



Homelessness Review and Strategy

**Hertsmere Borough
Council**

July 2014 - 2018

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Foreword by portfolio holder

The development of our new Homelessness Strategy comes at a time of great change in housing, welfare and social policy. There are continual pressures on housing and an affordability crisis in the area, which is likely to increase in future years.

The new Homelessness Strategy will be part of a suite of newly developed plans and policies affecting housing locally. We recently published our Tenancy Strategy and the new Allocations Policy has just gone live. All these plans focus on meeting housing needs and preventing homelessness. The Strategy is evidence based – a review of homelessness has been carried out – and it is being developed in consultation and partnership with stakeholders.

This Homelessness Strategy sets out the issues that are specific to Hertsmere and considers the challenges and opportunities that will come forward in the next 5 years. It provides our priorities for future action.

We are monitoring the impact of welfare reform on the residents of Hertsmere and it is expected that this Homelessness Strategy will assist the Council to deliver services that facilitate social and financial inclusion.

Many of the issues facing us are outside the direct control of the local authority. Nonetheless, we need to plan ahead, prioritise and propose actions to build on our past success mitigate the impacts of changing housing markets, social and welfare reform and above all, prevent homelessness.

Portfolio Holder for Housing

Hertsmere Borough Council

1. The purpose of the Homelessness Review and Strategy

The Council published a Homelessness Strategy in 2008, and this provided a 5 year plan for tackling homelessness issues locally. We are now at the point of wanting to review homelessness again, with a view to developing a further 5 year plan. This Homelessness Strategy contains the findings from the review of homelessness conducted during the summer of 2013, and sets out our plans on tackling homelessness in the future.

Separate to this document is a summary document and delivery plan. It is this that will in effect be the working tool by which we tackle homelessness locally, and ensure the Homelessness Strategy is delivered.

2. What has happened since the 2008 Strategy?

There have been many developments since the 2008 Homelessness Strategy was published. Later on in this *review document*, we will cover some of the issues facing the service, and our partners that work in tackling homelessness – the economic climate in which we are working and changes to legislation and government policy make the 2013 landscape very different to that of 2008.

Our successes

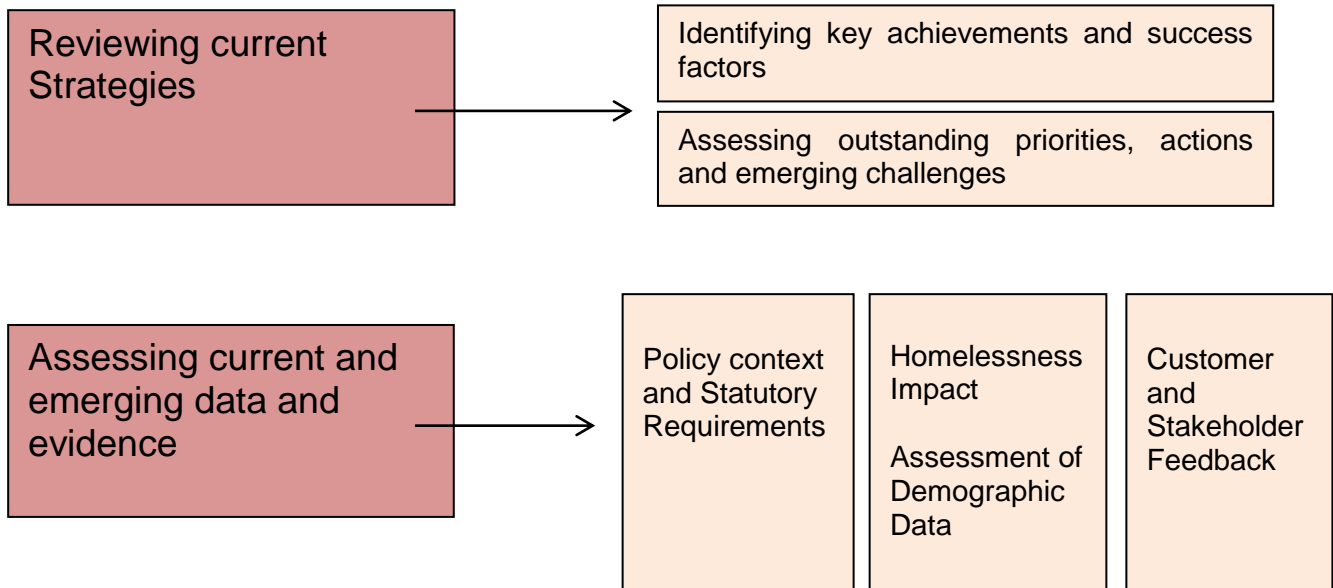
Despite the huge challenges faced, we are pleased to report on a number of really important successes as a result of the previous Homelessness Strategy. These include:

- A comprehensive review of the Allocations Policy to take advantage of the freedoms offered by the Localism Act. This has enabled us to re-think the priority awards that are made to homeless households and to ensure that the Council takes the opportunities presented by the Localism Act. This includes encourage applicants to be economically active.
- Development of the Living Over the Shops Scheme – LOTS – which has produced 7 flats which have been occupied by young homeless households, aged 16 to 25 years old. This, and some of the other temporary accommodation schemes, have meant that we have largely been able to avoid the use of B&B
- Minimal use of B&B, and only in an absolute emergency. This is against the picture of rising homelessness both nationally and locally.
- Development of an appropriate portfolio of temporary accommodation, providing good quality, reasonably settled homes for those who have been accepted as homeless

- Increased efficiencies from development of an online housing register application process
- Significant numbers of homelessness preventions achieved by a small dedicated team
- Introduction of effective and integrated triage, meaning that good housing advice is provided on drop in at the council offices, followed by case working those that threatened with homelessness
- Developed a scheme to reduce the possibility of rent arrears accruing from any shortfall between full rent levels and Housing Benefit levels in the private rented sector.
- Employment of a Tenancy Liaison Officer Service to provide support to both Landlords and tenants in the private rented sector and deal with rent arrears.
- Establishing a project to research the reasons why privately rented tenancies end and cause homelessness. We set up a private sector leasing scheme for privately rented properties and flats over shops in the borough.
- Development of a supported housing scheme for young vulnerable people with learning and physical disabilities
- Introduction of a Sanctuary scheme for women at risk of domestic violence,
- Development of a debt and money advice service, including a mortgage rescue scheme,
- Bringing Empty Homes back to use through Place Scheme Rent and Bond deposit Scheme
- In partnership with Hertsmere Borough Council, County Council and grant from Homes and Counties Agency, Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association had successfully developed 11 x 1 bedroom supported housing at Allerton Road and Castleford Road in Borehamwood.

3. Developing the Strategy

In summary development of the Homelessness Strategy has involved:



Central to understanding homelessness in the area, has been the joint working with colleagues in partner organisations. This has enabled the Council to get a clear picture of homelessness levels, emerging issues and the reality of what it is like to be facing homelessness in the area. The Strategy aims to adopt a commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across both local authority services and actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs where possible.

In line with national priorities there is an emphasis on a preventative approach to tackling homelessness with a focus on providing services such as mediation, tenancy sustainment and housing advice. The importance of housing support is recognised as essential to prevent repeat homelessness and there is a continued focus on helping homeowners at risk of repossession and avoiding rough sleeping.

