

To: Cabinet

Date: 21 June 2023

Report/Comments of: Scrutiny Committee

Title: Scrutiny Feedback to Cabinet – Homelessness

<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT CONSIDERED</b>	
<b>Report Title:</b>	Homelessness
<b>Purpose/Description of Report:</b>	The report provides an update on the work undertaken by the council to prevent and relieve homelessness, and to assist households who experience homelessness across Melton.
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Cllr R Child, Scrutiny Committee Chairman
<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr R Browne, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services

## 1. Introduction and Overview

The Scrutiny Committee met on 14 March 2023 to consider a report updating Members on the work undertaken by the council to prevent and relieve homelessness, and to assist households who experience homelessness across Melton.

The report covered the following: legal context; budget; temporary accommodation; cases, service demand and collaboration and general service challenges. The report was supported with a presentation from the lead officer.

## 2. Summary of Feedback/Recommendations for Cabinet Consideration

- Officers were thanked for the work they do and were told that the work is appreciated by partners and the community.
- A Member mentioned that in their experience of encountering residents who are homeless or facing homelessness, the feedback they have given regarding the response from the Council has been positive. In

the opinion of the Member, the actions that have been taken have been above and beyond what was expected.

- Concern was raised regarding the number of people living in temporary accommodation, however Members were informed that getting people out of temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation remains a top priority. Although Members were reminded that the permanent accommodation has to be suitable, and the Council believes someone is a priority need, then temporary accommodation will be provided until suitable accommodation is found, in order to discharge legal duties under the homelessness legislation.
- A comment was made by a Member that the Council is doing an exceptional job in regards to homelessness. The Member felt that the Council could get a better idea of what the level of need is through more engagement with food bank providers.
- It was queried whether the banding review (new allocations policy) has had an impact on homelessness, however Members were informed that the new policy was implemented over a year ago and that there have been few complaints as a result of the review. Officers were confident that the review had not impacted on homelessness rates and applicants impacted by the review had been encouraged to discuss their circumstances with the housing options team. Officers committed to providing some further information to the committee on how many people were negatively impacted by the new policy/banding changes.
- Members welcomed the clarification that Armed Forces Veterans are treated as a priority need when presenting as homelessness.
- The lack of supported accommodation in the Borough was raised as a risk.
- The concern of out of area people being housed within the Borough was raised. It was explained that the people would be isolated from friends and family and would not have the basics or access to services. Officers confirmed that they would always look at suitable properties in suitable locations relevant to each case and that availability of accommodation was a key consideration. It was also explained that in supporting homeless applicants into accommodation, referrals to charities and appropriate funds are made to help provide some household items. Officers confirmed that in temporary accommodation, the basics were provided.
- Concern was raised regarding the houses (private rented sector) that can't be brought up to standard due to new guidelines around energy efficiency. The Committee were informed that the Council are aware of the risk in this area. Officers advised that it hoped to increase engagement with landlords through a landlord forum.

- A Member stated that they do not think it is helpful to house a person in a property where everything has been stripped out, however it was noted that this is usually done for health and safety reasons.
- Complaints have been raised with Members regarding why some people seeking assistance do not receive a call back. Members were reassured that all people seeking assistance are registered with a duty officer and their case is processed in the appropriate manner.

**Written by: Scrutiny Committee Chairman in consultation with Members of the Scrutiny Committee**