

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	MONITORING AND AUDIT	Item A5	Page 1
Report Originator	John Conway Head of Housing	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i>	
Wards Affected	All	5 th February 2019	
Title	HOMELESSNESS UPDATE		

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mark Rowley

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members with an update on homelessness across the Borough and to advise of action being taken by the Council in response to the demand from homeless households.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 In common with local authorities across the country, the Council has seen a dramatic increase in homelessness over the past four years. This has been the result of a combination of factors:

- Rising house prices with home ownership being increasingly unaffordable for households on average incomes.
- An increase in evictions by private landlords caused by a rising rental market, a freeze in Local Housing Allowances and taxation changes affecting buy-to-let landlords.
- Reductions in funding for new affordable homes.
- The impact of welfare reform on low income households.
- Cuts in Supporting People funding resulting in the closure of supported housing projects.

2.2 As a result of these pressures, we are experiencing unprecedented demand for our services:

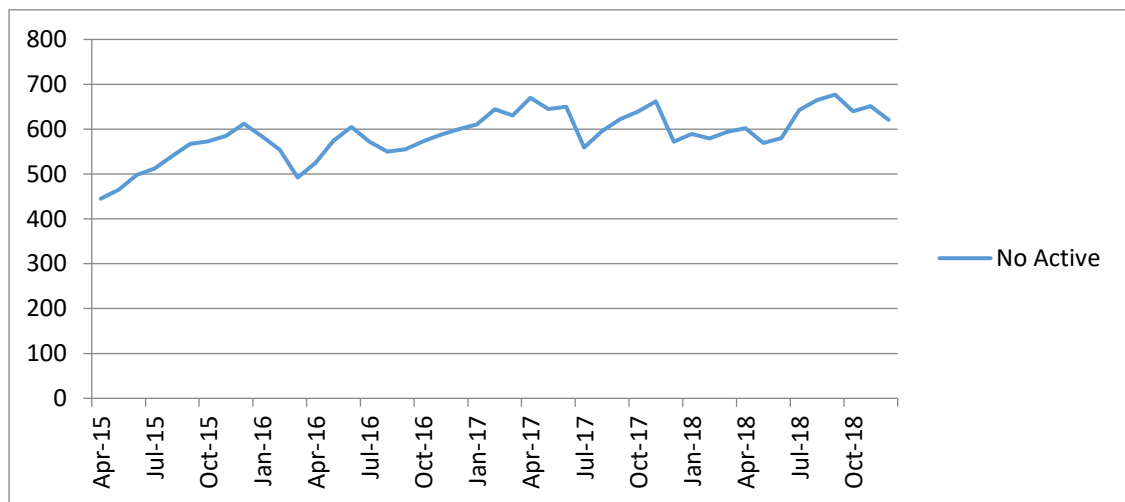
- Applications from homeless households have risen dramatically from 121 in 2014/15 to 391 in 2017/18.
- In the current financial year, an average of 20 households per week are approaching the Council for help because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	MONITORING AND AUDIT	Item A5	Page 2
------------------	-----------------------------	------------	--------

- Our use of temporary accommodation has increased significantly with 184 households in temporary accommodation on 28 January. This compares to 24 at the end of March 2014, 81 at the end of March 2017 and 164 in October 2018.
- Around 150 households are now applying to join the Keyways housing register every month with 621 households currently registered.

Table 1: Households Registered on Keyways 2015/16 – 2018/19 to Date



- 2.3 The demands on our service increased significantly with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in April. There is now a requirement for more in-depth casework and face-to-face interviews with a far greater number of customers in an effort to prevent homelessness.

3. THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO MANAGING HOMELESSNESS

- 3.1 Our Housing Options and Keyways teams work with all homeless people, providing advice and assistance to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Housing Options Advisors provide homeless households with advice on their housing options, prepare bespoke Personal Housing Plans and work to bring those plans to a successful outcome.
 - Temporary accommodation is provided for households without somewhere to stay. This can take the form of private sector leases, council housing, hostels, nightly paid accommodation and, in a few cases, bed and breakfast hotels
 - Environmental wardens and housing officers regularly undertake sweeps of town centres and other locations known to attract rough sleepers to identify who is sleeping rough and provide practical help and support.
 - The Council works in partnership with 'Safe until Daylight' to provide a night shelter for rough sleepers, which is scheduled to remain open until March 29. Referrals are made through the Housing Options team.