We have sought to involve stakeholders in the development of this Homelessness Strategy. We have done this in a number of ways:

- Inviting initial input into the review at the beginning of the process, asking for comments on the current local issues and emerging challenges for the future
- Sending out draft of this document for comment
- Revising the draft as a result of feedback

We are grateful to those who have given their time to help us with this project and we look forward to working regularly with colleagues in other services and agencies in reviewing outputs and monitoring progress.

4. Hertsmere – Background

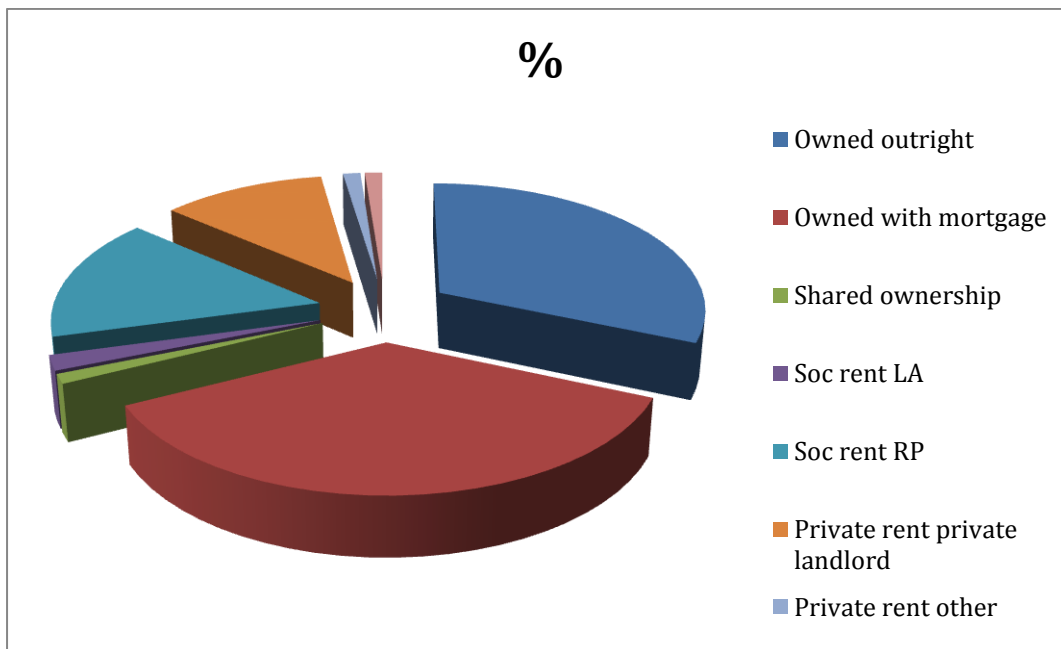
Hertsmere is a small borough located north of London. The borough consists of 38 square miles and has a population of approximately 100,000, a total which is likely to grow by 10% over the next 20 years. The main settlements are Borehamwood, Bushey, Potters Bar, Radlett and Shenley. There are a number of smaller settlements in rural parts of the borough. Hertsmere Council transferred a total of 6,070 housing units to two housing associations in 1994:

- Affinity Sutton Homes, formerly William Sutton Homes, owns around 4000 affordable homes in Borehamwood, Potters Bar, Radlett and Shenley
- Aldwyck Housing Association owns 1,701 affordable homes in Bushey and Potters Bar.

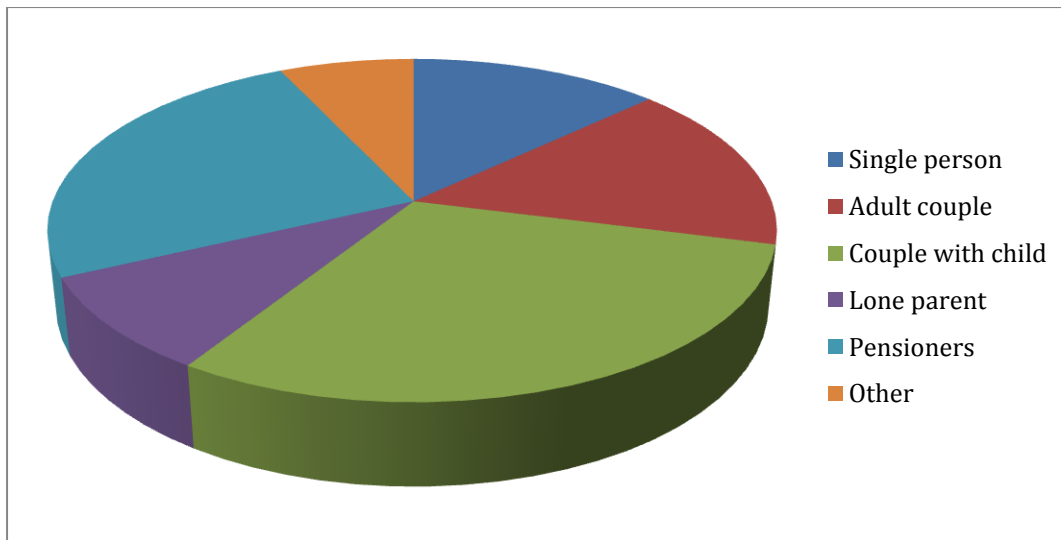
Together, Affinity Sutton Homes and Aldwyck Housing Association own 91% of the affordable housing in Hertsmere

A number of other registered social landlords are active in the borough, including Paradigm, Metropolitan, Hightown Praetorian and Churches, Genesis, Stonham and Home Group. The total amount of housing stock owned by registered social landlords at the end of March 2014 was 6910 properties.

The chart below shows the breakdown of property ownership in the borough.



This second chart shows household make-up in Hertsmere.



There are a number of specific local challenges the Council faces:

In-migration from London

With 80% of its area consisting of green belt land, its excellent rail links with the capital, and its attractive settlements and good facilities, Hertsmere is a desirable destination for households wishing to move out of greater London. Competition for housing between long-term residents and in-comers is significant, with consequent effects on house prices and rents. In-migration to the borough is partially characterised by the growth of vibrant minority ethnic and faith communities who wish to move to the borough because of excellent proximity to cultural facilities. The Jewish and Muslim communities in the borough in particular are thriving.

The Private Rented Sector

There is qualitative evidence that privately rented accommodation has increased as a proportion of Hertsmere's total housing stock – an interview-based survey of estate agents in Hertsmere which was carried out between September 2011 and March 2012 revealed that Hertsmere has been a very popular destination for Buy to Let investors. Hertsmere is a popular area with high value housing stock – house prices have generally been resilient during the recession. Therefore, Hertsmere is likely to have been an attractive area for investment by private landlords through the ten year period between 2001 and 2011.

It is important to state that Buy to Let has not added to the overall amount of housing stock; it has, moreover, transferred housing from other tenures to the private rented sector. Examples are:

- Housing which was previously owner-occupied is often bought with Buy to Let mortgages.
- Former social housing which had been purchased under the Right to Buy is usually very popular for purchase with a Buy to Let mortgage. In this way, it is

likely that a significant amount of housing which was once social rented has now become part of the local private rented sector.

