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PLACE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS SCRUTINY PANEL

Day: Tuesday
Date: 11 January 2022
Time: 6.00 pm
Place: Guardsman Tony Downes House, Manchester Road,
Droylsden, M43 6SF

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	MINUTES To approve as a correct record, the Minutes of the proceedings of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 2 November 2021.	1-4
3.	DIGITAL OFFER AND DELIVERY The Panel to meet Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member (Finance and Economic Growth) and Tim Rainey, Assistant Director, to receive an update on the Council's current position and the wider digital strategy and offer for 2022 and beyond.	5-18
4.	REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING The Panel to receive the final report to conclude the review of Homelessness and Housing.	19-36
5.	GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY The Chair to discuss priorities and recent activity of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Committees.	
6.	CHAIR'S UPDATE The Chair to provide a verbal update on recent activity and future priorities for the Panel.	
7.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 8 March 2022.	
8.	URGENT ITEMS To consider any additional items the Chair is of the opinion shall be dealt with as a matter of urgency.	

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy lead, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

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Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel 2 November 2021

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.00pm

Present: Councillors Mills (Deputy Chair), Billington, Chadwick, J Fitzpatrick, J Homer, Jones, North, Robinson.

Apologies: Councillors Glover, Bowerman, Choksi, Gosling, Lewis, Patel, T Sharif.

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 7 September 2021 were approved as a correct record.

22. HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING

The Panel welcomed Councillor Gerald Cooney, Executive Member, Housing, Planning and Employment; Ian Saxon, Director of Place; Gregg Stott, Assistant Director, Investment, Development and Housing; and John Gregory, Head of Community Safety and Homelessness, to receive an update in response to the Scrutiny desktop review of homelessness and housing, to inform future activity.

Mr Saxon updated members on recent changes within the Place directorate that have resulted in the services for housing and homelessness becoming more aligned, creating greater clarity and delivery of strategic priorities. It was discussed that during the review Scrutiny has focused its attention on three key strands with regard to outcomes for residents.

- Homelessness – statutory responsibilities and wider preventative work
- Housing access to public and private rent
- Private rented sector and improving quality

The presentation touched upon the recent development and adoption of a new Housing Strategy. This included wider context and external factors associated with housing supply and access, the effectiveness of partnerships across all housing sectors and priorities relating to homelessness prevention.

It was reported that a Registered Provider Partnership is to be established in Tameside, with strategic priorities to address:

- Supported Housing
- Housing management / Homelessness / Allocations and Nominations
- Growth and Development
- Place Making / Regeneration / Town Centres

The partnership is to become a key driver for work specific to homelessness and access to suitable housing and accommodation for vulnerable residents and families. Included within the wider aims of the partnership is to deliver new homes, specialist housing, improve quality in the private rented sector and to assist with homelessness prevention.

The Council has a legal duty to provide residents with housing support and advice. It remains important that the assessment and decision making process identifies the range of factors that lead to individuals and families becoming homeless. There is a range of tools available to

improve access to housing options through existing allocation and nomination arrangements with registered social landlords.

In addition to existing homelessness demand there is now a projected need for local authorities and partners to support a flow of people at risk of losing their home. Whilst the authority has no housing stock it does have a duty to ensure an effective scheme is in place for the allocation of social housing placements and a policy that prioritises households in 'Reasonable Preference'.

The private rented sector also has a significant role to play within the future supply of temporary accommodation and the provision of long-term housing solutions.

Implementation of the Housing Strategy and next steps include:

- Conduct a Homelessness Review of the borough
- Review the existing Homelessness Prevention Strategy
- Review the Allocations Policy to ensure it is effective under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Review the nominations process from Registered Providers with view to increasing the percentage of nominations the Council receives
- Pilot community outreach Tameside Housing Advice drop-ins in areas high need
- Develop a 20 unit modular Accommodation Based Support facility
- Review the allocations process for accessible and adapted properties

Councillor Cooney and officers responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:

- The Council's Homelessness Strategy
- Temporary and long-term housing solutions
- The effectiveness of current policies regarding allocations and nominations with RSLs
- Role of the private rented sector in supporting sustainable housing solutions, including options to improve quality and standards

Resolved: That Councillor Cooney and officers be thanked for attending the meeting.

23. RESPONSE TO MID-YEAR BUDGET UPDATE

The Panel received for information, a letter of the Scrutiny Chairs to Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member, Finance and Economic Growth, in response to the mid-year budget updates held on 7 and 9 September 2021.

24. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY

The Deputy Chair provided a verbal update on known activity of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

25. CHAIRS UPDATE

The Deputy Chair advised members that a final report to conclude activity on the Homelessness and Housing review will now be drafted and discussed at the next panel meeting on 11 January 2022.

Members updated on the Scrutiny annual budget meetings that will take place in January 2022, as soon as the dates and times are finalised calendar invitations will be sent to all panel members to attend.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 11 January 2022.

27. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR

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Place & External Relations Scrutiny Panel

Tameside and Glossop Digital Strategy, ambitions, challenges and opportunities

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Agenda Item 3

Tameside & Glossop Digital Strategy

- Sets out a five year vision and plan for the use of digital technologies for Council & Tameside & Glossop CCG
- Developed over 12 month period through a series of facilitated workshop sessions involving all service areas, T&G CCG & other key partners.
- Approved by Cabinet & SCB in September 2020
- Key deliverable in the Corporate Plan
- Linked into & supports Inclusive Growth Strategy

Tameside & Glossop Digital Strategy



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Cyber Safe and Secure with full GDPR compliance and Information Governance
Guarantee security and privacy of the systems that hold public data – people should have absolute confidence in what's happening to their information.

Marketing and Communications

Tameside & Glossop Digital Strategy

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- Each Priority sub-divided into two parts;
- Corporate Themes
- Digital Foundations
- Two cross cutting themes
- Communications
- Cyber Security



DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES: At the forefront of responsive & ubiquitous high quality digital public services

- A new **OnePlace website** bringing together pan-Tameside online public services into one place.
- Use of technology and Artificial Intelligence to deliver better services & smarter, tailored digital interactions.
- A **Virtual Call Centre for all Council Services** with new features such as web chat & automation.
- Empower citizens to access & manage information that is held about them.
- Widen the use of **Council App** and **NHS App** enabling people to better access services, their medical information & book appointments with their GP Online

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DIGITAL ENABLED WORKFORCE: Highly skilled & agile workforce confident in using technology

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- IT literate workforce confident & comfortable in their use of technology through access to effective training & online support.
- Using modern digital equipment, software & connectivity to support agile and collaborative working.
- Using common approach to transformation.
- Using sound business intelligence/predictive analytics to share data intelligently inform service delivery and support transformation.
- Develop a network of serviced based **Super Users and Digital Champions** that have enhanced knowledge and provide local support and advice.

DIGITAL ECONOMY: Strong and sustainable economy maximising digital opportunities.

- Delivery of the full **St. Petersfield Masterplan developing our digital and creative quarter.**
- Support Tameside businesses adopting and exploiting digital solutions with a focus on digitally enabled productivity in advanced manufacturing
- deliver a comprehensive destination / place marketing strategy and campaign to promote Tameside as a digitally enabled borough
- **Extend Ashton Old Baths Digital Innovation Centre and deliver Data Centre** to scale our digital offer including start up and growth businesses.

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DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS: Sustainable digital eco system which provides the building blocks for transformation.

- Robust, resilient & secure enterprise infrastructure. Commission **new Data Centre, Disaster Recovery Site** & replacement backup and recovery solution.
- Implement Industry standard lifecycle management of digital solutions
- Reduce the creation, processing and storage of paper
- **Digitisation of paper records programme**
- Secure **information storage, sharing & collaboration solution for use across the economy.**
- Investment in R&D in order to actively exploit emerging technologies.

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DIGITAL SKILLS: Opportunities for people and business to fulfil their potential through technology.

- Strengthening our Digital Talent pipeline
- Helping everyone to become skilled and confident in order to use digital enabled services and be **safe on-line**.
- Enable residents of all ages to improve their digital skills and computer literacy through the **Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award (iDEA)**.
- Digital accessibility and engagement for all. Invest and upgrade the computer and IT facilities in public libraries, expand SWIFT free public Wi-Fi into rural Village centres.

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DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE: Fast resilient digital infrastructure connecting all communities'

- Single digital infrastructure available for all public sector bodies including schools and colleges
- World class digital infrastructure. Continue to support the Digital Cooperative and the commercial roll-out of internet services that its members are delivering.
- Fast and affordable internet access for all through public Libraries, SWIFT free to use Wi-Fi in all our communities and be at the forefront of 5g rollout.
- Using technology to make our communities safe. **HD quality digital CCTV using our wide fibre network** to provide a state-of-the-art and comprehensive CCTV coverage for Tameside.

