

## Agenda Item 11

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Chris Hunt		
<b>Strategic Management Team Lead Officer</b>	Rachel O'Reilly		
<b>Author</b>	Alison Wilks		
<b>Telephone</b>	01306 870645		
<b>Email</b>	Alison.wilks@molevalley.gov.uk		
<b>Date</b>	27 November 2018		
<b>Ward (s) affected</b>	All	<b>Key Decision</b>	No

<b>Subject</b>	Homelessness Strategy 2015 to 2020 Action Plan Update
<b>Recommendations</b>	
The Cabinet is asked to note the progress made over the last 12 months to achieve the actions contained in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2015-2020.	

<b>Executive Summary</b>	
<p>The Homelessness Act 2002, requires local authorities to publish a five year homelessness strategy. Mole Valley District Council's (MVDC) third strategy was approved by the former Executive on 3 February 2015, when it was agreed that progress be reviewed annually by the Scrutiny Committee and on this occasion it is also being considered by the Cabinet. The last review by the Scrutiny Committee was 14 November 2017.</p> <p>A key feature of the Strategy was to achieve the National Practitioner Support Service Gold Standard for Homelessness. Since the Strategy was approved the first stage peer review was completed with a score of 72% (pass mark 60%) and on the completion of the ten evidence based challenges the Gold Standard was achieved and awarded in June this year. This is a considerable accolade for the Council being one of only 16 local authorities to achieve it and demonstrates the Council's corporate commitment to homelessness, customer care and best practice.</p> <p>Other key achievements during the year were the implementation of the majority of the Homelessness Reduction 2017 from 3 April 2018, reduction in the number of families placed in bed and breakfast, an increase in the number of emergency accommodation units owned by the Council to temporarily house statutory homeless households and 40 new affordable homes completed.</p> <p>A summary of the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the implications were explained to the Committee in the 14 November 2017 report and report to the former Executive on 28 November 2017.</p> <p>The updated Homelessness Strategy Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and includes the recommendations from the peer review and actions required for the ongoing implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p>	

## **Community Wellbeing**

### **Active communities and support for those who need it**

- Improve opportunities for residents to live safe and healthy lives
- Deliver a programme of inclusive sports and wellbeing activities, increasing participation across all generations and targeting those communities most in need
- Foster community spirit, encouraging individuals, families and communities to support each other especially in times of particular need
- Support individuals and families who find themselves unintentionally homeless, seeking to minimize disruption to education and employment
- Work with cycling and other leisure groups to encourage healthy lifestyles, and responsible enjoyment of our parks, open spaces, countryside and roads.

The Cabinet has the authority to determine the recommendation in accordance with its powers to monitor policy objectives and performance targets.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Homelessness Act 2002, requires local authorities to publish a five year homelessness strategy. Mole Valley District Council's third strategy was approved by the former Executive on 3 February 2015. On 20 October 2015, the first six months of operation of the Strategy was reviewed by the former Executive. Upon approval of the Strategy, the former Executive Member confirmed that it would be subject to annual review by the Scrutiny Committee and this is the third such annual review.

## **2.0 PROGRESS**

**2.1** Progress is detailed in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan attached at Appendix 1. The key achievements to date are summarised below.

### **2.2 Key Achievements**

- A key feature of the Strategy was to achieve the National Practitioner Support Service Gold Standard for Homelessness. Since the Strategy was approved the first stage peer review was completed with a score of 72% (pass mark 60%) and on the completion of the ten evidence based challenges the Gold Standard was achieved and awarded in June this year. This is a considerable accolade for the Council Valley being one of only 16 local authorities to achieve it and demonstrates the Council's corporate commitment to homelessness, customer care and best practice.
- Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 from 3 April 2018. An explanation of the Act was given in last year's annual report to the Committee on 14 November 2017 and to the former Executive on 28 November 2018. A summary is attached at Appendix 2.