5. Strategic links

The Localism Act requires that Councils develop a Tenancy Strategy by January 2013. Hertsmere's Tenancy Strategy was approved in July 2012 this sets out the Council's priorities which Registered Providers must have 'due regard to' in relation to setting their policies on the type of tenancies, duration and the conditions when tenancies will be renewed. Registered Providers have either already introduced fixed term tenancies or are currently looking at fixed / flexible tenancies lasting usually no more than 5 years.

Tackling homelessness is a key priority outlined in the Government's Housing Strategy, 'Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England' (2011), and the Coalition's aims to protect the most vulnerable and promote social justice. The national strategy outlines the Government's commitment to homelessness prevention, meeting the needs of the vulnerable, managing the consequences of those made homeless and addressing rough sleeping.

For many people homelessness or its threat is not the beginning of their problems; it often is associated with a history of crises, a long line of interactions with public and voluntary sector services and a long line of missed opportunities.

In August 2012 CLG published "Making Every contact Count: A joint approach to tackling homelessness" with a view to ensuring wider responsibility for preventing homelessness.

More recently the Council has implemented a new Allocations Policy which we believe provides a fairer and more transparent way of letting local social housing, which again is focused on mitigating the impact of welfare reform (particularly the bedroom subsidy) and promoting social inclusion.

The Hertsmere Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy provides a long term vision for addressing difficult and cross cutting issues which affect the economic, social and environmental well-being of Hertsmere.

Housing policy is a vital element in achieving this vision and the Homelessness Strategy will link in Hertsmere Housing Strategy.

The Hertsmere Housing Strategy has identified the following five strategic priorities: Hertsmere Borough Council's current housing strategy for 2009-2014 was approved by the Council in December 2008. The vision of the strategy is:

The strategic priorities in the Housing Strategy Action Plan are:

Strategic Priority 1: To continue to maximise the delivery of new affordable homes.

Strategic Priority 2: To work with partners towards a socially inclusive and sustainable community.

Strategic Priority 3: To improve the condition of housing stock in the private sector.
Strategic Priority 4: To aim to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.
Strategic Priority 5: To aim to make the best use of existing housing stock.

The Homelessness Strategy will complement and be consistent with the Hertsmere Housing Strategy and although the Homelessness Strategy will operate as a stand-alone document both policies share a number of key objectives.

6. The National Framework

New National Objectives

The present Coalition Government is committed to tackling and preventing homelessness, working in partnership with voluntary sector partners, local authorities and housing associations. The main focus is:

- Rough sleeping
- Homelessness prevention
- Preventing repossessions

There is a focus within the Coalition to encourage the provision of more affordable homes. However the NPPF has added an element of viability on developments, this has an overriding principal with regards to the percentage of affordable units. The Government is encouraging more empty homes back into meaningful use, with the use of the new homes Bonus, and PLACE schemes . The Government is looking to unlock private sector finance to support housing growth as well as helping provide affordable homes where possible as part of development sites.

Supporting People

The Supporting People programme began on 1 April 2003, bringing together seven housing-related funding streams from across central government. It is now a wholly decentralised programme, administered through 152 top-tier authorities who have complete discretion over where to direct their funds to best meet local needs. From 2011-12, all Supporting People funding has been rolled into Formula Grant and allocated via the Local Government Finance Report for the relevant financial year.

Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act was given Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. The aim of this has been to shift power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils.

The Localism Act lets councils decide:

- How best to help homeless people by enabling the use of the private sector where suitable.
- How to manage their housing waiting lists – by enabling councils to establish their own qualification criteria and to decide locally whether households who do not attract *reasonable preference* should be

registered.

- The length of tenancy that best fits a household's needs – by introducing the fixed term tenancy which can be used instead of life time tenancies.

Crucially, for local authority homelessness services, the Localism Act sets out new law that gives local authorities greater flexibility in bringing the homelessness duty to an end with offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, without requiring the applicant's agreement. This represents a significant and fundamental shift in tackling homelessness, and this review reflects on the impact this might have in Hertsmere, and the actions that need to be drawn through to the Homelessness Strategy to make this new power effective locally.

Welfare Reform

The Government's welfare reform programme aims to reduce the budget deficit, slow down growing benefit expenditure, increase fairness, increase work incentives and end benefit dependency.

In April 2011 the follow changes were introduced:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) calculated using 30th percentile of rents in the area. This means rents were previously calculated on the median (50th percentile) of rents in Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA). From April 2011 this changed to be calculated on 30th percentile of the BRMA. This will only be uprated by CPI from April 2013.
- Removal of 5-bedroom LHA rate. This was effective from April 2011 on new claims and changes of address.
- Introduction of caps for 1 to 4 bedroom rates. The national weekly caps currently stand at
 - £250 one bedroom
 - £290 two bedroom
 - £340 three bedroom
 - £400 four bedroom
- Increase in Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding-the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has increased the DHP budget. An extra £10 million was made available in 2011-12 (total allocation is £30 million). An extra £40 million was also available in 2012-13 (total allocation is £60 million).

Single people between 25 and 34 have as from January 2012 only been able to claim LHA at shared accommodation rates- the rates previously allowed for under 25 year olds.

Other significant changes that will come into force as a result of the reform to the welfare system at other times (as indicated) include:

- Increase in non-dependant deduction charges (phased in between 2011 to 2014)

- Property size restrictions for working-age people in social housing (April 2013), bringing the same rules in that apply to private sector lettings. This has become known as the “bedroom subsidy” and requires under-occupiers of social housing properties to pay a charge for each bedroom in excess of their needs, taken as a reduction in benefit payable
- The introduction of the overall benefits cap (2013) of £26,000 per annum for families
- Moving towards Universal Credit (2013 to 2017)

All of these will place new challenges on local authorities and will become important in shaping future housing advice and homelessness services.

7. Homelessness Nationally

The Homelessness Duty

Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002 place statutory duties on local housing authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Authorities must consider all applications from people seeking accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation. A main homelessness duty (see below) is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a priority need group. The priority need groups are specified in the legislation, although definition 3 above provides a summary.

Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household until a settled home becomes available for them. Where households are found to be intentionally homeless or not in priority need, the authority must make an assessment of their housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves. Where the applicant is found to be intentionally homeless but falls in a priority need category the authority must also ensure that accommodation is available for long enough to give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to find a home.

Homelessness Trends

Between 1 January and 31 March 2013, local housing authorities made 28,270 decisions on applications (by eligible households) for housing assistance, under the homelessness legislation of the Housing Act 1996. This is 1 per cent higher than the corresponding quarter in 2012. During the 2012/13 financial year, 113,260 decisions were made by local authorities. This is an increase of 4 per cent from 108,720 in 2011/12. Of the 28,270 decisions made between 1 January and 31 March 2013, the number of households found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need ('acceptances') rose by less than 1 per cent compared with the same quarter in 2012, whereas the number of households found to be intentionally homeless and in priority need increased by 11 per cent. The number of households found to be homeless but not in priority need fell by less than 1 per cent, and the number of households found not to be homeless rose by 2 per cent.

Between 1 January and 31 March 2013, local authorities accepted 13,230

households as being owed a main homelessness duty. This is an increase of less than 1 per cent compared to the same quarter last year.