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CYBER SAFE AND SECURE: with full GDPR compliance and information governance.

- Guarantee the security and privacy of our systems that hold public information through the adoption of **new Cyber Security Strategy for Tameside.**
- Provide assurance to Council that Cyber threat is being appropriately managed. **Accreditation Cyber Essentials Security standard.**
- Ensure all staff have the skills and awareness to identify and avoid cyber threats and keep information safe.
- Provide businesses and residents, including young and old with training opportunities and information to help them keep safe when using Social Media and the Internet.

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CYBER SAFE AND SECURE: with full GDPR compliance and information governance.

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- Guarantee the security and privacy of our systems that hold public information through the adoption of **new Cyber Security Strategy for Tameside.**
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- Provide businesses and residents, including young and old with training opportunities and information to help them keep safe when using Social Media and the Internet.

Progress to date:

- Data Centre and DR site being commissioned.
- Cyber Security Strategy approved
- SOCITM Strategic Assessment of Corporate IT Service undertaken.
- Priority resource requests for Office 365 roll-out and Cyber Security being considered.
- Single call centre system in use across all services
- 120 Digital Champions supporting corporate service
- Digital Cooperative 3rd year of trading.
- Links with WorkSmart and Transformation Agenda

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Scrutiny - Executive Response

In Respect of: Scrutiny Review on Homelessness and Housing

Date:

Response of: Councillor Gerald Cooney, Executive Member (Housing, Planning and Employment)

Coordinating Officer: Ian Saxon, Director of Place

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
1. That Scrutiny ask the Executive to monitor the local impacts of the decision to withdraw eviction relief. That any concerns of vulnerability, inequality and increased incidence of homelessness, (local voice and experience), add to a written response to the appropriate Government Office to inform future policy in this area.				

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
<p>2. That the Council prioritise and undertake a review of existing policies and mechanisms relating to local allocation and nomination arrangements with Registered Social Landlords. That future work in this area aims to improve transparency and accountability of decision making, with the need to generate and secure housing placements above that of recent years.</p>				
<p>3. With additional preventative responsibilities placed on the Council to actively identify and mitigate the associated risks of homelessness. That enhanced recording of homelessness demand, temporary accommodation and housing placements, is essential to recognise pressures within the system, to act on them promptly and effectively with greater accountability across all responsible parties. To routinely assess and review the overall success, impact and outcomes of interventions, to include financial appraisal of cost benefit analysis and value for money principles.</p>				

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
4. That the Council's current Homelessness Strategy (2018-2021) is updated for 2022 and beyond, with a review of strategic priorities undertaken on an annual basis, taking account of national and local pressures and to achieve greater alignment with objectives set within the new local Housing Strategy.				
5. That the Council reviews current monitoring tools to assess the effectiveness of homelessness interventions and how the service identifies, records and monitors future homelessness preventions and outcomes for residents.				
6. That the Council looks to target a reduction in the time residents are housed in temporary and short-term accommodation, with consideration to a more ambitious and cooperative pathway to secure housing solutions within a maximum timeframe.				

Recommendations	Accepted/ Rejected	Executive Response	Officer Responsible	Action By (Date)
<p>7. In addition to the work with RSLs, that attention is placed on developing the Council's partnership with the private rented sector across the short and long-term. To secure greater capacity for sustainable housing placements and accommodation options; and methods to engage and support vulnerable tenants at the earliest opportunity.</p>				
<p>8. That the Executive look to prevent any delay in future decision-making linked with previous ambitions to improve quality and standards in the private rented sector; and to connect with regional schemes aimed to promote best practice and build partnerships with the private rented sector.</p>				

