

Ashford Borough Council

Decisions taken by the Cabinet on 28th November 2019

Minute No	Topic	Decision
216	Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (Implementation & Current Position)	<p>The Portfolio Holder introduced the report which advised that the Homelessness Reduction Act had been implemented on the 3rd April 2018 to place a greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. Whilst the introduction of the Act had resulted in an 11% increase in homelessness approaches to the Council, the numbers of households accepted as homeless had significantly reduced from 160 cases in 2017/18 to 71 cases in 2018/19. In addition the number of preventions had risen in the first year of implementation from 148 in 2017/18 to 293 in 2018/19. The report provided an overview of the current position relating to homelessness in the Borough, as well as some data on the number of clients who had accessed the Council's service. The report also reviewed the Council's experiences in relation to the new Act so far and set out an Action Plan for tackling homelessness.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder and Housing Operations Manager drew attention to the costs of temporary accommodation and the methodology for counting the number of rough sleepers and said that both of these were key issues for the Service and on which they needed to remain vigilant.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader asked for more information on changes from KCC that were referenced in the report so that he could make further enquiries in his role as a KCC Member. The Head of Housing advised that as part of a re-tendering in October 2018, KCC had made significant changes to contracts for adult, children and ex-offenders in supported accommodation. In the longer term, there was a strong likelihood that this would impact county wide, with more single vulnerable people who might not meet the statutory threshold for services approaching Ashford and less accommodation/provision available for them. In addition, KCC had altered the criteria for those able to access floating support services. Only households that were identified as being at threat of homelessness were now eligible for the service. In effect, there</p>

		<p>would be no early intervention from this service until matters might be approaching a crisis point. It was therefore likely that this would exacerbate the problems of homelessness and rough sleeping. She advised that colleagues across Kent were working together, and with Social Services and Public Health, to try and find solutions to these problems. A Member said that in her role with the Street Pastors she had been extremely alarmed at the young age of some of the rough sleepers in the town centre. She asked about Belgic Court and how that appeared to have been empty for a number of months, whilst it could have helped with this situation. The Head of Housing advised that Belgic Court had been one of the casualties of the KCC re-tendering. Fortunately ABC had worked hard with KCC and Golding Homes to find a solution for Belgic Court and would be providing accommodation for young parents, removing up to eight households from temporary accommodation.</p> <p>A Member asked about the Council's current relationship with Porchlight. The Head of Housing advised that the Council continued to work closely with Porchlight, and a number of other partner agencies, on homelessness and rough sleeping issues. The Council had previously provided Porchlight with funding each year for a part time outreach worker solely for Ashford. This had been the case for a number of years, but with the increased rough sleeper activity emerging over the past two years, it was felt that a full time post was now merited and it had been agreed to bring that post in-house and to take more direct control and ownership of outreach work and statutory Homelessness Reduction Act assessments.</p> <p>In response to a question about the number of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, the Portfolio Holder was pleased to confirm that this was currently zero.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>That (i) the progress made since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 be noted.</p>
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