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	MONITORING AND AUDIT	Item A5	Page 3
-----------	-----------------------------	------------	--------

- The Council also operates a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) under which we provide temporary accommodation for people sleeping rough when the temperature falls below freezing point for three consecutive nights.
- The Turning Point supported housing project, which is run by Kettering, Corby and East Northamptonshire, provides accommodation with intensive support for single homeless people and particularly those who are rough sleeping and have substance misuse, mental health and offending behaviour issues.
- We work closely with the Probation Service and Northamptonshire Police to ensure that vulnerable people leaving prison have somewhere to live.
- A Housing Options Advisor works closely with Kettering General Hospital and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust to meet the housing needs of patients who are being discharged and to help prevent bed blocking.
- The Tenancy Support team provides practical support for vulnerable council tenants so that they can maintain their tenancies, avoid homelessness and make the most of their lives.
- We provide funding for Citizens Advice to provide advice to households at risk of becoming homeless.
- The Council organises and chairs the Kettering Homeless Action Partnership which involves more than 20 partner agencies.

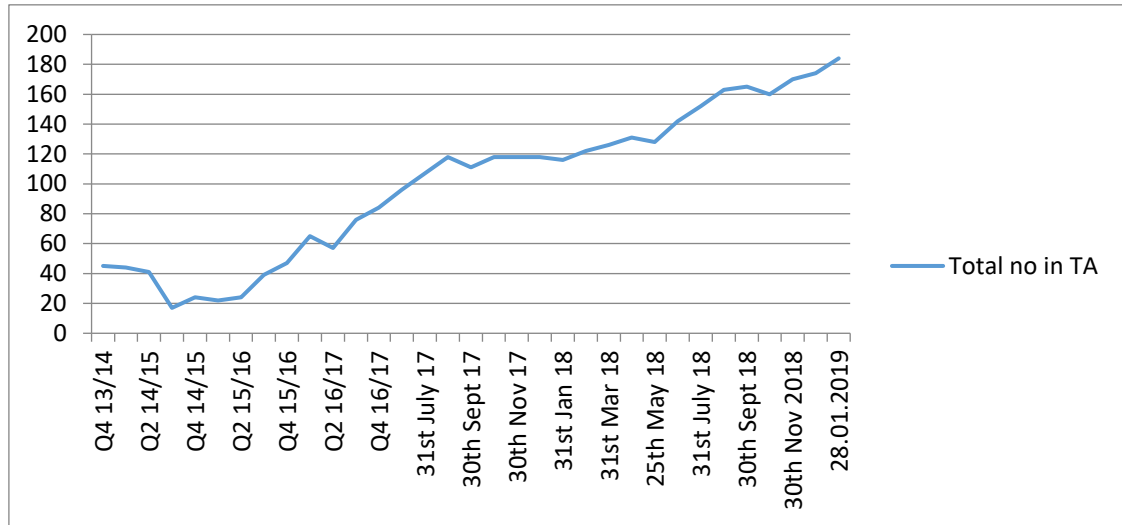
4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Since the last update report to the Monitoring and Audit Committee in November, the number of approaches by homeless households has remained high. We are seeing around 20 homelessness approaches every week and placing an average of five households in temporary accommodation. So far in this financial year there have been 899 approaches.
- 4.2 Similarly, the use of temporary accommodation remains high with a total of 184 households in temporary accommodation as at 28 January as Table 2, overleaf, illustrates.

