

## BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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<b>Report Originator</b>	John Conway	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i>	
<b>Wards Affected</b>	Queen Eleanor & Buccleuch, Slade, Welland	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2020	
<b>Title</b>	<b>RURAL HOMELESSNESS</b>		

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the forum with procedures and processes surrounding homelessness and details of available assistance regarding homelessness in rural areas.

### 2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 Homelessness is an issue that affects not just Kettering, but other towns and villages across the borough.
- 2.2 Most people who are legally homeless are not on sleeping on the streets. There are many situations where the Council may have a legal duty to help individuals with housing.
- 2.3 The increase in the incidence of homelessness is a symptom of our broken housing market. This varies in nature from place to place but the main factors leading to higher levels of homelessness are:
  - **A growing population and changing demographics** – Northamptonshire’s population has grown by 30% over the past thirty years compared to an increase across the country of 16.8%. This has resulted in increasing demand for housing but the nature of that demand is changing with many more single and elderly people looking for a home.
  - **Too few new homes are being built** – The Government estimates that between 250,000 and 300,000 new homes are required every year but in 2018/19 only 169,000 were actually built. The reasons for this are complex but key influences are the collapse in house construction following the 2008 financial crisis and reduced funding for new social housing. Locally, construction has picked up with 600 new homes now being built every year but there is still a pressing need for more affordable homes, especially in rural areas.
  - **Home ownership is unaffordable for many people** – With the average house price in the Borough being £202,457, it is clear that home ownership is well out of reach for people on low incomes or even middle-income households. Again, this is an issue that also impacts on rural populations due to house prices generally being higher than those in the Borough’s towns.

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- **Soaring private sector rents** – For people who are unable to buy, the alternative of renting privately is scarcely a better option with the average rent in Kettering being £607 per calendar month. This figure is higher still in most rural areas of the Borough due to the limited supply of properties available for rent.
  - **Welfare reform and increases in evictions by private landlords** – The Government has frozen Local Housing Allowance for a four-year period until 2020. At a time when private rents are soaring, lower income households are increasingly unable to pay the rents demanded by landlords. As a result, Section 21 evictions by private landlords are now the biggest reason for homelessness. In Kettering, for example, 168 households became homeless because they lost a private sector tenancy in 2018/19. This contrasts with a figure of 54 households in 2017/18.
  - **Reductions in funding for housing-related supported housing** – The cessation of the Supporting People programme has resulted in the loss of many units of supported accommodation across the Borough. Inevitably, this has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable people in our community and has resulted in an increase in street homelessness.
- 2.4 In a broken housing market many of the housing solutions that are usually available are no longer a realistic option for a wide range of people. In those circumstances, increasing demand from homeless households and longer waiting lists for social housing are the inevitable outcome.
- 2.5 The main elements of Kettering Borough Council's long-term strategic approach to homelessness are:
- **Building new affordable homes** – The key reason for the ongoing housing crisis is an insufficient supply of affordable homes. The Council is therefore working with Homes England and housing associations to build new affordable rented and shared ownership housing. Over the last decade, 1,501 new affordable homes have been built across the Borough.
  - **Working with private landlords** - Over the past twenty years the private rented sector has quadrupled in size and, despite the issues covered earlier in this report, represents a valuable housing resource. The Council is therefore exploring ways of working with landlords so that they are more ready to let properties to people on low incomes. Financial incentives for landlords and the provision of support services for vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector are two examples of the initiatives being developed.
  - **Improving the quality of temporary accommodation** – The Council has worked to reduce the use of poorer quality, high cost accommodation such as

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bed and breakfast hotels and instead place households in self-contained accommodation within easy reach of family and support networks.

- **Preventing homelessness through tenancy support** – With an increasing proportion of tenants who are vulnerable, it is essential that the Council provides practical support so that these tenants can make a success of their tenancies. Among the strategies that are employed are specialist tenancy support workers, a regime of intensive contact during introductory tenancies, welcome meetings prior to tenancies starting and life skills training. The proposal to acquire Wellington House, which is discussed elsewhere on this agenda, provides the Council with a great opportunity to enhance our work in this area.
- **Developing specialist housing with support for rough sleepers** – The Council is taking advantage of funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop a range of schemes to provide transitional housing and intensive support for people who are street homeless.
- **Preventing homelessness by providing specialist accommodation for vulnerable people with support needs** The Council is currently negotiating to purchase Wellington House so that it can be used as a homelessness hub and provide short to medium term accommodation with support for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness.

### **3. CONTACTS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE**

- 3.1 Should you have concerns regarding anyone that is threatened by, or is suffering from homeless issues you can contact the Council's Housing Options team by email ([housingoptions@kettering.gov.uk](mailto:housingoptions@kettering.gov.uk)) or call **01536 410333**.
- 3.2 Anyone has a legal right to make a homeless application. Should a person or family be eligible for assistance and make a homeless application they will be entitled to advice and support to either help them remain in their accommodation or find an alternative.
- 3.3 If KBC accepts that it has a duty to continue housing an individual or family it is likely to offer temporary accommodation until it can offer somewhere more long-term or 'settled'. In the short term if the Council has reason to believe an applicant is "eligible homeless" and in priority need they will be offered interim accommodation whilst long term solutions are sought to resolve their housing circumstances.
- 3.4 You can also connect rough sleepers with other services that can help, via [StreetLink](http://www.streetlink.org.uk) ([www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk)) an organisation which connects people

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living on the streets with local authority and outreach teams to get them support.

- 3.5 St Peter's and St Paul's Church in Kettering operates a soup kitchen every Thursday between 4.00pm and 6.00pm.
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