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a review of strategic priorities for homelessness and housing. Research and activity has identified a range of existing and emerging pressures, with consideration for the role and ongoing effectiveness of statutory and non-statutory services in preventing homelessness and methods aimed to improve access to quality housing.
- 1.2 Covid-19 has and may continue to exacerbate a range of existing health and economic inequalities, with demand on services becoming increasingly difficult to predict. A number of identified risks to homelessness link closely with disproportionate outcomes for residents currently housed in the private rented sector.
- 1.3 The Council has a legal duty to provide residents with housing support and advice. It remains important that the assessment and decision making process identifies the range of factors that lead to individuals and families becoming homeless.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report summarises and concludes activity undertaken by the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel during the period September to December 2021. As part of the process, Scrutiny has:
 - Completed a desktop review of homelessness and housing, informed by the emerging national picture and growing concerns highlighted for the accessibility of quality housing and risks of homelessness. A report tabled at the meeting of Overview Panel on 27 September 2021, attached as **APPENDIX 3**.
 - Met with Councillor Gerald Cooney, Executive Member, Housing, Planning and Employment; Ian Saxon, Director of Place; Gregg Stott, Assistant Director, Investment, Development and Housing; and John Gregory, Head of Community Safety and Homelessness, to receive an update in response to the Scrutiny desktop review of homelessness at the formal Scrutiny Panel on 2 November 2021.
 - Submitted a number of questions to the Executive for response. The three areas below have remained in place as key strands that Scrutiny aims to seek assurance and focus its attention towards improving outcomes for residents.
 - Homelessness – statutory responsibilities and wider preventative work
 - Housing access to public and private rent
 - Private rented sector and improving quality
- 2.2 The report puts forward a number of recommendations to the Executive.

3. KEY FINDINGS

National Picture

- 3.1 The health and economic impacts of Covid-19 have placed added pressure to residents on low income and those paying disproportionately high housing costs. People on low income, in receipt of benefits, with a disability, refugees and single parents, or people with protected characteristics set within the Equality Act are more likely to be affected by what is widely referred to as a housing emergency, leading to homelessness for some.
- 3.2 It is estimated that one in three adults in Britain do not have a safe or secure home, with the high cost of housing being the main cause of homelessness. Regulation in this area has not substantially changed since 1988.

- 3.3 The homelessness response to the pandemic has seen a range of actions taken to safeguard individuals and families, non-more so than a decision of Government to place a temporary ban on Section 21, no fault evictions.
- 3.4 This much-needed intervention, at the time, appeared as a first step towards addressing a growing need to protect the most vulnerable and to tackle homelessness in the long-term. This includes:
- Bringing forward the Governments pledge to end ‘no fault evictions’
 - Improve protection through the welfare system
 - Ensuring councils have enough resources to support households at risk of homelessness
 - Support for renters in arrears by increasing the funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, and amending how they are administered
 - Protecting people from harm: re-align Local Housing Allowance rates with local rents
 - Building more homes for social/affordable rent
- 3.5 In May 2021 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced that the temporary protection from eviction would cease, with no plans to extend or adapt legislation. At the time, leading bodies including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) warned of significant risks during recovery from the pandemic and a disproportionate concern for renters. JRF reported that on the day the eviction ban was lifted their survey revealed:
- Around 400,000 renting households have either been served an eviction notice or had been told they may be evicted.
 - Around 1 million renting households are worried of eviction in the next 3 months.
 - 1.7 million renting households are worried about paying their rent in the next 3 months.
- 3.6 Successful partnerships, multiagency working, system changes and increased funding have all come about during the pandemic. This is something that needs to continue throughout recovery phases. Housing associations can be part of the recovery work and ensuring a sustainable end to homelessness requires adequate funding, with the need for updated national guidance and policy.
- Local Picture**
- 3.7 **Homelessness** - The Homelessness Reduction Act was introduced on 3 April 2018. The Act was a significant change for council’s with the objective to help more people earlier, to prevent homelessness as much as possible and to help find accommodation for people who have become homeless. This has increased the range of people the Council is expected to support and the type of services it provides. In particular, the Act introduced assessments for people who ask for help and new duties to help people retain or find accommodation.
- 3.8 In addition to existing homelessness demand there is now a projected need for local authorities and partners to support a flow of people at risk of losing their home. There has become an increasingly common view to place homelessness as a priority factor within long-term and emergency planning for local authorities
- 3.9 Individuals and families living in temporary accommodation are often in overcrowded conditions where it is difficult to self-isolate and maintain social distancing. At 7 December 2021, there were 213 individuals placed in temporary accommodation by the Council, with the average length of staying being 179 days. The properties and facilities used to house individuals and families is diverse, limited and not always fit for purpose for long periods.
- 3.10 **Access to housing** - The Council has recently developed and adopted a new Housing Strategy. Whilst the authority has no housing stock it has a duty to ensure an effective scheme is in place for the allocation of social housing placements and a policy that prioritises households in ‘Reasonable Preference’.

