

The Homelessness Reduction Act – 12 Month Review

To:

Councillor Richard Johnson, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee 18/06/2019

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Not A Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 ('the Act'), came into effect on 3 April 2018. The Act places major new duties on authorities to relieve or prevent homelessness. These changes are summarised in Section 3 below and set out in detail in Section 1 of the appendix accompanying this report.
- 1.2 The appendix accompanying this report goes on to examine how this authority has implemented the Act and how it has applied its new powers to better deal with homelessness.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report and endorse the approach the Authority has taken as described in the appendix in relation to applying its new powers.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, has been described the greatest single change in how authorities are required to deal with homelessness since the broad framework was first set out in 1977.
- 3.2 Key aspects of the new Act are that a homelessness prevention or relief duty is now owed to applicants threatened with homelessness within 56 days, in contrast to the former 28-day duty. Furthermore, authorities now owe this duty to a far wider range of people than formerly, as described in Part 1 of the appendix.
- 3.3 As an accompanying code of guidance makes clear, the Act requires authorities to take a significantly different approach than has been the case hitherto to a broadened concept of statutory homelessness. In a three-stage process, an authority will begin by trying to save the existing home; moving on to assisting households to find a new home should prevention fail (priority need households will be owed an interim duty – temporary accommodation - at the point of homelessness); then on to the full homelessness duty for priority need households should relief fail. Under the former legislation only this latter duty existed.
- 3.4 The Act has now been in force for a little over a year, making this an appropriate time to examine:
 - how successfully our preparations for the introduction of the Act anticipated the organisational and other demands the Act has required;
 - the broad impact of the Act in terms of numbers assisted, workload per officer and the scale of the successful prevention or relief of homelessness;
 - how we have resourced the Act financially; and
 - the impact the Act has made in relation the key objectives the Act was intended realise.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

(b) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An EqIA was carried out regarding the introduction of the Act. There are no equality or poverty implications resulting from this report.

(d) Environmental Implications

Rated +L. All rented properties used by the council to support the schemes detailed in this report will need a valid Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

(e) Procurement Implications

None

(f) Community Safety Implications

None

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The Council has consulted with external partners via the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Partnership (HSIP) with regard to their perceptions of the impact of the Act locally.

6. Background papers

No background papers

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: "The Homelessness Reduction Act – 12 Month Review

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact David Greening, Head of Housing, tel: 01223 - 457997, email: david.greening@cambridge.gov.uk.