

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	Martin Hammond/John Conway	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i>	
Wards Affected	William Knibb	18 th September 2019	
Title	WELLINGTON HOUSE, KETTERING		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the views of the Research and Development Committee on the shortfall in temporary housing provision caused by the closure of Wellington House.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 25th June, the Research and Development Committee considered a report on homelessness and temporary accommodation, which highlighted the rising level of homelessness across the Borough and set out the Council's strategy for meeting demand.
- 2.2 The Committee expressed concern that Wellington House, which provided temporary accommodation and support for homeless people, had been closed earlier in the year after its owners, Home Group, changed their business model. The Committee asked that the Executive Committee's attention be drawn to the need to replace Wellington House as a matter of urgency.
- 2.3 Members may recall that Wellington Houser was built in 2002/03 and was initially run as a hostel by the YMCA until funding was withdrawn by Northamptonshire County Council a few years later. The building then lay disused until July 2015 when Home Group and the Council agreed that the premises should be reopened as a homeless persons' hostel providing accommodation and support for vulnerable single people and couples.
- 2.4 Wellington House has proved to be a valuable resource for the Council in meeting the needs of vulnerable homeless households. The premises contain five self-contained flats and 16 rooms with shared amenities. In addition, Wellington House has a drop-in centre, which was used as a night shelter for rough sleepers over last winter, and various activity rooms on the ground floor.
- 2.5 Home Group gave the Council notice of termination at the end of December 2018 and closed the facility in March. The Council's Housing Options team worked hard to find alternative accommodation for all of the residents who were displaced over that three month period.
- 2.6 Members will be aware that the Council, in common with other areas across the country, is experiencing unprecedented levels of homelessness. In 2018/19,

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1,142 households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness approached the Council for help. Currently, we receive an average of 27 new approaches from homeless households every week. Similarly, the Council's use of temporary accommodation has increased significantly in recent years with 233 households in temporary accommodation at the beginning of September. In this context, the Council has lost access to valuable and much-needed housing resource.

- 2.7 Wellington House is currently boarded-up whilst Home Group undertake an option appraisal in order to identify a viable future use for the building. Officers are liaising closely with Home Group to ensure that the premises continue to be used to meet local housing needs. With that in mind, we have indicated that our preferred solution would be for Home Group to sell the building to the Council so that it can be put back into use and continue to provide accommodation and support for the most vulnerable people in our community. If this does not prove possible, then the Committee may be of the view that replacement provision needs to be found and that officers should draw up some alternatives for consideration by the Committee in 2020.

3. CONSULTATION AND CUSTOMER IMPACT

- 3.1 None at this stage.

4. POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The loss of the accommodation at Wellington House has increased the overall costs of the homelessness service.

5. LEGAL AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None at this stage.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None specifically. An unused boarded-up building cannot however be described as a good use of resources.

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7. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Committee is asked to note the Research and Development Committee's comments concerning Wellington House and that officers are working closely with Home Group to bring the premises back into use; should this not prove possible, to authorise officers to formulate proposals for replacement facilities to submit to this Committee during 2020.

Background Papers: None

Previous Minutes/Reports: R&D Ctte 26/6/19