation** – exploring all options for increasing provision is on-going, including housing associations being asked to consider house share schemes and potentially, the Council using its development ambitions to build homeless accommodation;
- **Monmouthshire Lettings Service** – continuing to develop the arms-length branding to increase private sector opportunities, is linked to the recruitment of a dedicated MLS Negotiator;

- **Empty Properties** - the Council is shortly due to undertake surveys of the High Streets to identify possible empty space above shops. An Empty Homes trial is also pending as a 'learning exercise', with the aim of targeting 3 long-term empty properties;
- **Buying Properties for Homelessness** - this is an emerging proposal that the Council is currently seeking to determine whether this presents an additional option to increase accommodation provision. This will be the subject of further reports;
- **Trauma Informed Service Delivery** - as yet it hasn't been possible to give this the required consideration;
- **Mental Health** – there is a need to continue to strengthen provision for accommodation and support due to the high level of mental health need.

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

- 4.1 There are no negative implications with the implementation of the Homeless Transition Plan. The implementation of the Transition Plan strengthens the Council's ability to support safeguarding and corporate parent responsibilities. **See Appendix One.**

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 As this report essentially provides an information update, an options appraisal is not applicable.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 The Council has a duty to prevent and respond to homelessness under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and to work to the Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support.
- 6.2 The Homeless Transition Plan contributes to the aim of the Social Justice Strategy '*To put Social Justice at the heart of what we do.*' The proposal gives homeless residents of Monmouthshire an increased opportunity to secure good quality homeless accommodation.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 Additional funding has been provided in 21/22 as part of the MTFP – the Homelessness budget has been increased to cover additional staffing requirements (£191,000) and additional unit leasing costs (£33,000). The authority is still relying on the Welsh Government Covid Hardship fund to cover the costs associated with the provision of concierge arrangements at temporary accommodation, dedicated Accommodation Assistant supporting the management of B & B's and securing the availability of B & B's. The annual cost of this support in 2021/22 was identified at the budget setting stage as £750,000, Welsh Government has only committed to funding these costs until 30th September 2021. Therefore, unless further funding is made available then there is a potential financial risk to the authority of £375,000 if our Homeless provision remains the same.

7.2 If use of B & B continues into 2021/22 at a similar level, there will be a continued pressure for the Housing Benefit Budget. By the end of 2020/21 the Housing Benefit budget had incurred additional costs of £471,906, as a result of these placements. This represents the additional costs that the Council cannot claim through the Housing Benefit Subsidy mechanism. The Council was, however, able to recover these costs in full through the Covid Hardship fund. As advised in 7.1, Welsh Government have confirmed that this scheme will continue until 30th September 2021. Therefore, there will be a financial risk to the Council if Welsh Government remove the Hardship Fund and the current level of B & B use continues.

8. CONSULTEES:

8.1 Chief Officer Enterprise; Head of Enterprise and Community Animation, Enterprise DMT, Housing Options Team Manager; Flexible Funding Strategic Manager; Finance Manager; Estates Manager; Assistant Head of Finance – Revenue.

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS:** Welsh Government Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support;

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