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

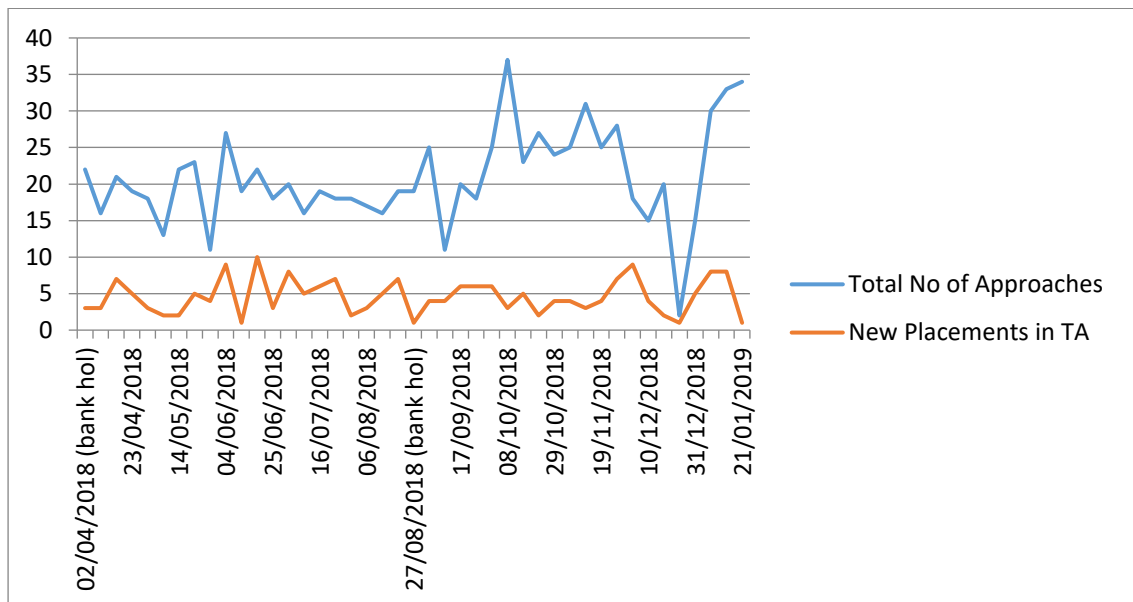
Committee	MONITORING AND AUDIT	Item A5	Page 4
------------------	-----------------------------	------------	--------

Table 2: Households in Temporary Accommodation



4.3 The table below provides information on homelessness approaches and placements in temporary accommodation each week since April.

Table 3: Homelessness Approaches and Temporary Accommodation Placements 2018/19



4.4 Wellington House closure

The Council has recently been notified by Home Group that the Wellington House hostel, which provides accommodation and support for vulnerable single homeless people, will close at the end of March. This is because Home Group is changing its business model and the hostel is no longer the type of facility that the housing association wishes to provide. Housing Options Advisors are working with Home Group to arrange suitable move-on accommodation for all the

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	MONITORING AND AUDIT	Item A5	Page 5
------------------	-----------------------------	------------	--------

residents and council officers are exploring options for the future use and ownership of the building with the housing association.