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided grants for homelessness and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act that has enabled improvements and enhancements to the service. These include: two additional positions over two years which are a Housing Options Officer and a Housing Intelligence Officer (to assist in the detection of housing fraud); improvements to the housing software; when appropriate covering costs to prevent households becoming homeless; and a proposal to appoint to a role for two years to provide money and budgeting advice to prevent homelessness and assist clients affected by the implementation of Universal Credit.
- Reduction in the number of families placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. There have been no families living in this type of accommodation for 6 weeks or more in the last 12 months.
- Two additional self contained emergency accommodation properties have been acquired to increase the Council's stock for homeless households that the Council has a responsibility for under the homelessness legislation.
- Over the lifetime of this strategy the Council has assisted 137 households access accommodation within the private rented sector through the HomeChoice Plus rent deposit bond scheme. At the time of writing there are 150 households living in the private rented sector who have been assisted through the scheme and 62 of these being since April 2017.
- The Customer Excellence accreditation for the Housing Team has been renewed during the year.
- 40 new affordable homes were completed in 2017/18.

### 2.3 Key Homelessness Statistics

	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	30 Sept 2018	Estimate 2018/19
<b>Nos. New Housing Options Cases<sup>1</sup></b>	270	286	365	377	226	472
<b>Nos. Homelessness Preventions / Reliefs<sup>2</sup></b>	96	110	130	221	67	134
<b>Nos. Homelessness Applications</b>	84	85	70	117	146	292
<b>Nos. Homelessness Acceptances</b>	28	41	28	39	20	40
<b>Main reason for Homelessness</b>	End of private sector tenancy	End of private sector tenancy	Family unwilling to accommodate	Family being unwilling to accommodate	Family unwilling to accommodate	
<b>As at -</b>	<b>31 March 2015</b>	<b>31 March 2016</b>	<b>31 March 2017</b>	<b>31 March 2018</b>	<b>30 Sept 2018</b>	
<b>Nos. in Bed and Breakfast and nightly stay</b>	15	11	18	12	6	
<b>Nos. of Families in Bed and Breakfast Over 6 Weeks</b>	0	1	1	0	0	
<b>Total in all Types of Emergency Accommodation</b>	39	40	54	39	33	

### 2.4 The statistics show the trends described below.

- While the table above shows fluctuations, the overall trend is upwards in terms of numbers approaching for housing options advice and applying to the Council as homeless, with a corresponding increase in the number of cases of homelessness prevented.
- From April to September this year there have been 226 new housing options cases compared to 164 for the same period last year. This is an increase of 43% and may be due to a greater capacity within the team to see and record cases, as well as a greater awareness of the Council's Housing Options service resulting in an increase in footfall.

<sup>1</sup> New cases seeking advice

<sup>2</sup> Cases where advice on housing options has been given and homelessness has been prevented or relieved

- The large increase in homelessness applications received (estimated to be a projected increase of 150% by the end of this year), is partly attributable to the change in definition under the Homelessness Reduction Act of when someone is threatened with homelessness, which has increased from 28 to 56 days.
- There are a fewer number of homelessness acceptances compared to applications because the Council's duty during the application period is often discharged in a number of ways. In the majority of these cases homelessness is prevented or relieved for example with accommodation in the private rented sector, directly from the Housing Register or with supported housing. In other cases applications are withdrawn and or the client loses contact with the Council and in a minority of cases a negative decision is made such as intentional homelessness.
- The table also shows that the main reason for homelessness continues to be households being asked to leave accommodation provided to them by family members (52 households). It is worth however noting that the number being asked to leave private rented sector accommodation was second with 41 households approaching the Council for assistance for this reason. The third main reason continued to be a non-violent relationship breakdown.
- The numbers of families living in bed and breakfast for six weeks or more has been zero for more than 12 months. We have in fact only placed one family in non self contained accommodation in the last 12 months and that was for a period of less than seven days.
- 2017/18 saw a large increase (from 36% to 59%) in the percentage of cases where homelessness was able to be prevented or relieved. The main methods of homelessness being prevented was through assisting with access to the private rented sector (63 cases / 29%) and accessing supported accommodation (59 cases / 27%).
- The higher number of cases where homelessness has either been prevented or relieved has had a knock on effect on the number of households that the Council has needed to accommodate in emergency accommodation, which in 2017/18 was down 28% on the previous year.