During the 2012/13 financial year, 53,540 households were accepted by local authorities as being owed the main homelessness duty. This is an increase of 6 per cent from 50,290 in 2011/12.

Acceptances by priority need category

Between 1 January and 31 March 2013, the presence of dependent children in the household was the primary reason for priority need in 64 per cent of acceptances, representing 8,490 households. This is an increase from 63 per cent in the same quarter last year. A further 9 per cent of households were in priority need because they included a pregnant woman, representing 1,180 households and down from 10 per cent in the same quarter last year.

The majority of the remainder were in priority need due to vulnerability, for example, mental illness (8 per cent) or physical disability (7 per cent). Homeless in an emergency accounted for less than 1 per cent of all acceptances. 3 per cent of acceptances were in priority need through being a young person (either 16 or 17 year-olds, or 18 to 20 year-olds formerly in care).

Acceptances by reason for loss of last settled home

Between 1 January and 31 March 2013, in 30 per cent of acceptances the reason for homelessness was parents, relatives or friends (mostly parents) not being able, or willing, to accommodate applicants.

In a further 18 per cent of acceptances, the reason for homelessness was the breakdown of a relationship with a partner, 69 per cent of these cases involving violence.

In 23 per cent of acceptances the reason for homelessness was the ending of an assured short hold tenancy. There has been a rise in acceptances for this reason, from 19 per cent in the same quarter in 2012.

The proportion of acceptances where homelessness resulted from mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home) was 2 per cent, down from 3 per cent for the same quarter in 2012. The proportion of acceptances due to mortgage arrears has remained much lower than the peak in the last downturn: 12 per cent during 1991.

Action taken in respect of acceptances

Of the 13,230 acceptances between 1 January and 31 March 2013, 8,050 (61 per cent) were placed in some form of temporary accommodation for a period of time. This is at the same level as in the same quarter last year. For a further 4,120 accepted households (31 per cent), arrangements were made, with consent, to remain in their existing accommodation (or to make their own arrangements), for the immediate future while awaiting the provision of alternative accommodation. This is up slightly, from 30 per cent in the same quarter last year.

6 per cent of acceptances were provided with settled accommodation, by being granted a secure tenancy in local authority or registered social landlord accommodation, or an assured short hold tenancy in the private rented sector. The remaining 2 per cent either made their own arrangements or had no further contact with the authority, thus bringing the homelessness duty to an end.

Households in temporary accommodation

The number of households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2013, arranged by local authorities under homelessness legislation, was 55,300: 10 per cent more than the same date last year. This is the seventh quarterly increase since the ending in 2011 of the long-term downward trend in the seasonally-adjusted number of households in temporary accommodation, which started at the peak in 2004.

Of the 55,300 households in temporary accommodation at 31 March 2013, 78 per cent had been accepted as owed a main homelessness duty and were being housed in temporary accommodation by the authority until a settled home became available. The remaining 22 per cent were being accommodated pending a decision on their application, the outcome of a local authority review or an appeal to the county court on the authority's decision, or possible referral to another local authority, or had been found intentionally homeless and in priority need and subsequently were being accommodated for such a period as would give them a reasonable opportunity to find accommodation for themselves.

There is a wide range of accommodation used to provide temporary accommodation, most of which is self-contained (either in local authority or housing authority stock, or within the private sector). At the end of March 2013, 84 per cent of households in temporary accommodation were in self-contained accommodation. This was the same as at the same date last year.

On 31 March 2013, of the 55,300 households in temporary accommodation:

- 37,060 households were in private sector accommodation (67 per cent of all households), most commonly in a property leased by the local authority or housing association, or in some cases let directly to the applicant as the tenant of a private sector landlord. This is an increase of 9 per cent from 31 March last year, when there were 33,850 such households.
- 9,270 households were in accommodation owned by social landlords (17 per cent of all households), up 12 per cent from 8,270 households as at 31 March last year. Of these 9,270 households, 72 per cent were in local authority owned stock, and 28 per cent in registered social landlord owned property.
- 4,470 households were in hostel accommodation and women's refuges (8 per cent of all households), up 3 per cent from the same time last year.
- 4,500 households were in bed and breakfast style accommodation (8 per cent of all households), 14 per cent higher than the same time last year. London accounts for just over half the number of households in bed and

breakfast style accommodation, where the number has increased by 22 per cent since the same quarter last year (1,880 to 2,290 households). Historically, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation peaked in March 1987, when 47 per cent (England) and 59 per cent (London) of households in temporary accommodation were housed in this style of accommodation.

In addition to the 55,300 households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2013, 5,920 households accepted as owed a main duty remained (with consent) in their existing accommodation (or made their own arrangements) while awaiting the provision of alternative accommodation. This is 10 per cent higher than at the same date last year.

At the end of March 2013, there were 100 households headed by 16 and 17 year-old applicants in bed and breakfast style accommodation, of which 40 had been there for over six weeks.

Households in temporary accommodation in another local authority district

Of the 55,300 households in temporary accommodation on 31 March 2013, 9,000 were in accommodation in another local authority district. This is an increase of 14 per cent, from 7,870 at the same date last year.

Of the 10,510 households who left temporary accommodation or other temporary arrangements during the quarter, 66 per cent had been in these temporary arrangements for less than six months, up from 65 per cent for the same quarter last year. The percentage of households that spend two or more years in temporary accommodation had fallen from 12 per cent to 9 per cent.

8. Local homelessness issues

Demand on the service

The homelessness prevention service provided by the Council is in high demand. There are two aspects to the service. The first is the housing advice service, and provision of signposting and information. This is provided by the Customer Service Team at the reception area at the Council Offices. In addition to initial advice and assistance this team provides triage, so that clients who need case work intervention are passed through to the Homelessness Prevention officers.

On average around 100 clients a month receive advice and assistance from the Customer Service team, face to face in the reception area, before they go onto seeing a Housing Officer for intervention or prevention assistance..

Housing register data

The Council is part of Herts Choice Homes, which provides the housing register for 5 local authorities – St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford, Welwyn Hatfield and Hertsmere.

There are currently around xxx households registered for accommodation (as at 1st May 2014 in the Hertsmere area, broken down by bedroom requirements, as follows:

Band	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
A	1	0	0	0	1
B	50	25	10	2	87
C	13	46	22	11	92
D	163	146	111	13	433
E	59	6	0	0	66
Total	286	223	144	26	679

Each year the Council has a number of lets available through nomination arrangements with housing associations. The number of lets over the last three years are:

2010/11	326
2011/12	292
2012/13	305
2013/14	306

Homelessness Prevention Activity

The focus of the Councils service is activity around homelessness prevention. This involves two lines of work. The first is around preventing the loss of existing accommodation, and the second is where this loss is unavoidable, to prevent homelessness by assisting clients in securing alternative accommodation.

During 2013/14, there were 1042 cases of homelessness prevented. The top 5 activities are:

- Provision of hostel or shared accommodation
- Securing accommodation with family and friends
- Successful referral to supported housing accommodation
- Securing private rented accommodation with the assistance of a deposit
- Securing private rented accommodation without the provision of a deposit

Homelessness data

The table below shows the number of homelessness acceptances over the last 4years.

