

EXECUTIVE BOARD
18TH JANUARY, 2021

SUBJECT:
TRANSITIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on:

- The continued impact of COVID -19 on homelessness provision particularly in relation to single people;
- A bid to Welsh Government for funding to assist in developing plans to tackle additional demand; and
- Plans to re-house and support particularly single homelessness people over the next 12 months and into the future.

Recommendations:

1. To note the continued impact of Covid-19 on homelessness provision.
2. To note the outcome of a bid to Welsh Government for additional support and progress made regarding our homeless plans.
3. To approve a variation of the Access to Social Housing Policy to undertake a pilot exercise to help re-housing single homeless households in Council stock including:
 - Using 6 vacant upper floor two-bedroom flats for single people; and
 - Using 3 vacant houses where two single people are given the opportunity to share a tenancy.
4. We investigate buying single person accommodation in the private sector as part of our general plans to increase stock numbers.

Reasons:

To ensure:

- We maximise the opportunities of Welsh Government funding and to develop better homelessness provision moving forward;
- We comply with new Welsh Government guidance which requires us to temporarily house and find permanent accommodation for all homeless single people;
- We meet the immediate demand for temporary accommodation, and we are set up to meet future demands; and
- We have a range of permanent housing options to support the homeless, particularly single people in the future.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: NO

Exec Board Decision Required YES – 18th January, 2021

Council Decision Required NO

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. Linda Evans (Housing Portfolio Holder)

Directorate

Communities

Name of Head of Service:
Jonathan Morgan

Report Author:
Jonathan Willis

Designations:

Head of Homes and Safer
Communities

Advice and Tenancy
Support Manager,

Tel Nos.

01267 228960/

01554 899232

E Mail Addresses:

jnwillis@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

jmorgan@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
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TRANSITIONAL HOMELESSNESS PLAN

Introduction

Welsh Government (WG) have changed the law regarding single people who are homeless and in 'priority need'. The purpose of this change was to try to address rough sleeping in Wales particularly in view of COVID-19.

Carmarthenshire has responded successfully to the changes and new demands by supporting and accommodating large numbers of single people over a six-month period.

Our successful response can be attributed to the way we have focused on improved our housing advice and homelessness provision in recent years.

We have consistently reviewed and reshaped our housing advice service to enable us to focus on homelessness prevention. We have created a "hub" of services tackling the main causes of homelessness before it escalates. The main elements of this Hub include our Housing Advice telephone Line, specialist case workers, provision of dedicated officers who have developed links with the private rented sector and support from homelessness organisations like Shelter.

Context

The change in the law has meant that regardless of a client's previous history, we **must** now temporarily accommodate and rehouse all single people that present as homeless, including prison leavers. This change has caused a significant demand on temporary accommodation and homelessness services in the County in terms of the number of homelessness presentations and the increased complexity of cases.

To meet this new demand, we have had to increase both the amount of temporary accommodation available, the number of housing staff to tackle homeless case work, provide out of hours cover and open our Housing Advice Line on Saturday mornings.

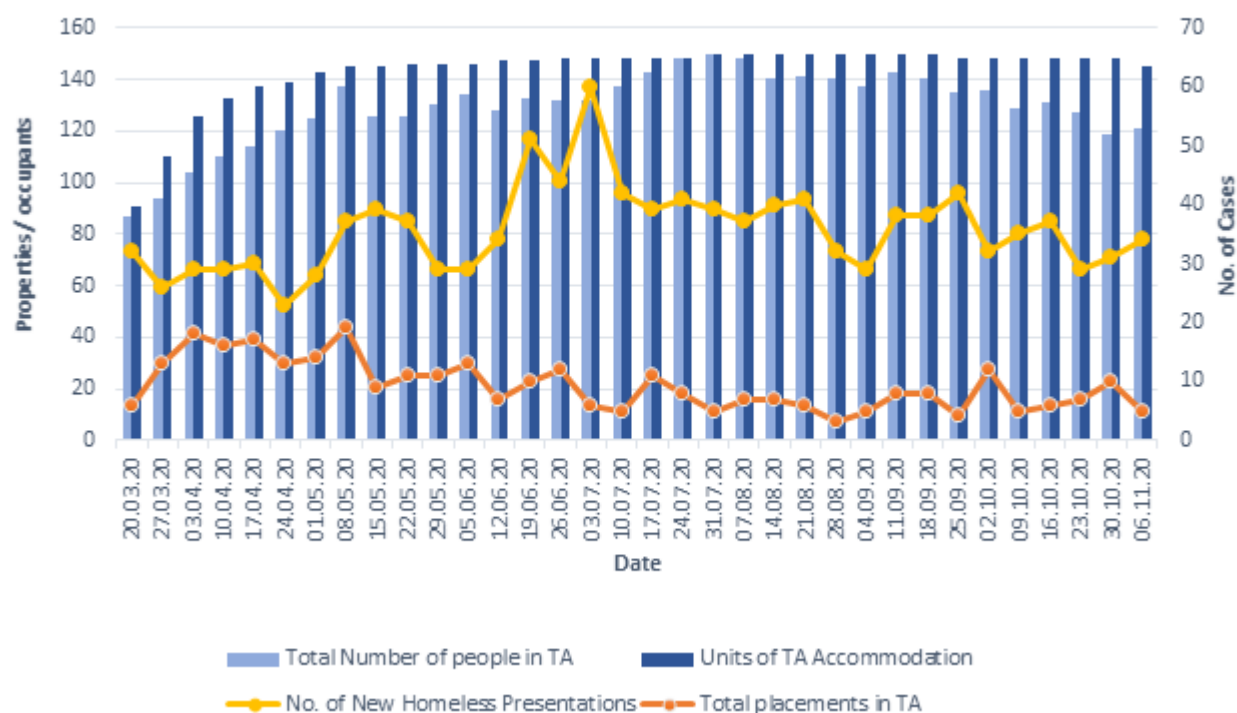
We have been claiming from WG hardship fund targeted at the provision of extra homelessness services. The amounts relate to about £80,000 a month from this fund but which was due to end in July 2020 but has now been extended to the end of March 2021.