### **3.0 Homelessness Reduction Act Compliance**

- 3.1 To comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act a factual amendment to reflect the requirements of the Act has been made to the current Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The revenue cost of the homelessness service is met from the Housing budget. There is pressure placed on the budget by the demands of meeting the Council's statutory homelessness responsibilities and in particular by: the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation when there are no alternatives; the up front costs of the private rent scheme, some of which are recovered through loans to clients; and the maintenance of the emergency accommodation stock that is subject to high turnover and consequent greater wear and tear.

- 4.2 The Council is also at financial risk if it is legally challenged on homelessness decisions, for which it may incur legal fees. In addition, if as a result of a mistake by the Council the applicant suffers real hardship, for example if a family is placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks and makes a successful challenge to the Local Government Ombudsman, it can result in the Council paying compensation.
- 4.3 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided funding to assist with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act over two years and the additional benefit of the Flexible Homelessness Grant. The grant in 2018/19 amounts to £174,210 and unspent grant from 2017/18 has been carried over into this year. A further £193,000 will be made available from the MHCLG in 2019/20. There is currently no confirmation of MHCLG grant funding beyond 2019/20.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 The extensive legislative provisions that applied on the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy (principally part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003) are intended to enable councils to identify, prevent and support persons who are homeless in the Council's area. The relevant powers and duties will continue to apply to the implementation of the Strategy throughout its term.
- 5.2 As set out in the report, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 imposed new duties on the Council. The key provisions were brought into force on 3 April 2018.
- 5.3 There remains a wealth of related legislation that will continue to apply throughout the term of the Strategy, including but not limited to the Human Rights Act, the Children's Act and the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- 5.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 (and any subordinate legislation) will also continue to apply.
- 5.5 The obligation to review the Strategy is set out at section 3(6) of the Homelessness Act 2002. Section 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 refers to further obligations and powers, including but not limited to the power to modify the Strategy from time to time. Please refer to the Appendix 1 Action Plan.

## **6.0 Corporate Implications**

### **6.1 Monitoring Officer Commentary**

The Monitoring Officer confirms that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

### **6.2 S151 Officer Commentary**

The review of the Homelessness Strategy does not in itself have direct financial implications. However, the report highlights the success of the Council in controlling a Housing budget that is essentially demand driven and highly dependent on changes in the economic wellbeing of Mole Valley residents. In addition the budget currently benefits from MHCLG grants for homelessness initiatives that have assisted in enhancing and improving the service.

Mole Valley is economically stronger than many areas of the UK, but a change in the economy or in the benefits system can still easily lead to a significant increase in pressure on the housing budget. As such it is potentially one of the Council's most volatile budgets, which needs, and receives, particularly close monitoring and management.

### **6.3 Risk Implications**

A sudden change in the economy that causes mortgage repossessions and private renters to lose their homes is a significant risk. This would increase homelessness applications, place pressure on the Council's stock of emergency accommodation and mean that the Council could possibly become heavily reliant on bed and breakfast accommodation. If families remain in bed and breakfast for more than six weeks the Council is at risk of challenge that is referred to above in the legal implications.

The Council's approach to homelessness is one of prevention and this alongside its past programme of investment to increase its own stock of emergency accommodation, enabling the development of new affordable homes and commitment to improve the homelessness service provides mitigation to reduce the risks identified.

The risks mentioned in the above paragraphs have been assessed and are included in the risk register.

### **6.4 Equalities Implications**

An equalities impact assessment was produced for the Homelessness Strategy and there has been no significant change that requires it to be amended.

### **6.5 Employment Issues**

There are no employment issues relating to this report.

### **6.6 Sustainability Issues**

There are no sustainability issues relating to this report.

### **6.7 Communications**

A press release will be prepared on the progress with the Homelessness Strategy.