Year	Acceptances
2010/11	27
2011/12	79
2012/13	119
2013/14	131

One of the ways that central government measures homelessness levels is looking at homeless acceptances per 1000 head of population. Data for Hertsmere shows:

Year	Per 1000 head of pop
2011/12	2.0
2012/13	2.9
2013/14	3.0

Out of the 38 decisions on homelessness that were made during January to March this year, 28 were accepted as homeless and owed a duty, whilst 6 were found to be non priority need, 3 not homeless, and 1 intentionally homeless. This shows that the Council is not only taking applications from clients it thinks it owes a homelessness duty towards, but – as the law requires – where it believes an application is triggered. This reflects best practice.

The causes of homelessness locally, in order, are:

Cause of homelessness	Number during 2012/13	Percentage
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	33	28%
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	25	21%
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	16	13%
Violent relationship breakdown	9	8%
Non violent relationship breakdown	7	6%
Other reasons	29	24%

Use of temporary accommodation

As at the 31st March 2014, there were a total of 69 households in temporary accommodation, an increase of 28 from the same time the year before. The breakdown of this as is follows:

Type of accommodation	Number
Bed & breakfast	0
Hostel inc women's refuge	22
Council or housing association stock	18
Private lease scheme	10
Other	19

19 of the total are accommodated outside the borough. However, this is a snapshot at the end of March. This figure changes all the time as we try to bring people back within borough boundaries.

The length of stay for households living in temporary accommodation is set out below:

Length of stay	Percentage
Under 6 months	33%
6 months to under 1 year	53%
1 year to under 2 years	13%

Ethnicity of homeless households

As a snapshot, the ethnicity of households who were accepted during January to March 2013, was:

Ethnic background	Number Hertsmere	Hertsmere Population 2011 Census
White British	17	85,063
Asian or Asian British	1	7,393
Mixed race	1	2,619
Chinese or other	2	1,029
Afro-Caribbean	0	3,927
Not stated	7	-
Total	28	100,031

9. Homelessness provision locally

There are a range of services in place to assist those who are threatened with homelessness. Some of these can be accessed directly the clients, others are on a referral basis from one of the client facing agencies. The main sources of advice and assistance are:

Hertsmere Housing Options Service

This is the statutory service provided by the local authority, providing free housing advice, homelessness prevention casework and assessment and provision under the homelessness legislation. The service is based at the council offices in Borehamwood although home visits are also provided.

The service is open to all, and Customer Service staff provide advice and assistance on a drop in basis. The housing options staff are accessed via an appointment service, and these interviews are used to prevent homelessness, casework clients into other housing options and, where necessary to take formal homelessness applications and make enquiries into homelessness.

Citizens Advice Bureau

The CAB has an office in the borough, in Elstree. They provide a range of services with regards to advice and assistance to clients such as money advice, and financial assessments, and in some instances support clients in advocacy.

Herts Young Homeless Group

This group work with young people aged 16 to 25, who are threatened with homelessness. Staff from the group provide the first point of access to advice services, and carry out needs assessments. The group also has the ability to pull in social services where necessary. The focus of the work is prevention of homelessness, but also to ensure the Councils duty towards young people who are homeless are properly carried out.

We are continually looking to improve local services and are interested in exploring what the DCLG sponsored “Gold Standard” can contribute in doing this.

Essentially Gold Standard is a DCLG sponsored programme, focusing on a 10 step continuous improvement approach that starts with the pledge for local authorities to “strive for continuous improvement in front line housing services” and culminates in an application for the Gold Standard Challenge. The standard itself is based around the report from the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness – “Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to the Prevention of Homelessness”. The Standard is set out in Appendix 1.

10. Consultation

We have been keen to capture the thoughts, views and ideas of others in reviewing homelessness. We have done this in a number of ways:

- Meetings with housing options staff about the issues they face on a daily basis, in relation to homelessness
- An email survey to key partners asking for their thoughts on special features of homelessness in Hertsmere, and concerns for the future to which we had a number of useful responses
- Sending out a draft of the Homelessness Strategy prior to finalisation, asking for input and comments

Staff raised the following issues:

- Proximity to London is a real issue because of the challenges this brings in trying to compete with larger London boroughs in accessing private rented accommodation. These authorities have significant budgets to pay landlord incentives and other incentives to assist their own clients with access to accommodation. This leaves Hertsmere competing with others for stock in its own borough.
- One of the areas of concern are the numbers of vulnerable clients that come to the Council, particularly those with mental health issues
- Many clients come to the Council as a result of family breakdown

- A concern about the possibility of increasing numbers of clients coming from housing associations with arrears – largely as a result of the bedroom subsidy changes

From the initial survey sent out to agencies, the following issues were raised:

- There is a shortage of affordable single persons rented accommodation in the general area
- Hertsmere has local areas within it that have very different histories of housing development, house prices and make-up of the community.
- The development of new affordable homes is critical – the homelessness strategy need to go beyond looking at the supply of temporary accommodation
- All development opportunities need to be maximised including use of the new homes bonus, working with partners, identifying land opportunities, being careful not to have policies that impede the supply of new homes, speedy planning decisions, supporting partners who attempt to access innovative funding streams
- The provision of support to homeless people in securing accommodation and sustaining their tenancy must be an important feature of the new strategy
- Where the rehousing of vulnerable people is concerned, more emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that appropriate support is in place when people are rehoused – in the absence of this, repeat homelessness is likely to occur
- The homelessness review should also look at the banding scheme of the allocations policy – not just the band for homeless people but of other needs groups, to see whether changes might generate more vacancies, because of increased numbers of chain lets. This is about making best use of existing housing stock
- The use of temporary accommodation should be subject to a review, essentially to look at affordability, suitability and ensuring accommodation is fully occupied to prevent rent loss from voids
- Concerns for the future include:
 - Impact of RTB (Right To Buy) on the available stock
 - Mortgage arrears increasing
 - Temporary awards of DHP(Discretionary Housing Payment) coming to an end, and planned reduction in DHP funds from central government
 - Impact of the benefits cap on ability of clients to access the private rented sector

In addition to working with partners on developing this review, we have been keen to seek feedback from clients of our service – those who have sought housing advice from us, those who have had homelessness prevented, and those who have been placed in temporary accommodation as a result of actual homelessness.

We had the following feedback from service users:

- All respondents were aware of the Council's homelessness prevention services and how to access these. Some were told about it by family and friends, others directed by other agencies (one by a health visitor)
- The main barrier they faced in finding their own local accommodation was accessing the private rented sector. There were 2 key problems: rent levels outside of LHA and landlords unwilling to "accept DSS". All but one respondent was advised by the Council to look for private rented properties, but found this an unrealistic prospect
- There was an example of a good referral between agencies – a woman was referred to CAB for assistance in benefit maximisation
- All respondents said they were not sure of the process once they had had the initial housing options interview, and therefore kept calling the Council to find out where they stood and what was happening with their case. They found this frustrating, with comments such as "I have to keep ringing them to find out"; "they've not been in touch since I moved in here"; "they didn't keep me informed". Production of a simple leaflet explaining the process from application through to decision will assist this and is included in the delivery plan to move forward. All respondents said they would welcome this. It should also help to cut down the number of calls coming in to the service.
- All respondents were clear about their need to bid, and took the requirement to bid very seriously. They were aware that if they did not bid then bids would be placed on their behalf, and they would have no choice about where they lived.