- 3.11 With around 1,800 social homes let in Tameside each year, the Council can decide who qualifies for waiting lists. It is important to review such a policy in effort to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is framed in a way that supports vulnerable and priorities groups, where necessary and appropriate and set within boundaries of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 3.12 A Registered Provider Partnership is to be established in Tameside, with strategic priorities to address:
- Supported Housing
 - Housing management / Homelessness / Allocations and Nominations
 - Growth and Development
 - Place Making / Regeneration / Town Centres
- 3.13 Included within the wider aims of the partnership is to deliver new homes, specialist housing, improve quality in the private rented sector and to assist with homelessness prevention.
- 3.14 **Private rented sector (PRS)** – The sector has a substantial impact on Tameside and the Council’s priority areas including population health, community safety and homelessness.
- 3.15 In 2019, Scrutiny reviewed methods to improve quality and standards in the PRS. The review looked at a variety of options available to the Council that included the use of a selective licensing scheme. Scrutiny appreciated that the impacts of Covid-19 have delayed work in this area.
- 3.16 The PRS in Tameside has grown over recent years, with 14.2% of all properties (2017) being privately rented. This equates to almost 15,000 households and 40,000 residents, of which 12,000 are children. It is estimated that the number of private rentals has risen further over recent years.
- 3.17 Tameside’s low income households and single parents continue to be adversely affected by the impacts of welfare reform and Universal Credit. This also includes housing elements such as the Local Housing Allowance and pressures placed on single people in receipt of the shared room rate who continue to face limited housing options.
- 3.18 Tameside Housing Advice is a frontline service that provides residents with help and advice for all aspects of housing and directly supports individuals and families to resolve housing problems. The demand for advice and support is increasing, with the following data drawn from 2018/19.
- 657 households accepted as being owed a homeless relief duty or main homeless duty.
 - 276 households homeless or at risk of being made homeless as result of loss of property in PRS.
 - 97 households became homeless as result of loss of property in PRS (Section 21 notices).

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Covid-19 appears to have highlighted and exacerbated a range of issues set within outdated national legislation in protecting vulnerable residents at risk of eviction. This presents a vital role for Government to prevent any future delay in developing a new and sustainable national framework for tenants and landlords alike.
- 4.2 The removal of temporary measures aimed to safeguard vulnerable residents from eviction and homelessness continues to present an added level of uncertainty and risk while impacts of Covid-19 remain present within all communities.
- 4.3 Strategic priorities for homelessness and access to accommodation has changed significantly since the Council’s existing homelessness strategy was developed in 2018.

- 4.4 The Council has a continued role to prevent crisis demand of homelessness in the housing sector. It is therefore pleasing to see that a local Registered Provider Partnership is to become a key driver for work specific to homelessness and access to suitable housing and accommodation for vulnerable residents.
- 4.5 There is a continuing need to prevent homelessness and to provide greater access to safe, affordable and quality homes.
- 4.6 The Council currently has range tools and policies available and at its disposal to improve access to housing options through existing allocation and nomination arrangements with RSLs.
- 4.7 The PRS has a significant role to play within the future supply of temporary accommodation and the provision of long-term housing solutions.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That Scrutiny ask the Executive to monitor the local impacts of the decision to withdraw eviction relief. That any concerns of vulnerability, inequality and increased incidence of homelessness, (local voice and experience), add to a written response to the appropriate Government Office to inform future policy in this area.
- 5.2 That the Council prioritise and undertake a review of existing policies and mechanisms relating to local allocation and nomination arrangements with Registered Social Landlords. That future work in this area aims to improve transparency and accountability of decision making, with the need to generate and secure housing placements above that of recent years.
- 5.3 With additional preventative responsibilities placed on the Council to actively identify and mitigate the associated risks of homelessness. That enhanced recording of homelessness demand, temporary accommodation and housing placements, is essential to recognise pressures within the system, to act on them promptly and effectively with greater accountability across all responsible parties. To routinely assess and review the overall success, impact and outcomes of interventions, to include financial appraisal of cost benefit analysis and value for money principles.
- 5.4 That the Council's current Homelessness Strategy (2018-2021) is updated for 2022 and beyond, with a review of strategic priorities undertaken on an annual basis, taking account of national and local pressures and to achieve greater alignment with objectives set within the new local Housing Strategy.
- 5.5 That the Council reviews current monitoring tools to assess the effectiveness of homelessness interventions and how the service identifies, records and monitors future homelessness preventions and outcomes for residents.
- 5.6 That the Council looks to target a reduction in the time residents are housed in temporary and short-term accommodation, with consideration to a more ambitious and cooperative pathway to secure housing solutions within a maximum timeframe.
- 5.7 In addition to the work with RSLs, that attention is placed on developing the Council's partnership with the private rented sector across the short and long-term. To secure greater capacity for sustainable housing placements and accommodation options; and methods to engage and support vulnerable tenants at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.8 That the Executive look to prevent any delay in future decision-making linked with previous ambitions to improve quality and standards in the private rented sector; and to connect with

regional schemes aimed to promote best practice and build partnerships with the private rented sector.

