

Report to CABINET

Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2021-24

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Hannah Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing

SRO:

Helen Lockwood, Deputy Chief Executive – People and Place

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Director of Economy

Report Author:

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18th October 2021

Reason for Decision

The report seeks approval of the new Temporary Accommodation Strategy and accompanying delivery plan, setting out how the Council will deliver efficiency and sustainment of temporary accommodation options pursuant to its statutory obligations.

Executive Summary

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act coupled with the Council's statutory housing advice service coming back in-house are notable contributors to the development of the Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2021-24.

The approach outlined in the Strategy will ensure the Council is able to withstand forthcoming homelessness pressures that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic namely, the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and moratorium on bailiff evictions.

The Strategy and Delivery Plan outline a programme for delivery of temporary accommodation that would help reduce budgetary pressures, meet suitability and legal compliance standards and improve sustainability in the light of anticipated challenges.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet;

- Approve the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and accompanying delivery plan
- Authorise a procurement exercise allowing Housing Strategy to work with Procurement for the purpose of developing a bespoke temporary accommodation provider framework

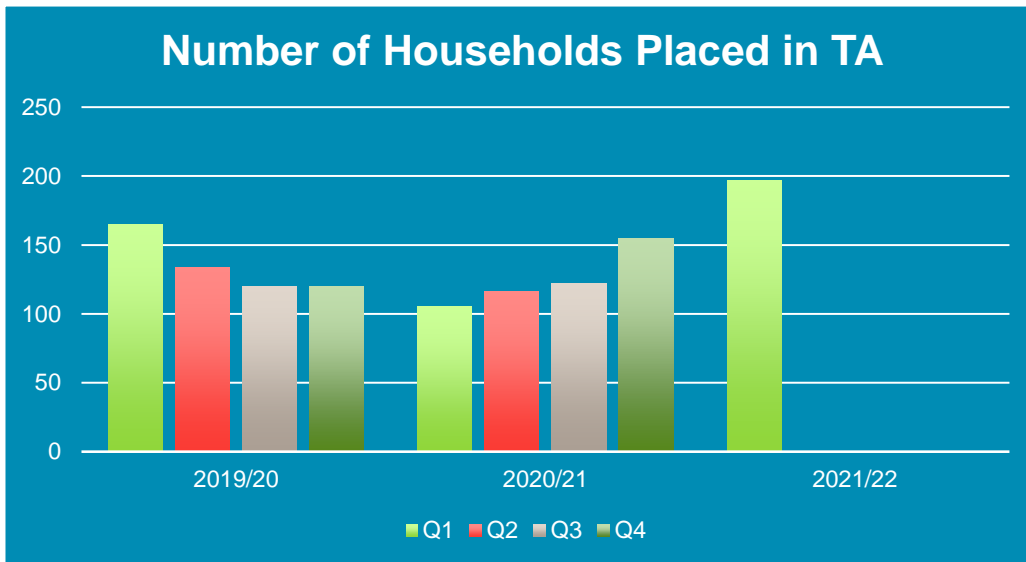
Temporary Accommodation Strategy

1 Background

- 1.1 The Introduction of Oldham Councils inaugural Temporary Accommodation (TA) Strategy sets out how the Council plans to deliver and sustain TA for the next three years, in order to meet its statutory obligations.
- 1.2 Change in legislation coupled with the local pressures pointed to need for the Council to develop a TA Strategy that would set out how the Council would respond to the groundbreaking changes. Hence, the commitment to bring forth a strategy was made in the Council's Housing Strategy 2019.
- 1.3 The development of a TA Strategy was also been motivated by the Council's Housing Options coming back in-house on 1st July 2019. The sudden transition of statutory functions coming back in-house has expedited the requirement for a TA Strategy.
- 1.3 Substantial efforts have already been dedicated to reshaping the outlook of the Council's TA portfolio. In Q1 of 2020/21, shortly after the pandemic struck, the Council managed to reduce hotel and B&B placements by an estimated 75%.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018, placed additional statutory duties on Local Authority (LA) in the form of the new Prevention and Relief Duties.
- 2.2 The Prevention Duty requires the Council to accept a duty and take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage, within 56 days. Where homelessness can't be prevented and a household becomes homeless, the Authority must award the Relief Duty and take reasonable steps to relieve homelessness; it is usually at this stage that interim accommodation is provided to a household.
- 2.3 Since the HRA came into force local authorities, including Oldham, have experienced annual increases in TA placements. Based on homelessness presentations and assessments, this upward trend is expected to continue in 2021/22.
- 2.4 At the end of Q1 2021/22 there were 197 households in the Council's TA, signifying an increase of 19% compared to Q2 2019/20 when Housing Options Oldham came back in-house, there were 165 placed in TA.