11. Likely future levels of homelessness

Planned national welfare benefit changes may have an impact on lower income households. Welfare spending is planned to reduce by £18bn by 2014-15. There are a number of concerns for the future that arise from this; some are being seen already, such as:

- Single room rate extension to the under 35's
- Difficulty in accessing private rented sector accommodation because of high demand, including demand from people who would might have been expecting to access the owner occupation market, as well as from those moving out of London.
- Cost of living increases – including travel costs, food, energy and so on

Other concerns are from the likely impact of Universal Credit – due to come in during 2014. For those who rent privately, there is a concern that they may not be able to effectively set aside the rent element from their benefit each month and pay landlords rent due on time. This could lead to increased court action and increased threat of homelessness.

There are a number of other issues that will impact on the workloads of those working locally to tackle homelessness:

- Home ownership has been increasingly out of reach for future generations and this has led to increased demand for social / affordable housing
- Increasing demands on the rented sector and the power for the Council to make Private Rented Sector (PRS) offers to homeless households as a discharge of legal duty.
- Interest rates are low now but any upward changes will severely impact on owner-occupiers and could impact on buy to let landlords - who may either sell or seek higher rent levels - which could put the properties out of reach for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA).

There is a concern that there will be increasing numbers of households making approaches for housing advice, looking to access more affordable housing locally and ultimately an increase in numbers of people threatened with homelessness. We need to respond to this challenge, and the Homelessness Strategy will set out the Council's plans for doing this.

The use of prevention initiatives is proven to be far more cost effective. The challenge for the Council is to find the right balance of budgetary cuts and investment which provides longer term savings and also provide better quality services to the communities.

With an expensive private rented market in the borough there are key concerns around affordability especially in light of welfare changes including the cap on total benefits. The introduction of the affordable rent model has also seen a reduction in the affordable housing grant available from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) with a greater emphasis on housing associations delivering sites using their own resources and borrowing money secured against income from the Affordable Rent model. These changes are likely to have serious implications for many of our customers. Raising public awareness and helping people to prepare for these changes will be essential in order to prevent homelessness occurring.

As well as putting a strain on resources, it is also likely that these factors will lead to an increased demand for services. Whilst the strategy will remain ambitious it will be important to be realistic and identify resources required to deliver objectives, as well as how the resources will be sourced, in an environment when value for money and doing more with less will be prevalent. In a time when resources will be scarcer it is imperative to use what resources we have effectively.

12. Themes for the Strategy to take forward

The aim of the homelessness review has been to produce a picture of homelessness demand in Hertsmere and also of provision for homeless households – both services and actual accommodation. In doing this, we are able to identify areas that need to be tackled by the Homelessness Strategy.

We know that homelessness is rising. We are concerned about the impact of welfare reform, generally, and specifically on those who are not working. We are concerned about affordability generally for people.

We are also concerned about rising demand and the need to manage expectations, on line, if possible. For those we owe a duty to assist, we intend to use the private rented sector. Before we can do this, we need to stimulate that sector and ensure a steady supply of properties. There are challenges in doing this because of our proximity to London.

At the same time we want to continue to ensure we have an appropriate portfolio of temporary accommodation. We need to ensure there is an appropriate amount of support for people who need it.

We are mindful of those we do not owe a re-housing duty to and we want to ensure we provide good quality housing advice and assistance. We cannot do this alone and we must improve the co-ordination between agencies.

Taking on board all of the above, we have identified a number of areas where current services can be improved, or where new services are needed in order to prevent and reduce homelessness in the next five years. The following priorities have been identified in order to deliver high-quality, easily accessible services across all areas of the district:

The themes identified that require actions moving forward are:

1. Mitigating the impact of welfare reform

This is one of the key themes of the Homelessness Strategy, and will involve a number of different areas of work around accessibility to services, services to support those threatened with homelessness and seeking alternative accommodation as well as actions around sharpening up homelessness prevention services.

It will be important though to work closely with employment services to attempt to help lift clients out of the benefit cap by getting them into work.

Getting unemployed service users into employment, and maximising the opportunity to discuss this as part of housing options interviews has been identified as one of the best ways of helping people through welfare reform. The Council will explore best practice opportunities that might bring employment services more closely into the housing options process, resulting in getting clients into training and work.

2. Increase access to the private rented sector

The review has identified a number of issues around access to the private rented sector including competition for properties from other local authorities, particularly London boroughs plus the need to ensure the rent deposit scheme is adequate in assisting in procuring accommodation. The Council will be discharging the homelessness duty into the private rented sector and so an appropriate supply is critical.

The Delivery Plan will identify actions to address these issues.

3. Review of temporary accommodation portfolio

In the light of the ability to discharge homelessness duty into the private rented sector, we will need to review the existing portfolio of temporary accommodation to ensure it is used into the most appropriate way whilst providing move on for tenants, to ensure there is churn (and therefore availability) in temporary accommodation (TA).

We also want to continue to explore more possibility of supported housing development for young males and females. We are exploring the possibility of a local single room lodging scheme for 25 to 35 years olds, due to the changes in benefit rules in increasing the age of the rent single room rate to 35, and to link in with the Governments initiative to the No Second Night Out, and the single homeless project that provides funding for single homeless.

4. Review and monitor the impact of the new allocations policy on homelessness

The new allocations policy went live on 1st April 2013 and it is important that we ensure that homeless households have the opportunity to bid for permanent homes, without creating a “fast track” into social housing. We also need to ensure that through put in temporary accommodation is not overly quick so as to create too many voids, which will add to the cost of managing that accommodation.

Monitoring of the new Allocations Policy is a key part of this aim. By monitoring allocations to homeless households and comparing to previous years we will be able to measure the effectiveness of the Allocations Policy in resolving homelessness. These figures will need to be considered alongside other data such as homelessness prevention figures, data from the Private Sector Leasing and PLACE (Private Lease Agreement Converting Empties) schemes.

There is a need for regular monitoring of the allocations policy and for a broader, multi agency review to address any unintended consequences.

5. Managing client expectations

There are two aspects of client expectations. The first is around publicity for the services to ensure that those threatened with homelessness are aware of the service and able to easily access advice and assistance. This will involve actions around promoting the Council services, and all other services available in the borough. The second aspect is ensuring that we give out good quality information that enables applicants to make informed choices about their housing prospects.

The Council intends to develop a strategy that can help manage the future levels of demand, given the likely impact of welfare reform on homelessness and requests for housing advice by:

- Providing information to customers about what realistically the Council can do to provide social housing
- Provide quality information on waiting times – in housing reception areas and online
- Provision of online housing advice, and exploring how information technology can be used to act as effective triage into the service
- Signposting clients to agencies such as CAB, for money and debt advice which is directly sponsored by the Council.

Part of this work will include working in partnership with Herts Young Homeless Group to continue the successful education project on homelessness for young people in schools across the borough.