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Report To:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	27 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sandra Stewart, Director - Governance and Pensions Sarah Threlfall, Assistant Director – Policy, Performance and Communications
Subject:	SCRUTINY – DESKTOP REVIEW ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING
Report Summary:	To receive a summary and insight of existing publications and research aimed to highlight current and projected pressures for local authorities regarding access to quality housing and the impact of Covid-19 on demand for statutory homelessness support.
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel are asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree that subject to any further comments the report be shared with the relevant Executive Member for information and to inform future strategy and service delivery where necessary. 2. That Scrutiny receives a service response to the impacts of Covid-19 to homelessness and the effects of recent changes to safeguarding measures for residents at risk of eviction.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision making and to improve outcomes for residents and service users.
Policy Implications:	Scrutiny activity seeks to check the effective implementation of the Council’s policies and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regards to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the financial context for the provision of housing and homelessness services is significant. During the 2020/21 financial year, the Council faced significant financial pressures in respect of temporary accommodation costs, which were driven by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council receives direct grant funding to support housing and homelessness services, however costs often exceed available funding. Future decisions on housing strategy and service delivery will need to consider the financial implications and constraints of the current funding system.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The office for National Statistics alongside the English Housing Survey results additional information was published about household resilience and changes due to COVID-19 provides data to drive evidence based change. A study from Shelter and YouGov 2020 revealed the lasting impact of homelessness and bad housing on a child’s education. With over 136,000 children growing up in temporary accommodation across Britain, it is unsurprising the devastating effects homelessness and bad housing can have on a child’s wellbeing and their ability to learn. All of these issues then create a level and demand and costs for the Council to attempt to manage with reducing income.

It is therefore critical that the Council has a fit for purpose strategy to deal with these issues or failing that raise them with Government in a clear and evidence way to effect change.I

Risk Management:

The Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels will be informed of the progress in implementing the work programmes.

Access to Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:



Telephone:0161 342 2199



e-mail: paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's scrutiny function remains well positioned to respond to local challenges and has an important role to provide direct insight and support to the Executive on a range of key matters. Improving outcomes for residents remains at the forefront of all work priorities and feedback of this nature aims to inform future planning in response and recovery to Covid-19 in Tameside.
- 1.2 As detailed in the Scrutiny Annual Work Programme, tabled at a meeting of Overview Panel on 26 July 2021, there is a range of options available to each Scrutiny Panel as to how activity is planned and undertaken. In order to prevent delay this will take the form of research on a particular issue as a desktop review.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This short report aims to provide a range of points for consideration regarding the emerging national picture and growing concerns highlighted for the accessibility of quality housing and risks of homelessness.
- 2.2 Research of this nature links closely with continued efforts of the Council to support residents and to safeguard against external pressures and future demand on services that have become increasingly hard to predict throughout Covid-19 and recovery. This subject also broadly connects with past Scrutiny activity and recommendations to improve quality and standards in the private rented sector.
- 2.3 The paper highlights and summarises recent publications, research and findings that are publically available from the following sources:
 - Joseph Rowntree Foundation
 - Crisis
 - Shelter
 - National Housing Federation
 - Local Government Association
 - UK Collaborative for Housing Evidence
 - Centre for Ageing Better
- 2.4 Undertaken as a desktop review to inform the Executive of key issues, Scrutiny wish to request a service response to the impacts of Covid-19 on homelessness and the effects of recent changes to safeguarding measures for residents at risk of eviction, to include updated data and insight on demand for housing support.

3. KEY MESSAGES

- 3.1 Future challenges associated with Covid-19 have potential to be profound and far-reaching for the resilience of households and communities. This relates to a range of expected and delayed external factors such as uncertainty of future employment, housing, education and timely access to healthcare and support.

