

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	John Conway – Head of Housing	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i> A18/015	
Wards Affected	All	19 th September 2018	
Title	TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION POLICY FOR HOMELESS APPLICANTS		

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mark Rowley

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To seek Executive Committee approval of the Temporary Accommodation Policy for homeless applicants which will provide a framework for the fair allocation of temporary accommodation to homeless households.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 requires housing authorities to secure temporary accommodation for eligible households where there is a reason to believe that a household may be homeless and have a priority need for accommodation.
- 2.2 Households with a priority need for accommodation may include pregnant women, families with dependent children and other households which are vulnerable on grounds of ill health or age, for example.
- 2.3 The temporary accommodation secured by the Council must be suitable for the individual household by virtue of its type, size, affordability and location.
- 2.4 The Council currently uses a range of temporary accommodation including council properties, hostel accommodation, self-contained properties leased from private sector landlords, and bed and breakfast accommodation. There is a large variation in the cost of different types of temporary accommodation with self-contained properties leased from private sector landlords and bed and breakfast accommodation typically costing the Council around £50 per night with hostel accommodation provided by housing associations costing approximately £9 per night.
- 2.5 Homelessness applications have increased by 224% over the past three years and there has been a corresponding increase in the Council's use of temporary accommodation with over 150 households currently in temporary accommodation compared to just 24 households in August 2015. There is an insufficient supply of affordable temporary accommodation in the locality and this presents a challenge in meeting the needs of vulnerable homeless households. As a result, the Council sometimes has to place households

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outside Kettering borough although it is a priority to move these households back to the Borough at the earliest opportunity.

2.6 A number of measures are being taken in response to these challenges:

- The Council is purchasing approximately 30 properties within the General Fund to utilise as temporary accommodation. This will mean that the Council is less reliant on costly bed and breakfast hotels and self-contained properties leased from private sector landlords.
- Staff resources are being increased so that the Council can respond effectively to the challenges that we now face. During the spring, recruitment was undertaken to the Housing Options team that resulted in an increase in staffing from four Housing Options Advisors to six Housing Options Advisors and two Senior Housing Options Advisors. This increase in capacity means that the team will have more time to focus on preventing homelessness and therefore alleviating the need for temporary accommodation to be provided.
- A new Accommodation Officer was recruited in May to ensure that those households accommodated in temporary accommodation are managed effectively and that the most appropriate type of temporary accommodation is used.
- The Council has adopted a revised Spend to Save Policy that enables the Housing Options team to provide a grant of up to £5,000 to any homeless household that would be owed a temporary accommodation duty. The grant can be awarded to either help homeless households remain in their current property (e.g. by clearing rent arrears) or to secure a property (e.g. by paying the deposit and first month's rent).
- The Council continually monitors the number of homeless households requiring temporary accommodation in order to try and secure a sufficient supply to meet anticipated demands.

2.7 The Council has not previously had a Temporary Accommodation Policy due to the relatively low numbers of households accommodated in temporary accommodation and the limited types of accommodation that were available. Despite the initiatives described above, the Council remains under severe pressure to provide suitable local temporary accommodation for homeless households. Accordingly, it is felt that a Temporary Accommodation Policy is now required to ensure that all temporary accommodation is allocated to homeless households in a fair, equitable and transparent manner that takes account of the needs of each household.

2.8 The Temporary Accommodation Policy sets out how the Council will allocate temporary accommodation to homeless households. It outlines which households will have priority for the different types of temporary accommodation available. It aims to ensure that the temporary accommodation available is allocated fairly and transparently and that applicants are provided with accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

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2.9 In particular, the Policy states that the Council will use bed and breakfast accommodation as a last resort and will take action to identify alternative and more suitable accommodation for homeless households as soon as possible, particularly in the case of families with dependent children.

2.10 Nationally, the Local Government Ombudsman is focusing on complaints relating to temporary accommodation and published a report in December 2017 called '*Still No Place Like Home*'. This looked at the common themes arising from complaints which have been upheld against local authorities about temporary accommodation. Many of these complaints related to the suitability or otherwise of temporary accommodation. The report made a number of recommendations which have been taken into account in creating this Temporary Accommodation Policy.

3. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

3.1 The Policy has been devised taking into account feedback from homeless households about their preferences and the suitability of the temporary accommodation to which they have been allocated.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The proposed Temporary Accommodation Policy is attached to this report. A summary of the main points of the policy is provided below.

4.2 **Types of Temporary Accommodation:** The different types of accommodation that will be considered for use by the Council when providing an offer of temporary accommodation to a household are:

- Private sector leased accommodation (PSL)
- Accommodation within our own HRA stock
- Bed and breakfast
- Other nightly paid, privately managed facilities - shared facilities
- Other nightly paid, privately managed facilities - self contained
- Accommodation owned by the council (non HRA properties)
- Hostel (Wellington House or Refuge)

4.3 **Allocating Temporary Accommodation:** The Temporary Accommodation Policy describes the order of preference in which different types of temporary accommodation will be offered to different household types. Officers will first look to place households in accommodation within the borough but where households have had to be accommodated in other areas, they will be prioritised for a move back to the Borough at the earliest opportunity.

4.4 **Use of bed and breakfast accommodation:** The Council will only use bed and breakfast accommodation for households when no other accommodation is

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available. When it is used, we will keep those accommodated under regular review.

4.5 **Suitability of accommodation:** In establishing whether an offer of temporary accommodation is suitable for a homeless household, officers will take into account the relevant legislation and the following factors:

- 1) Distance outside of the area
- 2) Affordability
- 3) Access to own transport
- 4) Public transport
- 5) Employment
- 6) Caring arrangements
- 7) Children's schools, including availability of school places in the new area, any statement of special educational need or educational health care plan, and whether any child is at a pivotal point of education, i.e. GCSE or A level years
- 8) Medical needs of the household
- 9) Other factors as raised by the applicant

5. **FINANCIAL RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None at this stage.

6. **HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None at this stage.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 requires housing authorities to secure interim (temporary) accommodation for eligible households where there is a reason to believe a household may be homeless, and have a priority need for accommodation.

7.2 The Temporary Accommodation Policy will be monitored to ensure that it continues to comply with legislation and any relevant case law. It is proposed that the Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

8. **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee adopts the Temporary Accommodation Policy attached to this report.

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Background Papers:

Title:

Date:

Contact Officer:

Previous Minutes/Reports:

Ref: 17.EX.78 Housing Options – Spend to Save Policy

Date: 18th April 2018