### **6.8 Consultation**

Consultation has not been undertaken with partners for this review.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **7.1 Homelessness Strategy 2015 to 2020**

Homelessness statistics

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and associated documents

Gold Standard National Practitioner Support Service documents



Appendix I HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2015 to 2020

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
<p>Reinforce the corporate commitment to the National Practitioner Standard for Homelessness across the Council’s services</p>	<p>To confirm Council’s commitment to the Standard</p>	<p>Approval of the Homelessness Strategy by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet</p>	<p>Cabinet and SLT</p>	<p>The Standard cannot be met if this commitment is not made</p>	<p>The National Practitioner Standard for Homelessness challenge on the corporate commitment to homelessness was achieved in 2016.</p>
<p>Consult the National Practitioner Team on how to achieve the Standard, which includes conducting a peer review of the homelessness service and achieving the ten Standard challenges.</p>	<p>To highlight areas where improvement is required and enable the Council to meet the Standard</p>	<p>Pass with 60% the peer review exercise with other local authorities and complete the submission of evidence for the ten challenges</p>	<p>Housing options team; appointed consultant; other local authorities; stakeholder agencies</p>	<p>That the Standard is not reached and that service requirements are below that of other Surrey local authorities</p>	<p>The peer review was completed with a 72% score in 2015. The pass mark was 60%.</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
<p>Ensure that there is a robust plan in place for the implementation of Universal Credit. This will cover: how we support people to apply for benefits; arrangements for monitoring Universal Credit payments and the rent contribution; how to arrange for housing payments to be paid to direct to landlords; and knowledge on how to help households apply for a range of benefits</p>	<p>To minimise the impact of welfare reform on the most vulnerable and have a planned approach with the HomeChoice Plus scheme</p>	<p>Making contact with local links within the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure simple easy dialogue and communication on vulnerable cases</p>	<p>Housing Options, DWP and Housing Benefit</p>	<p>Rent arrears could accrue; financial hardship could occur; landlords through the HomeChoice Plus service could be lost and homelessness could occur</p>	<p>Housing staff have received training on this. Private sector landlords have also received information at the landlords' forum from the DWP on Universal Credit. The roll out of Universal Credit has been slow and subsequent actions have been delayed. It is now due to go live on all new cases from 24 October 2018. A further private rented sector landlord seminar on the subject is planned for 29 November 2018.</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Licensing and accreditation of private rented sector landlords	To ensure good quality private rented sector provision within Mole Valley and elsewhere and ensure a professional HomeChoice Plus service	Consider schemes already in place both locally and nationwide to affiliate too; consult with the landlords forum regarding this.	Housing Options, Environmental health, local landlords	The HomeChoice Plus scheme becomes stagnant and poor quality private rented accommodation is allowed to occur	This action has been put on hold, as we have been concentrating on supporting landlords with legislative changes which have affected this sector, such as welfare reform and requirements on landlords such as right to rent.
Implement Local Pad software	To update our private rented sector landlord and property database and provide a forum for local landlords	On receipt of development timetable and demonstration system share with landlord focus group before full implementation	Housing options	Rent deposit bond and rent in advance information is subject to inaccuracies. Gas safety certificates are not highlighted as needing to be renewed.	Local Pad has been installed and launched for private sector landlords in 2015