- 2.5 The gradual increase in the number of households entering TA consequently places additional pressure on existing limited budgets. Although 2020/21 was an abnormal year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of providing TA is increasing across the region due to lack of available and cost-effective options.
- 2.6 Amid rising TA admittances, the Authority is also under significant pressure to identify suitable move on options in the social and private rented sectors to reduce time spent in TA.

3 Current Challenges

- 3.1 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic placed additional pressures on the Council's TA options namely, the 'Everyone In' directive from Central Government. Under this directive Council's have also been asked to accommodate rough sleepers where there would not normally be a statutory duty to do so. There has been an increase in people and external organisations requesting accommodation under this pre-existing directive above and beyond the commissioned bed spaces the Council has available for this cohort.
- 3.2 As Everyone In gradually phases out it's believed the pressure from the private rented sector (PRS) and the new Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (DAA) will inflict additional pressure on statutory TA provision. Provisions within the DAA obligate Oldham to provide safe accommodation to victims of domestic abuse and renders the use of hotels/B&B unsuitable.
- 3.3 There was a significant increase in domestic abuse presentation in Oldham during the COVID-19 pandemic, this increase was reflected across the region and nationally. In the light of increasing presentations, efforts would have to be doubled down to bring online safe accommodation that meets the legal definition introduced under the Act.
- 3.4 It is important to emphasise that the end of the moratorium ban on bailiff eviction which came to an end on 31st May 2021 is expected to bring forth further challenges as homelessness presentations from the PRS are referred through the Housing and Advice Service as the courts work through their backlogs.

4 Options/Alternatives

- 4.1 One of the aims of Oldham Council's Housing Strategy 2019 was to develop a TA Strategy, and this document seeks to deliver on that priority.
- 4.2 In addition to delivering on the Housing Strategy's ambition, the TA Strategy also delivers upon Oldham Council Economy Business Plan. The Business Plan includes a myriad of interconnected objectives, with successful delivery of some actions closely linked to the development and approval of the TA strategy.
- 4.3 The inaugural Strategy and accompanying delivery plan succinctly set out how the Council plans to continue revamping its portfolio through a multitude of approaches and delivery methods as outlined.
- 4.4 Coinciding with overarching Central Government initiatives and local strategies for example, the emerging Homelessness Strategy, the TA delivery plan sets out Oldham Council's response to intensifying homelessness pressures.
- 4.5 The options available to the Council are as follows.
 - 4.5.1 Option 1 – Do not approve the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2021-24 and accompanying Delivery Plan. This is not the preferred option as it would delay the delivery of a much-needed strategy that would steer the Council towards cost-effective and sustainable delivery of TA.
 - 4.5.2 Option 2 – Approve the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2021-24 and the accompanying delivery plan and commence a procurement exercise to create a TA Provider framework. This is the preferred options as this would enable Oldham Council to begin working towards the desired model for TA.
 - 4.5.3 Option 3 – Approve the Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2021-24 and accompanying delivery plan only. Whilst it is useful to have a TA Strategy and delivery plan without a route to procurement the Council would struggle to deliver the ambitions detailed in the document. Therefore, this option is not preferred.

5 **Preferred Option**

- 5.1 Option 2 is the preferred option.
- 5.2 It is recommended that the Strategy and accompanying delivery plan together with commencement of a procurement exercise, for the purpose of creating a bespoke framework of TA providers the Council is able to call-off to meet its statutory obligations are approved. This will enable the Council to mobilise the delivery plan at pace and scale to ensure statutory compliance and a cost-effective supply chain of TA to meet the needs of our residents.

6 **Consultation**

- 6.1 Following extensive consultation as part of the development of the Council's Housing Strategy, this document has built on this feedback from communities in further consultation with internal officers and the Lead Member for Housing.

7 **Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The decision to formally approve the Oldham Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2021-24 will not in itself incur a financial cost. As the practicalities of implementing the strategy become known, additional reports/business cases will be required and at this point any financial implication will be commented on further in-depth.
- 7.2 However it is acknowledged within the report that the Strategy Delivery Plan is taking a pragmatic approach to tackling temporary accommodation issues within Oldham, acknowledging that resources are finite. It is hoped that by way of a more focused Temporary Accommodation Strategy, the financial pressures in this area can be alleviated and the Council can benefit from more efficient and effective use of its resources
- 7.3 It is hoped that the Council will also supplement these existing financial resources by maximizing results through better partnership working and by exploring the potential to increase external funding.