WG made available a further £20 million (mixture of revenue and capital) and local authorities were invited to make a bid to aid their recovery and make transitional plans in relation to tackling homelessness because of COVID-19.

The impact on homelessness and temporary accommodation

- The change in the law has increased the number of people we have provided with temporary and emergency accommodation. We normally cater for 70 to 80 households at any one time, but this number has been more than 140 on occasions (Over hundred are single people).
- We have been providing on average 12 new households a week with temporary accommodation, mostly single people (three or four normally).
- The amount of temporary accommodation (pre Covid-19) was insufficient to accommodate the surge in demand, so we have sourced additional units from our own stock, our RSL partners, private landlords and sourced three B&B/ hotel establishments.
- We identified early on the need to manage community cohesion and anti-social behaviour. There is a concern about drug and alcohol misuse and the concentration of people with support needs living in a hotel environment for long periods. We continue to manage the situation using 24-hour security and by working closely with the police.
- We are experiencing a continued demand from single homeless people for temporary and emergency accommodation although the numbers are starting to reduce.
- Private landlords were not able to evict their tenants during the initial and post lockdown periods. This limited the number of homeless presentations from this sector, however, private landlords are now able seek a possession order in the courts with a 6 months' notice period (3 months' notice where there is evidence of anti-social behaviour). This may see demand for temporary accommodation rising again.
- The following graph highlights the impact in terms of the demand on homelessness in terms of new cases and numbers in temporary accommodation:

A Graph to show the demand on Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation during Covid 19



What are our plans for the next 12 months?

- Welsh Government have confirmed the results of our bid in August. We were successful in securing £330,000 capital and £552,000 revenue. We continue to pay for additional B & B provision from the Welsh Government emergency fund which will amount to approximately £350,000 at the end of March 2021.
- At the core of our proposals is to ensure homelessness is brief and non-repeated by the adoption of rapid re-housing principles advocated by WG. Rapid rehousing starts with providing people with long term housing, and offers additional, sometimes intensive, support if needed to help them retain it and thrive.

A summary of key themes, actions and progress is provided below:

Theme	Actions	Purpose	Progress
Provision of Additional Support	To introduce a new "Housing First" support modal	To provide wrap around intensive support targeted at individuals with chaotic lifestyles to help them stay in their tenancy.	We have received £327,000 from WG. We are currently supporting 20 individuals with capacity to support 40 by the year end.
	To provide more intense support to those in temporary accommodation.	Support involves accessing benefits, health care other support	We received £70,000 from WG. We are supporting 80 single

		services and help to find permanent housing.	people through this service currently
	To expand our pre-tenancy service so we support all new tenants who are coming out of temporary accommodation regardless of tenure.	The additional officer will ensure there is continuity of benefits so they can pay rent, help with basic items to start a new home, and provide advice on tenancy conditions.	An additional officer has been appointed and will start a 12-month pilot by the end of November.
	To set up mental health wellbeing support for homeless people.	To meet increased demand for mental wellbeing support for individuals with these issues do not always meet the threshold for statutory services	The new service has been commissioned via Llanelli Mind and will begin by the end of November.
	To provide additional financial support to maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness	To pay rent in advance, bonds or pay off rent arrears where people have been affected by COVID-19	An additional £100,000 has been obtained from WG. 160 tenancies have been supported so far this year.
Provision of More Appropriate Temporary Accommodation	To phase out the hotel accommodation being used currently and to expand the numbers of good quality temporary accommodation.	To provide more appropriate accommodation.	Numbers in B&B have been reduced from 33 to 23 Our pool of rented property for temporary accommodation has also been expanded and currently involves 113 units.
	To decommission temporary accommodation in the Station Rd area.	To disperse to other areas to reduce the levels of anti-social behaviour and crime and support the drive to change the mix of accommodation in Tyisha.	We are seeking a single provider via a formal procurement exercise which we plan to initiate subject to further approval.
Provision of Additional Accommodation	To use small number of 2-bedroom upper floor flats not popular with families for single people.	To use increase immediately accommodation for single person	Subject to approval
	To use a small number of vacant houses where two people can share	To use increase immediately accommodation for single person	Subject to approval
	To incentivise landlords to help us to expand our Social Lettings Agency and target empty private properties.	To use increase immediately accommodation for single person	We received £150,000 from WG. 30 units of accommodation are currently being considered