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure that clients are referred to support services.	To ensure clients benefit from a range of services that may meet their needs	Staff to be aware of all services and how to make referrals	Housing options	Clients are not supported and may fail in accommodation and become homeless	All clients have support needs identified at housing options interviews and through continuing case work. Referrals are then made to appropriate agencies. This is monitored through case work meetings and 1-2-1s with staff
To monitor and promote the use of the Housing Options Wizard (HOW)	To ensure clients make maximum use of the wizard to help prevent homelessness early	Promote from time to time on the Council's website and newsletter	Housing options	Clients delayed in seeking advice	<b>Ongoing</b> throughout the strategy period. Adapt the HOW and provide more detailed information based on individuals' circumstances would require additional cost and this needs to be assessed.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure that all clients have a written summary of the advice they are given	To ensure all clients receive clear understandable advice	Staff to be trained on how to incorporate this practice in their day to day work	Housing options	Clients forget the advice they have been given by the Council and are unclear of their rights	This is both available following an initial housing options interview as well as through the HOW online. This is monitored through Staff 1-2-1s.
Seek to adopt a no second night out approach to rough sleepers within Mole Valley by writing a new policy and reconnection criteria	To ensure that no household has to spend a second night on the streets and meet the Standard	Write a new policy in conjunction with the Surrey- wide re-connection policy developed by Guildford and already in operation.	Housing Options; Other Surrey authorities; Pitstop; Leatherhead Start; Health; local hostel and supported housing providers; Respond; Catalyst	That an individual could become entrenched in rough sleeping and suffer a deterioration in health	Through the East Surrey Outreach Service (eSOS) this has been adopted and we have also adopted a reconnection policy. We have achieved the Gold Standard requirement on this challenge.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure that vulnerable clients housed in supported accommodation have a housing pathway	To ensure that vulnerable care leavers have a pathway that will allow them to succeed in living in independent accommodation	Improve procedures to ensure a pathway is included for all cases	Housing options and partner agencies	That vulnerable clients fail when housed in independent accommodation and become homeless	Completed
Provide a 'flat mate' function through our HomeChoice internet pages to help single people and couples to find rooms to rent within and outside the district	Increase the availability and ease of access for single people and couples to find affordable accommodation in Mole Valley in the private sector	Develop Localpad to include a flatmate search option	Housing Options	That non statutory homeless households have limited housing options available to them and become homeless	<b>October 2018</b> – this action has been delayed due to our wish for the implementation of Universal Credit for single people to be more bedded in before we introduce these clients to landlords within the HomeChoice scheme.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Signpost clients facing mortgage repossession to the Getwise service, CAB for money advice and other appropriate support services	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	Getwise has ended and all clients are referred to CAB for money advice (whether relating to mortgages or other financial problems)
Refer clients facing mortgage repossession to government schemes available	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer staff to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	<b>October 2018</b> – There are no current government schemes in operation, however we do work with clients to relieve and prevent their mortgage issues through discussions with mortgage providers and other housing options. We have passed the Gold standard on this matter.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Negotiate with mortgage lenders to prevent homelessness where possible	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer staff to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	<b>October 2018</b> – We work with clients to relieve and prevent their mortgage issues through discussions with mortgage providers and other housing options. This has been passed through the Gold standard.
The Homelessness Strategy to be reviewed annually by the Scrutiny Committee.	To ensure the Homelessness Strategy is delivered	Report progress annually to the Scrutiny Committee	Housing Options Manager	The Standard and strategy actions are not achieved	<b>Ongoing</b> - The former Executive approved the strategy in 2015 and the Scrutiny Committee reviewed it after the first six months and in November 2016 and 2017. Next review November 2018

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
<p>To ensure where possible that bed and breakfast accommodation is not used for 16 or 17 year olds and that emergency beds through Surrey County Council and Surrey nightstop are fully utilized.</p>	<p>To ensure 16 and 17 year olds are not inappropriately housed in bed and breakfast</p>	<p>Work with partners and ensure the multi-agency panel meets to make best use of the accommodation available for young people</p>	<p>Housing options</p>	<p>Young people are inappropriately accommodated</p>	<p>Throughout the strategy period to date no 16/17 year olds have been placed in bed and breakfast. The Gold standard challenge was achieved on this action in 2016.</p>
<p>Complete the acquisition of additional self contained emergency accommodation units</p>	<p>To prevent the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households with a priority need</p>	<p>Purchase properties on the open market</p>	<p>Housing Options and Property team</p>	<p>Households will need to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation until alternative accommodation is available in the private rented sector or in Council managed emergency housing.</p>	<p>Eight properties have been acquired and two existing corporate properties have been converted for emergency accommodation. The acquisition programme is completed.</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Look to source nightly stay and bed and breakfast placements in Mole Valley or the surrounding areas	To restrict the need for the use of bed and breakfast accommodation outside the district	Contact local providers in Mole Valley and discuss availability, provision and requirements. Work with other Surrey local authorities to identify providers	Housing options and other Surrey authorities	Households are placed in bed and breakfast or nightly stay accommodation outside the district and away from support networks	<b>Ongoing</b> – since the inception of the action plan we have worked with one provider within the district however there are no cooking facilities.
Ensure that no household with dependent children is in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks	To provide suitable accommodation options for homeless households and prevent the Council breaching the Homelessness Suitability of Accommodation Order 2013.	Source greater numbers of nightly stay accommodation; discharge duties to all suitable homeless clients into the private rented sector to free up Council owned emergency accommodation units; monitored by weekly reports to the Cabinet lead for Housing.	Housing options	The Council is in breach of the Homelessness Suitability of Accommodation Order 2013	<b>Ongoing</b> – During the 2018/19 financial year there have been no households out of those placed who have been in bed and breakfast for over 6 weeks