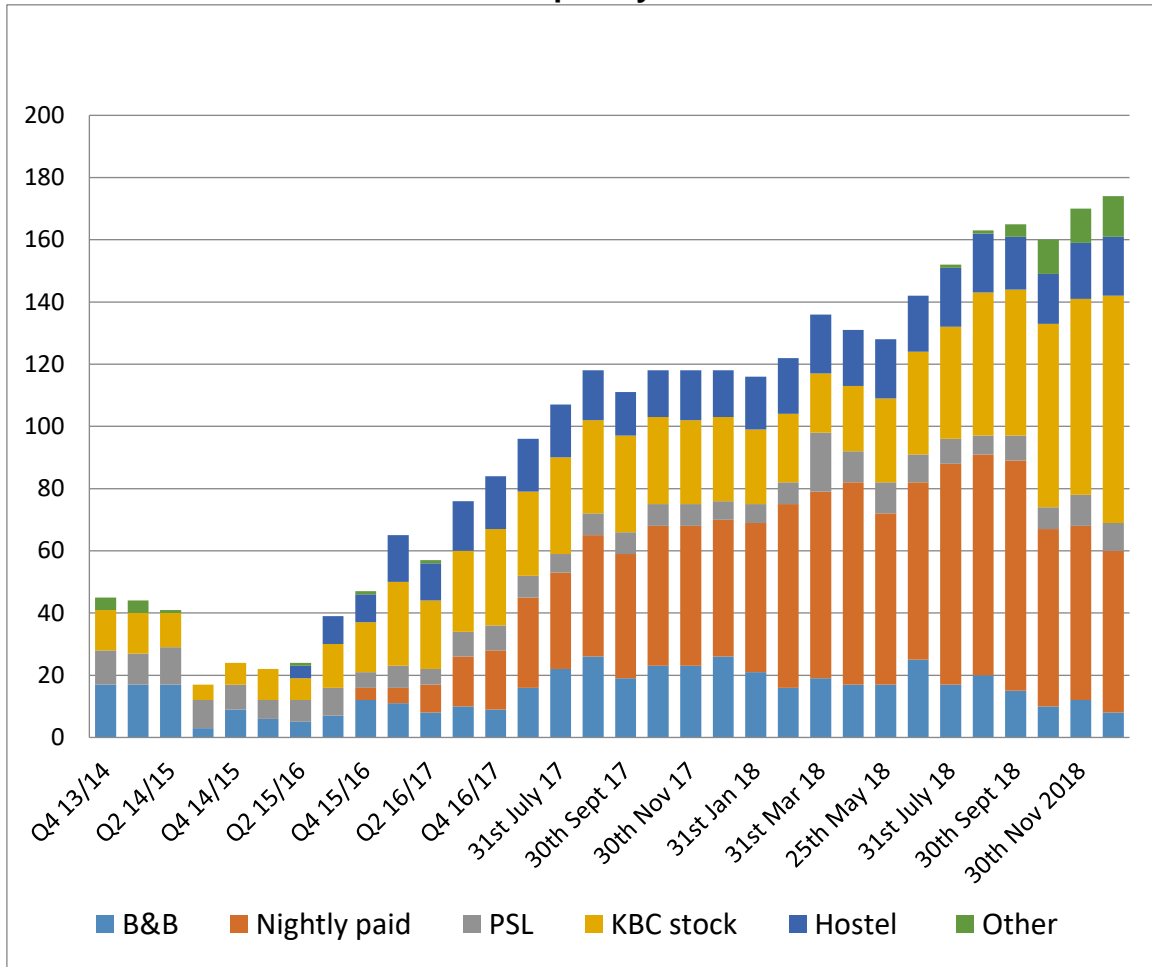
4.5 In the face of unprecedented demand, the Council is taking action over a number of areas in order to provide a high-quality and responsive housing options service to customers whilst minimising the financial impact on the Council. Recent initiatives include the following:

- We have increased the number of supervisory and front-line posts within the Housing Options team so that the Council can respond effectively in those areas where we are under particular pressure and where there are new and emerging challenges.
- A temporary accommodation policy, which was approved by the Executive Committee in September, ensures that the needs and preferences of customers are taken into account in allocating temporary accommodation. The policy has enabled us to reduce the number of homeless households who are placed in accommodation outside the Borough. Of the 184 households in temporary accommodation only two are placed outside Northamptonshire with the vast majority (171) within the Borough.
- We are implementing an action plan with the aim of reducing the time that homeless households have to spend in emergency accommodation. This includes a comprehensive review of the customer journey to achieve better co-ordination between teams, eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and improve communication with customers at what can be a stressful time in their lives.
- A briefing session for public sector and voluntary agencies on the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was held in late November. This provided a range of agencies, including social services, probation, the NHS and jobcentres, with information on their Duty to Refer when they believe a service user is homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- The Council is making bids to the Government for funding to enhance services for rough sleepers from the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Cold Weather Fund for Rough Sleepers. Bids are being prepared in partnership with Accommodation Concern and Safe Until Daylight, and cover some short term measures for this winter and longer term initiatives to help people to move from the streets into supported accommodation.
- We have negotiated significant reductions in the cost of nightly paid accommodation and bed and breakfast accommodation with the average cost of nightly paid accommodation reduced from £45 to £20 per night.
- The Council has acquired 20 properties on the open market for use as temporary accommodation and is in the course of purchasing another seven properties. This will enable us to provide accommodation that is better located and of a higher standard than is generally available. Table 4 provides information on the types of accommodation being used as temporary accommodation.

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	MONITORING AND AUDIT	Item A5	Page 6
------------------	-----------------------------	------------	--------

Table 4: The Council's Use of Temporary Accommodation 2013/14 to Date



5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The Monitoring and Audit Committee is recommended to note the current position regarding homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation.

Background Papers:

Date: N/A

Previous Reports/Minutes:

Date: N/A

Contact Officer: John Conway