(John Hoskins)

8 Legal Services Comments

- 8.1 The preferred option 2 is supported. It is important that the Council continues to abide by its statutory requirements in relation to temporary accommodation and of course in the most cost-effective manner as possible. Failure to comply with its requirements under the legislation or indeed not operate in the most cost-effective manner could render the Council open to legal challenge via Judicial review and / or negatively affect the reputation of the Council. (Alex Bougatef – Legal Services)

9. Co-operative Agenda

- 9.1 In addition to delivering on the Housing Strategy 2019, The new TA Strategy embodies the Authority’s corporate vision for improving lives and services in the borough by

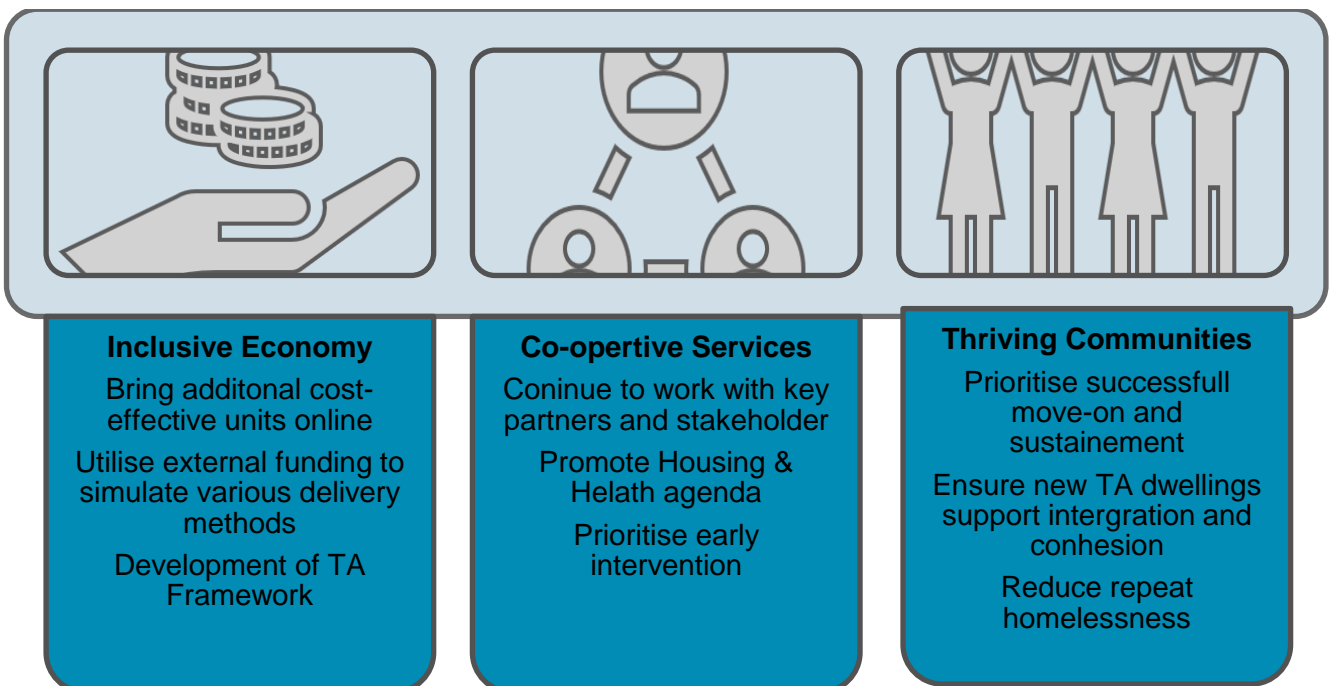


Fig1

- 9.2 The Strategy links seamlessly with the Co-operative values of the Council and each will be consistent throughout the delivery phase to ensure residents, especially those that experience homelessness benefit from the following outcomes:
- Improved health and wellbeing
 - Better quality of TA
 - New Opportunities to deliver additional services

10 **Human Resources Comments**

- 10.1 None

11 **Risk Assessments**

- 11.1 The longer-term risk to the Council around homelessness is affordability for a Statutory Service within its current financial envelope and long-term financial outlook. This policy is consistent with the present Housing Strategy and the financial/ operational implications will become clearer as it is implemented. (Mark Stenson)

12 **IT Implications**

- 12.1 None

13 **Property Implications**

- 13.1 As outlined in the main body of the report - Bryn Cooke

14 **Procurement Implications**

- 14.1 The Commercial Procurement Unit supports the recommendations outlined in the report and will work alongside the Housing Strategy Team to ensure the procurement process is undertaken in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. (Emily Molden).

15 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

- 15.1 None.

16 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

- 16.1 In meeting its statutory accommodation duties the Council will take all necessary steps in consultation with internal colleagues and elected members to minimise disruption when new accommodation is brought online.
- 16.2 Housing Strategy will continue to consult elected members on any new scheme in their wards and outline what, if any mitigation is in place. Existing data and information sharing processes will be utilised and reinforced to add value to this process.

17 **Implications for Children and Young People**

17.1 None. No significant implications beyond our existing statutory obligations.

18 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

18.1 No. The report sets out how the Council plans to meet its statutory obligations efficiently and sustainably.

19 **Key Decision**

19.1 Yes

20 **Key Decision Reference**

20.1 HSG-13-21

21 **Background Papers**

21.1 None.

22 **Appendices**

22.1 None