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Develop an average of 50 new affordable homes per year	To ensure that there is a flow of new affordable homes to prevent bottle necks of households waiting for accommodation	Work with local housing associations to enable new homes and provide financial investment where needed	Strategic Housing Manager	Stagnation of the social housing and emergency accommodation and inevitable use of bed and breakfast if homelessness prevention measures have been exhausted	<b>Ongoing</b> - 40 affordable homes completed in 2017/18
Assist those affected by the spare room subsidy to find lodgers through advice on advertising of rooms available	To prevent financial hardship to those households affected by this welfare reform whilst also assisting non priority households with accessing lodgings	Consider development of LocalPad to allow advertisement of rooms to let; promote HomeChoice Plus to these potential landlords.	Housing options	Financial hardship is caused to those affected by the spare room subsidy, leading to rent arrears and homelessness; non-priority households have fewer housing options available to access	<b>October 2018</b> – this action has been delayed due in order to complete the gold standard. The delay has also been due to waiting for Universal Credit for single people to be bedded in before using the HomeChoice scheme.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
<p>Work closely with Leatherhead Pitstop to provide a short term directed and focused service to those homeless or socially excluded service users and to reconnect to areas where a local connection is held</p>	<p>To ensure that the service does not lead to an increase in homelessness within Mole Valley and helps individuals to move on and ensure that service users are reconnected to areas where they have a local connection and are able to access the most amount of services. To prevent service users to Pitstop rough sleeping in the Mole Valley area.</p>	<p>Write a new policy in conjunction with the Surrey- wide re-connection policy developed by Guildford and already in operation. Offer training opportunities to Pitstop staff to ensure understanding of options and housing / homelessness issues</p>	<p>Housing Options, Pitstop, Other Surrey authorities; Leatherhead Start; Health; local hostel and supported housing providers; Respond; Catalyst</p>	<p>Pitstop becomes an organisation where homeless individuals congregate and do not progress into accommodation. That service users of Pitstop rough sleep in Mole Valley. That option available from the areas that they have a local connection are not accessed and utilised.</p>	<p>The Pitstop was unable to find suitable premises and the trustees of the charity decided in 2016 not to continue its activities. <b>This action is no longer relevant.</b></p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Speak with local banks regarding the possibility of ring fencing monies for rent once Universal Credit begins	To minimise the effect of welfare reforms such as Universal Credit for households who need assistance with budgeting and to give greater security to landlords within the private rented sector	Visit local banks and discuss ways of referring and assisting clients set up jam jar accounts.	Housing Options	That Universal Credit leaves households with budgeting problems in financial hardship and that rent is not paid leading to homelessness	<b>October 2018</b> - The roll out of Universal Credit has been slow and subsequent actions have been delayed. Discussions will be held with the CAB regarding this action.
Consider closer links with the Surrey Credit Union	To ensure effects of welfare reforms are minimised for households at risk of loan sharks. To investigate the use of jam jar accounts	Discussions with Surrey Credit Union regarding referrals for clients	Housing Options and Surrey Credit Union	That households borrow money from other sources at high interest rates and suffer financial hardship	<b>October 2018</b> – Meetings occurred with Surrey Credit Union however they have moved their focus towards loans rather than jam jar and simple accounts. <b>This action is no longer being pursued.</b>