6. Ensuring appropriate support is available for homeless people

Given the anticipated increased use of private rented sector we are keen to ensure that households are supported into appropriate accommodation and that they are given enough support to ensure tenancies continue and are successfully renewed. We recognised that support is critical if tenancies are to be sustained successfully. We recently introduced the new role of Tenants Liaison Officer to provide support to those moving into the private rented sector. We are keen to continue to monitor the successes that this delivers.

A number of stakeholders have raised the issue around support in moving into accommodation and we are keen to take this aspect forward and work to make sure this support is in place.

7. Working towards Gold Standard

Essentially Gold Standard is a DCLG sponsored programme, focusing on a 10 step continuous improvement approach that starts with the pledge for local authorities to “strive for continuous improvement in front line housing services” and culminates in an application for the Gold Standard Challenge. The standard itself is based around the report from the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness – “Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to the Prevention of Homelessness”. The Standard itself is set out in Appendix 1.

Working towards this will drive service quality upwards.

8. Improve move on provision

We are keen to review move on from supported housing schemes and from temporary accommodation. This links closely to the work we want to do in ensuring we have an appropriate portfolio of TA. We are aware of issues with partner housing associations accepting nominations for tenants moving on from TA and we intend to work jointly to resolve these.

9. Increased partnership working

We do work in partnership with colleagues in other departments and other agencies, but we recognise that there is scope to achieve more in this area. We will review the partnerships we have and explore opportunities for increased gain. We are also keen to ensure that partners are involved in the delivery and the monitoring of this Strategy and will establish a forum to enable effective review to take place.

10. Increase housing supply

The last couple of years the number of homes built in Hertsmere have increased with large amount of public sector and private sector housing investment more so in the Borehamwood area of the borough. However, demand for affordable housing continues to be very high and people on the Council's Housing Register is higher and growing day by day and about 100 housing let's become available through new build housing and re-let void from our partner Housing Association and Registered Providers. Few percentages of these homes are of family size 3 bedrooms and more homes.

Increasing the supply of affordable homes in the borough is a key aim for the Council, as mentioned prior viability has affected supply. The overall supply of permanent property has not increased. One of the aims in the 2009-2014 Housing Strategy is to increase the supply and quality of housing from all sources. Activities include working with Private Sectors Landlords, Housing Association and Registered Providers to deliver new affordable homes and bring their existing stocks to a condition better than decent.

The Council will use its own resources to assist in the delivery of affordable homes, where viable helping to set Affordable Rents at below 80% of market rents and ensuring affordability for low income working households.

With limited land supply in the borough we will also find innovative solutions to increasing the supply of affordable homes. We will make best use of existing Land and assets, and continuing to support under-occupiers in housing association property to move to smaller properties.

13. Resources available to tackle homelessness

The Homelessness Strategy is based on the assumption that all actions and improvements will be delivered within the existing resources. We recognise this is not ideal but it reflects the economic challenges the Council currently faces. The Councils in house service consists of a team of 12 staff including a service manager. Within this, new initiatives such as support for clients of the rent deposit scheme are

delivered. This team will have responsibility for developing, delivering and monitoring the Homelessness Strategy.

Partnership working will lever in additional resources. As ever we will strive to coordinate and enhance partnerships.

The Council receives an annual Homelessness Grant from Central Government to assist in implementing the Borough's Homelessness Strategy and addressing homelessness issues. The amount available to the Housing options Service for 2013/14 is £71,000. This funds 2 posts within the service.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

For private rented tenancies the Council receives Discretionary Housing Benefit payments which can be used to support households affected by Local Housing Allowance changes. Where appropriate the Council will use Discretionary Housing Payments to help prevent vulnerable households in the private rented sector from becoming homeless.

There is £16k available for 2014 as extra DHP to mitigate the impact of welfare reform and we are looking to invest this in some joint work with RPs around assisting those who wish to move as result of the withdrawal of bedroom subsidy.

14. Conclusions

This Homelessness Strategy has been developed in order to assist in understanding homelessness issues locally. In doing this it sets out some of the up and coming challenges, particularly in relation to welfare reform. It is a time of great change and we are anticipating there will be increasing demands on the Council's service and on those provided by other agencies. Partnership working will be key in preventing homelessness and in navigating clients through pathways that can assist them. These pathways will by necessity include training and employment services.

Appendix 1: Gold Standard: The 10 Local Challenges

- 1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which as buy in across all local authority services**
- 2. To actively work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local authority partners to address support, education, employment and training needs**
- 3. To offer a Housing Options and prevention service to all clients including written advice**
- 4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative**
- 5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each housing partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support**
- 6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord.**
- 7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme**
- 8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a positive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs**
- 9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 into bed and breakfast**
- 10. To not place any families in bed and breakfast unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks**

Homelessness Strategy 2014 – 2018 Delivery Plan

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
Priority 1: Mitigate the impact of welfare reform							
Research further opportunities for homelessness prevention	Provision of debt advice referrals	Map existing provision of existing service & arrange effective referral routes	By Dec 2014	Within existing	Increased levels of prevention of at least 10% per year	Housing Services Manager	
Develop mechanisms to monitor the impact of welfare reform	Be part of a group that assesses the impact of welfare reform, monitors outcomes and introduces services / initiatives to mitigate negative impact	Part of Group Focus on financial inclusion	Ongoing	Within existing	Minimize negative impact of welfare reform	Housing Services Manager Benefits Manager	
Monitor expenditure on social fund budget	Social Fund of £10k is available to tackle welfare reform	Set up monitoring & reporting mechanisms	By Dec 2014	Within existing	Mitigate impact of welfare reform	Housing Services Manager	
Map provision of financial & benefits services	Create awareness amongst all agencies of provision across the borough	Pool knowledge and existing information to create up to date directory / resource	By Dec 2014	Within existing	Increased awareness of financial inclusion services amongst staff & agencies	Housing Services Manager	
Explore options to link employment & training & volunteering opportunities with Housing	Explore what services exist Identify scope for joint working / protocols / co-location / shared training etc Develop systems	Means will be identified though the options appraisal	December 2014	Derived from joint working	To get housing applicants not into work into employment. Establish a baseline in year 1 and increase year	Housing Options Manager	

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
Options	Establish a project to implement				on year		
Priority 2: Increase access to private rented sector							
Review current capacity of the deposit scheme in relation to discharge of duty for homeless households (possible future policy)	Develop a package for discharge of duty in PRS so it can be used in certain cases	Review existing scheme & identify any improvements Review incentives Review advice & information to clients Consider out of area placements as necessary Produce standard paperwork etc Involve landlords in the review	Sept 2014	Within existing	Increased numbers of applicants placed under Localism Act, each quarter.	Housing Options Manager	
Explore methods to improve standards in the PRS	Develop an accreditation scheme if appropriate	Produce paper on costs /benefits Meet with stakeholders Develop a training and implementation plan	Sept 2014	Within existing	Target each year for number of landlords awarded accreditation	Private sector Housing Officer	
Consider developing a local lettings agency	Carry out options appraisal (council run service? Existing partner? New procurement?)	Research current best practice Analyse local market Conduct full options appraisal Reach decision & implement	2014-16	Within existing or identification of new through spend to save		Private sector Housing Officer	
Increased the availability of PRS Properties	Explore options including local newspaper, radio and provision of additional services e.g. named support.	Joint working	Dec 2014	Within existing	10% increased of PRS quarter on quarter	Private sector Housing Officer Housing Service Manager	