Homelessness

- 3.2 Homelessness affects a wide variety of people. Some people may be more vulnerable to homelessness. They may be more at risk if they are:
 - Leaving home for the first time or leaving care
 - Pregnant with nowhere to stay when the baby is born
 - Struggling to live on benefits or low income
 - From abroad without the without the right to benefits
 - An asylum seeker or refugee

- Leaving prison

3.3 Residents can ask for help from the Council if they are homeless or under threat of becoming homeless within 8 weeks. Local authorities have a legal duty to help people, while not all will be eligible for housing, advice and guidance is available to all people in need.

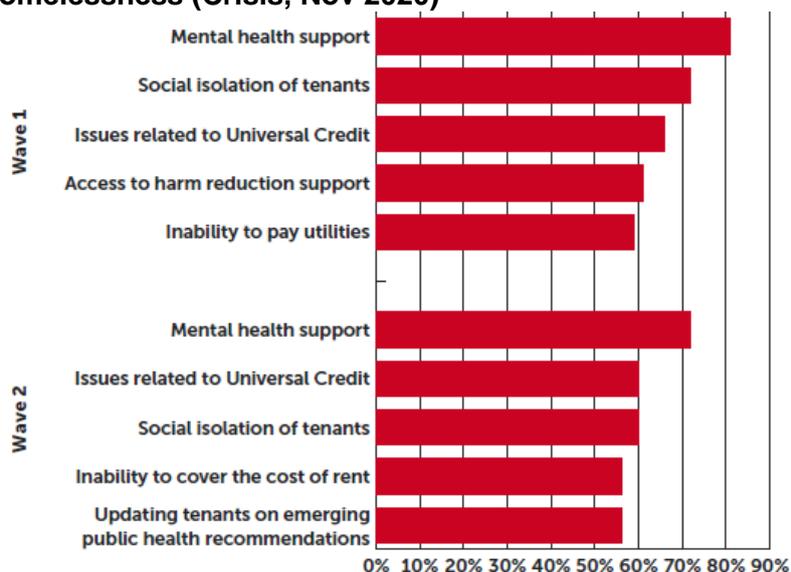
Impacts of Covid-19

3.4 The homelessness response to the pandemic has seen a range of actions taken to safeguard individuals and families, non-more so than the temporary ban of Section 21 evictions within the private rented sector. Covid-19 has also applied added pressure to people on low income and those paying disproportionately high housing costs.

3.5 In addition to existing homelessness demand there is a projected need for local authorities and partners to support a new flow of people at risk of losing their home. While data is not comprehensive, in England between April and June 2020 around 64,000 households were eligible for a homelessness duty. There has become an increasingly common view that homelessness should now be a priority factored within emergency planning.

3.6 Figure 1 below shows the challenges in supporting residents at risk of homelessness during the first two waves of the pandemic.

Figure 1: Top 5 reported challenges related to supporting people currently housed and at risk of homelessness (Crisis, Nov 2020)



3.7 In May 2021, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation warned of significant risks during recovery from the pandemic and a disproportionate concern for renters. Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that on the day the eviction ban was lifted a survey revealed:

- Around 400,000 renting households have either been served an eviction notice or had been told they may be evicted.
- Around 1 million renting households are worried of eviction in the next 3 months.
- 1.7 million renting households are worried about paying their rent in the next 3 months.

3.8 The temporary ban on evictions provided much needed security to renters at a time of profound economic and social disruption. Warning signs now point to a spike in evictions and homelessness with the ban lifted. In addition to the 400,000 households worried of eviction, there is also around 450,000 households in rent arrears and almost 20% of this group in arrears for over four months.

3.9 Families with children, BAME households and those on lower income are disproportionately worried about paying rent and in fear of eviction in the next three months. Households with

three or more children are more than twice as likely to be worried about being evicted (21%) compared to households without children (9%). The proportion of children growing up in privately rented accommodation, the least secure tenure, has risen from 16% to 22% in the past ten years.