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS - PEER REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS					
ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Annually conduct a review of service costs compared to the rest of Surrey	To ensure that service costs are monitored and comparisons made with other Surrey authorities	Compare figures on B&B expenditure; salary levels; rent deposit and rent in advance spend with other Housing Options Managers	Housing Options	That service costs are unchecked and put the Council at financial risk	<b>This is updated each financial year end</b>
Ensure all appropriate funding streams are investigated on an ongoing basis to assist in homelessness prevention services	To maximise funding opportunities for the service	Monitor grants and funds available throughout the year from various sources	Strategic Housing manager	That non statutory services are left without funding and therefore need to end	Ongoing projects such as eSOS may require additional funding and will be applied for when available.
Ensure MVDC's corporate service standards are available on the housing section of the website	To give transparency to the public and other agencies	Add a page to the Council's website within Housing to highlight service standards and monitor progress against these	Affordable Housing Officer and Housing Options Manager	That the service does not perform to the expected standard and is unmonitored	Available through the Customer Care pages of the Council's website which is more appropriate than on the housing

		standards			pages
ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Introduce an annual Homelessness Forum for stakeholders	To update stakeholders on current performance against the homelessness strategy and receive support on actions where appropriate and feedback	An annual meeting	Housing Options Manager and stakeholder agencies	That stakeholders are unaware of the strategy and work of the service and do not engage with actions	<b>October 2018</b> – This will be introduced at the beginning of next financial year when the new Homelessness Strategy process is launched.
Consider implementing a system with the Customer Services Unit (CSU) to monitor time spent for Housing Options clients from arrival to being seen in reception.	To ensure that good customer service is provided	Investigate system requirements and possibilities for monitoring this	CSU, IT and Housing Options	Clients to the service are waiting unacceptable periods of time to be seen by housing officers without managers being aware	<b>October 2018</b> - There is no viable way of consistently monitoring this action. <b>This action is no longer being pursued.</b>
Advise customers of Wi-Fi ability to be able to self investigate options before, during and after interviews	To facilitate Housing Clients investigating their options on their portable devices whilst in the building	WiFi sign in reception	CSU	Clients are unable to promptly respond to options discussed	This action has been implemented

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure all staff receive regular interview refresher training and updates on Housing options and homelessness legislation and case law	To ensure that staff are legally informed and updated and that skills are updated regularly	Internal and external training through various agencies including NPSS	Housing Options Manager	Officer skills reduce; poor advice or options given;	Ongoing – an annual update on case law and legislation is received by staff through team training sessions and reading publications.
Ensure all case files are consistently dealt with by officers with full interview notes and enquiries made within service guidelines	To ensure that all cases are consistently dealt with and able to be picked up by any given officer. To ensure that enquiries and decisions are made promptly to prevent homelessness and establish statutory responsibilities	Regular file reviews both at 1-2-1's and at case closure by senior officer	Housing Options Officers and Housing Options Manager	Team resilience diminishes to cover case work in officer absence. Homelessness increases where prompt enquiries not made. Bed and Breakfast costs increase due to time delays in decision making	<b>October 2018</b> – all housing options cases are monitored through 1-2-1's to ensure that interview notes are fully completed and up to date.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure that risk is always assessed for any applicant approaching due to violence or previous threats of violence	To manage risk and safeguard Housing (and other Council) officers	Officers to regularly check alerts on Abrisas and update where required. Officers to be aware and use the soon to be implemented Council wide Clients of Concern list	Housing Options team, Paul Holliday	That staff are placed in situations of risk with clients without adequate safeguards	Ongoing. As well as marking on our housing system where there are risks posed from clients, there is also a corporate client database which staff can access. Staff are aware of the violence at work procedure and when to use it.
Ensure applicants goals and preferred options are included on initial assessment form.	To understand and manage customer expectations whilst attempting to meet the desired outcomes	Additional field added to initial assessment form	Housing Options	That clients aspirations are not met, understood or managed and that complaints arise from staff not meeting clients expectations	Completed. This is now part of the initial housing options form and is monitored at 1-2-1 meetings

