

SUBJECT:	Bed & Breakfast Policy
MEETING:	Single Cabinet Member Decision
DATE:	25th July 2018
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to adopt a proposed policy for the use of Bed & Breakfast (B & B) for homeless purposes. Establishing a policy was a recommendation of the Adults Select Committee on 20th March 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To consider the circumstances in which the Council needs to use B & B for homeless purposes and the standard of service that should be provided, including being assured in respect of applicants and other occupiers.

2.2 To consider the attached draft B & B policy. **See Appendix 1**

2.3 To agree and adopt the proposed B & B Policy, which will be reviewed on annual basis.

2.4 That Adults Select Committee receive an annual update on B & B use and

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Council has a duty to respond to homelessness. The focus of the Act is homeless prevention. However, where homelessness cannot be prevented the Council has other duties, including accommodation duties. In the event of homelessness, the Act requires the Council to:

- provide interim accommodation for applicants in priority need (S.68). The definition of priority need includes families with children and 16/17 year olds.
- help secure (this is not an absolute duty) accommodation and (S.73)
- a duty to secure accommodation for applicants in priority need (S.75)

3.2 Nevertheless, accessing an adequate supply of accommodation is an on-going challenge for the Council. Not only is homeless accommodation itself in short supply together with social housing, but it is a small part of the wider Monmouthshire housing market, which also has an under-supply of affordable accommodation. The rural nature of the County further compounds the situation. **See Appendix 2.**

3.3 There are a number of challenges providing homeless accommodation. This includes there being only one family hostel (which is in Monmouth), the private leasing scheme has contracted over recent years, private sector accommodation is difficult to access and MCC accommodation is typically at capacity. Also there is a need to have regard to the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015 and the Council needs to be mindful of safeguarding and community safety issues.

- 3.3 On occasions, therefore, the use of B & B may be necessary. This, however, is always an absolute last resort and if no other suitable accommodation can be sourced.
- 3.4 This report proposes that the Council adopt a policy for the use of B & B. The policy will provide a framework and standards within which the Council will work. It also provides a basis against which the provision of B & B will be monitored. The policy particularly seeks to support the Council's Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.6 Although it is proposed to establish a B & B policy, the on-going focus needs to be to continue to try and avoid the use of B & B by seeking to further strengthen homeless prevention and to identify additional forms of accommodation. **Appendix 3** provides an overview of proposed current key actions, some of which are in progress.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

4.1 The following options are available and are evaluated in **Appendix 4**:

- **Option 1** – Continue with the status quo and have no B & B policy in place.
- **Option 2** – Establish a B & B policy and take no further action
- **Option 3** - Establish a B & B policy whilst also seeking to continue to strengthen homeless prevention and introduce new accommodation options, particularly a supported lodgings scheme, that will help to mitigate against B & B use. Such schemes may not, however, provide provision for applicants assessed as unsuitable through risk assessment processes.

5. OPTIONS EVALUATION

5.1 Additional evaluation over and above that listed above is detailed in **Appendix 4**.

4. REASONS:

4.1 The Council has a legal duty to prevent and respond to homelessness under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and to comply with The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are cost implications to the Council to placing households in B & B. The gross expenditure for 2017/18 was £33,673. A level of this will be off-set by Housing Benefit payments made directly to the Council, where eligible.

5.2 The Council has a budget for short-term accommodation needs. It's not anticipated that the proposed policy will create any additional net costs.

5.3 At present applicants aren't charged for B & B provision. The draft policy maintains the non-charging arrangement due to the administrative implications.

5.4 To support the Council's Safeguarding Policy, since April, the Council is keeping a unit of shared accommodation vacant as a unit of emergency accommodation to reduce the need to use B & B. The gross cost of keeping this unit vacant is the loss of £86.19 per week through lost rental income.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The proposal to develop new measures to identify new measures to strengthen homelessness prevention and seek to introduce new accommodation options. Should the Council need to reduce the level of private leasing or phase out the PLS, this will impact negatively on homeless applicants in Monmouthshire. **See Appendix 5.**
- 7. SAFEGUARDING & CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:**
- 7.1 The provision of accommodation for any homelessness or to prevent homelessness supports both safeguarding and corporate parenting.
- 7.2 A risk assessment procedure is undertaken prior to any B & B placement, which both considers the safeguarding of the applicant themselves or the safeguarding of other applicants/residents.
- 8. CONSULTEES:** Cabinet; Senior Leadership Team; Head of Planning; Housing and Place Shaping; Adults Select Committee.
- 8.1 The Adults Select Committee requested that B & B use is reported to the Committee on an annual basis and that the Policy is reviewed annually. The Committee also requested that the Monmouthshire church network be engaged with in respect of the Council seeking to identify additional accommodation options.
- 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:** Housing (Wales) Act 2014; Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness – Welsh Government, March 2016; The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015.
- 10. AUTHOR:** Ian Bakewell, Housing & Communities Manager
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Appendix 2

Housing Options Team - Accommodation Overview

The current demand for homeless demand is summarised as follows:

The Council received 719 contacts in 16/17 and 533 in 17/18 about homelessness and determined the following applications:

	15/16	16/17	17/18
○ S.66 (at risk of becoming homeless within 58 days)	248	183	258
○ S.73 (actually homeless)	95	217	228
○ S.75 (actually homeless)	37	37	33
○ Total	380	337	519

The following is the accommodation resource available to the Council for homelessness:

- MCC Family Hostel, Monmouth - 5 units of emergency family accommodation
- MCC Single persons Shared Housing, Countywide – 60 units (3 further units pending) of single persons accommodation
- MCC Low Cost Home-Ownership Property – 1 unit of family accommodation
- Solas Young Persons Accommodation, Abergavenny & Chepstow – 21 units of accommodation for 16-24 year olds
- MCC Monmouthshire Lettings Service
 - 13 units (6 further unit pending) of family accommodation
 - Private Leasing Scheme – 45 units of family accommodation recently transferred over from Melin Homes. (The number of units has fallen from 56 as report to Adults Select in March 2018.
 - 62 units of single persons accommodation in shared housing
- Other eg Cyfannol refuge, MIND supported housing, Bron Afon Housing Association – this is ad-hoc accommodation
- Monmouthshire social housing stock

Appendix 3

Overview of Key Actions to Strengthen Homeless Prevention & Develop Alternative Housing Options to Private Leasing

The following actions will help to mitigate against budget pressures and help to provide additional housing options, helping to provide alternatives to using B & B.

- 'Lodgings based' Supported housing models are being investigated. A presentation by Nightstop was provided to officers on 7th December 2017. Other models have been acquired for consideration in relation to the Supporting People programme.
- A Young Persons Accommodation Officer was appointed in January 2018, providing a dedicated service for young people. This is being funded through the Supporting People Programme.
- Acquire family 'hostel' type premises for the South of the County. The Council was offered a property by a housing association prior to Christmas, but this has fallen through. There is, however, a subsequent offer to buy a property for the Council to use as a family hostel in the south.
- Funding has been acquired from WG grant to temporarily offer 'Golden Hellos' for the Monmouthshire Lettings service. This ceases at the end of March 2019.
- Two part-time benefits staff have transferred from Social Care. This has enabled the Housing Options Function of Financial Inclusion to be strengthened.
- A small Homeless Prevention Reserve has been created to offer private landlords rent guarantees.
- The monitoring of the Housing Register is an on-going priority to ensure the Register works for the Council in respect of homelessness and prevention.
- Housing Options staff have met with Tai Calon Housing Association in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. Tai Calon from time to time, such as in locations close to Monmouthshire, may have vacancies that the Council may be able to utilise for homeless households. This as yet hasn't facilitated any opportunities.
- Discussions have been undertaken with a local housing association about both surplus non-viable stock that may be disposed of and alternative models, the latter of which perhaps could be funded through the Welsh Government Innovative Housing Fund. No proposals have emerged as yet.
- A pilot supported lodgings proposal is currently being developed with a housing support provider.
- The 'Housing First' model is being investigated.

- Discussions are on-going with a group of Monmouth Churches who are interested in providing a night-shelter for rough sleepers during the winter. Discussions about the churches supporting the said supported lodgings are also being discussed.
- Engage with the Monmouthshire church network and community to seek to identify additional accommodation options.
- Development of a joint Regional Homeless Strategy with other Gwent Council's. It is hoped that regional solutions will emerge that may support Monmouthshire needs,
- On-going development and promotion of Monmouthshire Lettings. 13 properties acquired to date.
- The Council has withdrawn from a sub-regional Prison Prep Officer scheme that aimed to provide a dedicated and early intervention service for prison leavers. The Council has now signed up to a service provided by Cornerstone in Caerphilly
- Introduce Positive Pathways for Young People – an early intervention protocol to identify young people at risk of becoming homelessness and developing a housing pathway accordingly to minimise the risk.
- Liaise with housing associations in respect of accessing existing stock
- A Supporting People and Homeless Strategic Planning group has been established. The aim of this is to more closely align the Supporting People Programme and on-going commissioning with homeless prevention and to improve the evidence base.

Appendix 4

Evaluation Criteria – Cabinet, Individual Cabinet Member Decisions & Council

Title of Report:	Homelessness & Prevention – B & B Policy
Date decision was made:	
Report Author:	Ian Bakewell

What will happen as a result of this decision being approved by Cabinet or Council?

The Council will have a policy framework within which to provide B & B and to monitor against

12 month appraisal

What benchmarks and/or criteria will you use to determine whether the decision has been successfully implemented?

The following benchmarks will be used to assess whether the decision has had a positive or negative effect:

- Requests/demand for homeless assistance
- Level of successful homeless prevention
- No. of B & B placements
- Average stay in B & B
- No. of families placed in B & B
- No. of 16/17 year olds placed in B & B
- The cost of B & B provision
- Inspections
- DBS checks

12 month appraisal

What is the estimate cost of implementing this decision or, if the decision is designed to save money, what is the proposed saving that the decision will achieve?

This proposal is cost neutral. No direct costs will be incurred as a result of the policy.

12 month appraisal

Any other comments