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
Develop closer links with HB to assist in expansion of PRS schemes	Monthly meetings with HB colleagues Increased access to DHP	Joint working	Ongoing	Within existing		Housing Services Manager	
Ensure partner agencies are aware of the financial packages available to assist clients into PRS	Develop checklist / guidance for all staff & partners	Map existing financial support available	Oct 2014	Within existing	Increased awareness by agencies of packages available. Test at Homelessness Monitoring Group regularly	Private sector Housing Officer	
Priority 3: Review of temporary accommodation portfolio							
Carry out a suitability appraisal of B&Bs currently used	Develop a tool for assessing B&Bs and visit to carry out assessment	Use template Conduct inspection Produce report\ Reach decisions on unsuitable B&Bs & cease to use	By End July 2014	Within existing	Only use suitable, fully inspected B&Bs	Housing Services Manager	
Ensure maximum occupancy levels in TA stock, to minimise voids	Meet with RP providers to understand the issues relating to occupancy & voids	Face to face meeting & brainstorming solutions and any areas needing operational change	Ongoing	Within existing	Maximum occupancy in al TA schemes – monitored monthly	Housing Services Manager	
Explore options for increased supported housing options for under 25s	Consider a rent a room scheme and other viable alternatives	Discuss with partners Carry out small feasibility study	July 2014	Within existing	Increase provision for this age group	Housing Services Manager	
Priority 4: Review and monitor the impact of the new allocations policy on homelessness							
Develop clear	Review what is in	With Herts Choice Homes	Sept 14	Herts Choice	Consistent policy	Housing	

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
policies and procedures for implementation of new policy	place and what needs to be drafted			Homes partnership & within existing	implementation across the sub region	Options Manager	
Monitor lets to homeless households	Monitor lets to homeless households to identify any trends of unintended consequences of the new policy	With Herts Choice Homes	Start Aug 2014 then every quarter	Herts Choice Homes & within existing	Ensure no fast track into housing loophole	Housing Options Manager	
Monitor RP stock being advertised through CBL	Ensure the correct % of stock is going into CBL and the impact this has on transfers / those affected by bedroom tax	With Herts Choice Homes	Start Aug 2014- Ongoing	Herts Choice Homes	100% of stock going into CBL as agreed Increased transfers / down sizing	Housing Options Manager	
Priority 5: Managing client expectations / demand							
Develop methods for disseminating information regarding realistic housing expectations	Article in council magazine Make use of TV screens in reception Newspaper article	Develop a communications plan	Start Aug 2014 & ongoing	Within existing	Clients better informed about waiting times & housing prospects	Private sector Housing Officer Housing Services Manager	
Provide up to date information on housing prospects online and in customer service points		Collation & publication	July 2014	Within existing	Clients better informed about waiting times & housing prospects	Housing Options Manager	

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
Education in schools	Continue to work with & support Herts Young Homeless Group in the education in schools project	Joint working	Ongoing	Within existing	Increased knowledge amongst young people of the realism of being homeless	Housing Options Manager	
Explore opportunities for online housing advice	Talk with IT colleagues and providers to assess opportunities and costs		July 2014	To be identified	Provision of a quality online housing advice service	Housing Services Manager	
Capture and monitor customer feedback	Ensure mechanisms are in place to capture feedback & use it to reshape services periodically	Develop customer feedback mechanisms (consider mystery shopper, use of volunteers to conduct telephone surveys, exit interviews etc)	December 2014	Within existing	Establish a base point of customer satisfaction Aim to increase this by % year on year	Housing Services Manager	
Priority 6: Ensuring appropriate support is available for homeless people							
Monitor the workloads and outcomes of the Tenants Liaison Officer role	Establish key performance indicators and a baseline & complete data that demonstrates the need for / successes of the post	Working with key partners and landlords	Aug 2014 Ongoing	Within existing	Increased number of sustained tenancies	Housing Options Manager	
Review support available for clients moving in to temporary accommodation	Particularly in relation to ensuring successful tenancy set up	Review existing provision Identify other sources of provision Create referral routes	Dec 2014	Within existing?	No tenancy breakdown as a result of lack of resettlement support	Housing Services Manager	
Priority 7: Working towards Gold Service							
Access the Practitioner Support	Develop detailed action plan	Using tools available on website	July 2014	Within existing	Gold standard accreditation	Housing Services Manager	

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
website and understand the journey to make in relation to Gold Service	Speak to relevant DCLG Practitioner Support officer						
Involve partner agencies in Gold Standard Award	Set up multi agency meeting to move forward	Joint working	July 2014	Within existing	Gold standard accreditation	Housing Services Manager	
Priority 8: Improve move on provision							
Explore options for greater "churn" within temporary housing schemes	Explore use of quotas for providers Explore usefulness of private sector leased properties for move on	Options appraisal, reach decision, develop implementation plan	Oct 2014 Ongoing	Within existing	Effective move on from schemes	Housing Services Manager	
Review refusal of nominations from RPs involving people who are moving on from TA	Carry out review with a view to identifying issues to be resolved by joint working / discussion. Develop clear policies moving forward.	Meeting relevant RPs	July 2014- Ongoing	Within existing	Agreed procedure in place Fewer refusals by RPs	Housing Options Manager	
Priority 9: Increase partnership working							
Carry out a review of the current partnerships in place	Ensure each existing partnership is effective Identify additional partnership needs	Joint working	Aug 2014	Within existing	Effective partnerships & new partnerships where necessary	Housing Services Manager	
Establish a partnership / vehicle / opportunity for	Need to ensure partners are involved in delivery and monitoring	Joint working	July 2014	Within existing	Joint work on homelessness strategy delivery	Housing Services Manager	

Task	Details	How	When	Resources	Targets	Key Officers	Comments / Progress
joint work on Homelessness Strategy delivery						Key staff from other agencies	
Review protocols that support joint working	Review all current protocols with other agencies. Strengthen links particularly with probation. Mental health services, drug & alcohol services	Review existing provision & develop new arrangements through joint working	Aug 2014 ongoing	Within existing	Effective protocols in place	Housing Services Manager	
Priority 10: Increase housing supply							
Build appropriate homes	Ensure the council builds the right properties to meet demand	Ensure mix of units is right & where required a Local Lettings Plan is in place	Ongoing	Within existing		Affordable Housing Coordinator	
Build appropriate homes (2)	Effective monitoring of demand to ensure the Council can track what units are required in which locality	Establish tool for monthly monitoring	Sept 2014	Within existing		Affordable Housing Coordinator	
Making best use of existing stock	Monitoring RP activity on Tenancy Strategy	Monitoring in accordance with guidance set out in Tenancy Strategy on fixed term tenancy	Start July 2014-ongoing	Within existing		Affordable Housing Coordinator	
Maximise home swaps for existing under-occupiers	Make better use of home swap tools and promote them	Monitor the number happening Talk to providers Effective training on the tools available Hold promotion event	By July 2014	Within existing Joint working with RPs	Increased number of home swaps per month from implementation – 10% increase	Housing Options Manager	