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Consider a marketing strategy for housing options service	To promote the work of the team and reach out to a wider clients base who we may then prevent from becoming homeless	Promotional posters in stakeholder agencies and adverts in journals or papers	Housing Options Manager and Communications Team	That households are unaware of our service at an early stage and therefore only approach when in crisis. Homelessness prevention opportunities are missed and bed and breakfast accommodation usage increase	An article has been included in the Mole Valley newsletter and will be repeated from time to time.
Review and update the customer feedback process	To obtain feedback on the service to monitor customer satisfaction and to guide and influence service improvements	Investigate web based feedback options (ie. Survey monkey)	Housing Options Manager, CSU	Lack of knowledge on the customer experience prevents service improvements occurring and leads to increase in complaints	<b>October 2018 - Ongoing</b> Although the Customer Excellence programme is no longer being pursued the Housing team will continue to investigate different customer feedback processes in the

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	coming year TARGET DATE
Review existing service level agreements and identify where new service level agreements are needed with partners	To ensure that all Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are relevant and highlight gaps where SLAs are required	Identify all areas where SLA is required; review those in place and enter into discussions where these are not present to put these in place	Housing Options Manager; relevant stakeholders	Joint working becomes based on personal relationships rather than standardised procedures and SLAs. When staff leave these relationships sever and service delivery is affected	<b>October 2018</b> All SLAs are reviewed during their life and re-written when new tenders are awarded.
Review the framework structure and procedure around Housing options casework	To identify and gaps in our current framework structure and look at where service improvements can be made	Consider Options casework structure from other authorities within the Gold Standard process to compare and look to implement areas of good practice. Consider the NPSS toolkit	Housing Options	The framework does not provide clear concise structure to enable case work to be undertaken and becomes unfit for purpose. Clients become homeless due to gaps in the casework process	<b>October 2018</b> This has been reviewed since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and is governed largely by the government monitoring tool known as H-CLIC



### Summary of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and Implications

- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) received Royal Assent on 27 April 2017, and will place increased duties on local housing authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness. It will amend the current duties under the Housing Act 1996
- The changes will not come into effect immediately as councils will need time to prepare. The Government also has to issue comprehensive new guidance on how to deliver the duties as well as publish a commencement order. Officers expect the changes will take effect in April 2018 with a new Code of Guidance being issued later this year.
- The HRA transforms the help councils are expected to provide to all homeless people. It aims to ensure provision of new support to people who aren't entitled to help under the current system. It requires councils to try and prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, intervening early and encouraging other public sector bodies to actively assist in identifying and referring those at risk of homelessness.

#### The key provisions include:

- **A prevention duty:** This is a continuation of the current duty to prevent homelessness although the time period for this to be triggered has increased from 28 days before a household are homeless to 56 days, provided they are eligible for assistance on the basis of their immigration status. This duty will arise irrespective of their connection to the area.
- **A relief duty:** a new duty for councils to try and resolve the homelessness of people who are already homeless by helping them to secure accommodation. To qualify for help they must be eligible for assistance on the basis of their immigration status **and** have a connection to the local area, otherwise they can be referred to another local authority.
- **Measures to incentivise cooperation:** People being helped under the prevention and relief duties will be expected to take reasonable steps to resolve their own homelessness and cooperate with the Council's attempts to assist them. Should they deliberately and unreasonably refuse to cooperate the duty owed to them by the Council at any given stage of the process may end.
- **A duty to refer:** a new duty on other public services to refer people to the local housing authority if they are working with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- **Continued temporary accommodation protection for families:** councils are required under existing law to accommodate homeless families, if they meet a number of tests and the HRA maintains these protections in cases where councils are unable to help families under the new prevention and relief duties.

### **Reviews of the Council's decisions**

- Clients will have increased rights to seek reviews of the Council's decisions at each stage of the assessment process and over any aspect of the personal housing plan that they disagree with.