- 3.10 Renters from BAME backgrounds are almost twice as likely to be worried of eviction compared to white renters (18% vs 10%). Households with annual income below £25,000 are three times more likely to be worried about paying rent (24%) and are more likely to already be behind with household bills and rent payments compared to households on higher incomes.
- 3.11 Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Local Government Association has relayed a number of similar points to the Government. The view being to protect the most vulnerable and to tackle homelessness in the long-term. They include:
- Bringing forward the Governments pledge to end 'no fault evictions'
 - Improve protection through the welfare system
 - Ensuring councils have enough resources to support households at risk of homelessness
 - Support for renters in arrears by increasing the funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, and amending how they are administered
 - Protecting people from harm: re-align Local Housing Allowance rates with local rents
 - Building more homes for social/affordable rent
- 3.12 A report published by Crisis (Nov 2020) details that at the end of September 2020 over 10,000 people in England were living in emergency accommodation as a direct result of the 'Everyone In' initiative and almost 19,000 people have been moved into other forms of accommodation.
- 3.13 Families living in temporary accommodation are often in overcrowded conditions where it is difficult to self-isolate and maintain social distancing. The pause in lettings did mean they had to stay in this accommodation even longer than previously planned. The new guidance on social housing lettings will help ensure suitable accommodation for families in this position.
- 3.14 Issues such as youth homelessness, increased incidence in domestic abuse, hospital discharges, and prison releases are likely to become more problematic. Other increases in homelessness may arise, with regard to mental health and breakdown of relationships.
- 3.15 Successful partnerships, multiagency working, system changes and increased funding have all come about during the pandemic. This is something that needs to continue through Covid-19 recovery. Housing associations can be part of the recovery work and ensuring a sustainable end to homelessness, provided adequate funding and ongoing guidance is available.

Housing

- 3.16 It is vital that everyone is able to live in a home that is safe and comfortable. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and there is an urgent need to improve the quality of housing in England for the benefit of current and future generations.
- 3.17 Shelter report a housing emergency, with 17.5 million people unable to secure a safe and stable home. This includes families and individuals of all ages living in unaffordable homes of poor quality.
- 3.18 People on low incomes, in receipt of benefits, with a disability, refugees and single parents, or people with protected characteristics set within the Equality Act are more likely to be affected by the housing emergency, leading to homelessness for some.
- 3.19 The high cost of housing means the private rented sector has doubled in size over the last 20 years. Private renters have watched the cost of rent rise faster than their earnings. Priced

out of owning a home and denied social housing, people are often forced to take what they can afford even if it is of poor quality or away from jobs and support networks.

- 3.20 One in three adults in Britain do not have a safe or secure home with the high cost of housing being the main cause of homelessness. Regulation in this area has not substantially changed since 1988 and most private rentals are on tenancies of 6 to 12, often creating a permanent state of stress and instability for tenants.

Findings from past Scrutiny activity on quality and standards in the private rented Sector (Pre-Covid)

- 3.21 Tameside's housing stock is unique, with 88% of all properties located within council tax bands A, B and C. There is a high density of terraced properties within certain areas which is typical of the housing type made available for private rent.
- 3.22 The Private Rented Sector in Tameside has grown over recent years, with 14.2% of all properties (2017) being privately rented. This equates to almost 15,000 households and 40,000 residents, of which 12,000 are children. It is estimated that the number of private rentals has risen over recent years.
- 3.23 A wider range of residents are now living within the Private Rented Sector and for longer. This includes older people, families with dependent children, single parents, single occupiers and residents with a disability, poor mental health or long-term condition. For the first time, there are now a higher number of older residents living in the Private Rented Sector when compared to numbers housed with social landlords.
- 3.24 Tameside's low income households and single parents continue to be adversely affected by the impacts of welfare reform and Universal Credit. This also includes housing elements such as the Local Housing Allowance and pressures placed on single people in receipt of the shared room rate who continue to face limited housing options.
- 3.25 Tameside Housing Advice is a frontline service that provides residents with help and advice for all aspects of housing and directly supports individuals and families to resolve housing problems. The demand for advice and support is increasing, with the following data drawn from 2018/19.
- 657 households accepted as being owed a homeless relief duty or main homeless duty.
 - 276 households homeless or at risk of being made homeless as result of loss of property in Private Rented Sector.
 - 97 households became homeless as result of loss of property in Private Rented Sector (Section 21 notices).

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Economic and social recovery from Covid-19 is progressing for some, but many renters are struggling to stay afloat.
- 4.2 The Council and partners have a significant and continued role to prevent crisis demand of homelessness in the housing sector.
- 4.3 The drive to prevent homelessness and to provide safe, affordable and quality homes for all continues beyond Covid-19.
- 4.4 There is a growing need for on-going assessment and earlier identification of households at risk of eviction; and to mitigate known inequalities and range of almost predetermined outcomes for vulnerable residents.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As set out on the front of the report.

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