- The evidence shows that providing accommodation alone is not enough to ensure that tenancies are maintained. To ensure that we are successful we have added a range of additional housing related support prior to, and during a tenancy;
- Bed and breakfast accommodation should not even be a short-term solution for those who find themselves homeless. We will want to phase out the hotel accommodation being used currently. We have already reduced the numbers in bed and breakfast from 33 to 23;
- Our pool of rented property for temporary accommodation has also been expanded and currently involves 113 units (100 units are leased from private landlords 3 from an RSL and 10 units from our own stock). We have a dedicated team to manage the accommodation and they ensure standards are regularly assessed, and occupation monitored;
- There is a concentration of temporary accommodation in the Station Road area. Both our Homelessness Strategy and our plans to regenerate Tyisha have indicated that we will decommission temporary accommodation in the area with the view of dispersing to other areas to reduce the levels of anti-social behaviour and crime. We are seeking a single provider via a formal procurement exercise which we plan to initiate subject to further approval;
- There is a limited supply of single person accommodation (we have approximately 600 in our stock). Last year we allocated 72 Council homes and 71 RSLs homes to single people. We cannot therefore rely on wholly the existing provision of our own stock or RSLs and will also need to engage and incentivise the private rented sector to provide permanent accommodation;
- In terms of our own stock, plans are being made to include more single person accommodation in our new build and affordable home developments. In the meantime, we are proposing we are investigate buying single person accommodation in the private sector as part of our plans to increase stock numbers; and
- In addition, and to deal with the immediate issue, we are proposing we use a small number of 2-bedroom upper floor flats not popular with families for single people. As well as using a small number of vacant houses where two people can share. It is proposed these properties will be dispersed in and around the main townships. Allocations will be made with the approval of the Head of Homes and Safer Communities and the tenancies will be supported and monitored carefully to minimise impact on neighbours etc.

Recommendations

1. To note the continued impact of Covid-19 on homelessness provision.
2. To note the outcome of a bid to Welsh Government for additional support and progress made regarding our homeless plans.
3. To approve a variation of the Access to Social Housing Policy to undertake a pilot exercise to help re-housing single homeless households in Council stock including:
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Detailed Report Attached:

NO

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: **Jonathan Morgan** **Head of Homes and Safer Communities**

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES	YES	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The plan aligns with our Homelessness Strategy by delivering additional accommodation and support for homeless people in a sustained way.

One of our key recommendations is a request to vary our Access to Social Housing Policy.

2. Legal

The plan will ensure we meet our new legal duties in a sustained way moving forward.

Those termed *in priority need*-local authorities have a duty to provide temporary or emergency accommodation if requested. If it is apparent the case cannot be resolved through prevention or the provision of other support the local authority has a duty to provide permanent accommodation (social housing or access to an assured tenancy in the private rented sector.)

3. Finance

- Welsh Government confirmed the results of our bid in August. We were successful in securing £330,000 capital and £552,000 revenue.
- Welsh Government have also agreed to continue to fund additional B & B provision from the Emergency Homelessness Provision. This will amount to approximately £350,000 by the end of March 2021.

5. Risk Management Issues

- Failing to implement our plan will result in significant pressure on homelessness services in the County; and
- Additional accommodation of the right type and appropriate support will not be delivered if the plan is not implemented.

6. Staffing Implications

- Four additional staff have been approved based on secondments and temporary provision for a 12-month period.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Jonathan Morgan

Head of Homes and Safer Communities

1. Scrutiny Committee - Not applicable at this stage.

2. Local Member(s) - Not applicable at this stage.

3. Community / Town Council - Not applicable at this stage.

4. Relevant Partners

A variety of partners have been consulted including appropriate partners and RSLs

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

As above.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD PORTFOLIO
HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED:**

YES

Cllr Linda Evans is in favour of the way forward and actions presented in this report.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Carmarthenshire Homelessness Strategy		http://democracy.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/documents/s27466/Report.html?CT=2