

| Housing Select Committee | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------|---|
| Title | Key Housing issues | | |
| Key decision | No | Item no | 6 |
| Wards | All | | |
| Contributors | Executive Director for Customer Services | | |
| Class | Part 1 | 7 September 2016 | |

1 Summary

1.1 Key Housing Issues is a general report that aims to update the Housing Select Committee on current and new issues important to housing.

2 Report on Homelessness - Communities and Local Government Select Committee

2.1 The Communities and Local Government Select Committee launched an inquiry into homelessness – with a particular focus on rough sleeping – in December 2015 and the findings were published in August 2016. It is the first Parliamentary inquiry into homelessness since 2005 and sought to get a clearer picture of the levels of homelessness and understand the pressures affecting homeless people. Lewisham submitted evidence to the Committee in a joint submission with other boroughs in the South East London region.

2.2 The report highlights the following:

- Homelessness is increasing, with the greatest increase in those who have been homeless for two consecutive years. The principal cause is the lack of availability of housing which is affordable to households who become homeless.
- There are three different types of homelessness including; rough sleeping, those in temporary accommodation and night shelters and people with short-term arrangements with friends and family – the ‘hidden homeless’.
- The Committee was supportive of local authorities and recognises the challenges they face. However, there is evidence of varying levels of support to vulnerable people across the country and the evidence of those who are not priority need being poorly served is unacceptable.

2.3 The report's conclusions and recommendations state:

- A Cross-Departmental Government strategy is needed in which “all Departments need to contribute to the ending of homelessness by subscribing to a common approach”.
- The impact of welfare reforms of recent years has increased pressure on the levels of homelessness.
- The Government should consider setting a statutory duty to provide meaningful support to single homeless people who can prove a local connection.
- Local Housing Allowances levels should also be reviewed so that they more closely reflect market rents.
- Government should review and reinforce the statutory Code of Practice ensuring it outlines clearly the levels of service local authorities must provide. This will ensure a sympathetic and sensitive service for all.
- The Government should review the level of refuge and hostel accommodation and consider providing additional resources for further provision with regard to victims of domestic abuse.
- Housing benefit recipients should have the option of their benefit being paid directly to the landlord to reduce likelihood of arrears and increase landlord confidence.
- Landlords should be encouraged to offer longer Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreements to increase stability, with the tenants allowed to break tenancy early without penalty if they want to move.

2.4 The Committee also noted its support for a current Private Members Bill which would introduce a ‘prevention duty’ to homeless households. The text of this Bill has yet to be published, but it is expected to be based on the Welsh Government’s 2014 Housing Act as well as recent work by Crisis. The Welsh model created a new duty for Welsh Councils to provide advice and support for anyone at risk of homelessness, regardless of whether they are deemed to be in priority need under existing laws. As this created a new duty, the Welsh government provided additional funding for Councils when it introduced this legislation.

2.5 A new duty to prevent homelessness would have a substantial impact on councils in London. It would significantly increase the case load of the housing needs services and it is also likely it would increase the number of households in temporary accommodation.

2.6 Officers will monitor the outcome of the CLG’s report and responses from government.

3 Update on the New Government and legislative change

- 3.1 As part of the Prime Minister's new cabinet, Sajid Javid MP was appointed as Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 14th July 2016. Gavin Barwell MP was also appointed as Minister of State for Housing and Planning Minister for London.
- 3.2 Initial statements from the new Government have indicated that they will proceed with the housing policies introduced by the previous Government. Before the change in government, it had been expected that the regulations setting out the detail of measures such as Pay to Stay and High Value Voids would be published in the summer before Parliament went into recess. It is now expected that draft regulations will be published in September or October.

4 PLACE/Ladywell opens and wins two architecture awards

- 4.1 The residential units at PLACE/Ladywell were handed over to Lewisham Homes on 18th August 2016 and homeless families who were previously in nightly paid accommodation moved in on the same day.
- 4.2 PLACE/Ladywell was awarded both The Mayor's Prize and 'The Temporary' award at the New London Architecture Awards held on 7 July. When selecting the Mayor's Prize, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan described PLACE/Ladywell as "inspirational" and an example of

"... an imaginative borough using innovative design to build affordable homes for Londoners that really need them, as well as affordable workspace for creative start-ups, and community space for use by local people. It shows how excellent architecture can create more social value, for less cost".
- 4.3 As well as providing much better temporary accommodation, PLACE/Ladywell will also save money by reducing the need for expensive nightly paid/bed and breakfast temporary accommodation. This will save approximately £170,000 per year over what would be spent to house these families in very expensive nightly paid "bed and breakfast" type accommodation.

5 Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme

- 5.1 Conflict in Syria began over 5 years ago and continues today with no signs of imminent resolution. Since the conflict began in March 2011 more than 250,000 Syrian people, predominantly civilians have been killed. It is estimated that over 4.5 million Syrian people have fled the country since the start of the conflict, one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history. In September 2015 the Prime Minister announced that the UK Government would resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 under the Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme, known as the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP). As of March 2016 just over 2400 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the UK, 50 of these households have been resettled in London.

- 5.2 On 7th September a report is going to Mayor and Cabinet to seek approval for the resettlement of up to 10 Syrian refugee households in Lewisham. To date, 2,400 Syrians have been resettled in the UK across 71 local authorities, with 50 households having been resettled in London. It is currently estimated that pledges have been made nationwide to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees.
- 5.3 Accommodation for Syrian refugees in Lewisham will be sourced from the private rented sector (PRS) and from offers of community support in line with the approach of other participating London boroughs. All London boroughs who have accepted Syrian refugees as part of the SRP to date have accommodated households in PRS accommodation rather than social housing.
- 5.4 The outline time table for accepting and resettling cases is set out below. Once a household is accepted then it is typically 6-8 weeks before their arrival. Coordination support and commissioned support services need to be in place ahead of arrival in the UK.

| Time Table for Lewisham Syrian Refugee Resettlement | |
|---|--|
| Date | Activity |
| September 2016 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter into formal agreement with the Home Office post Full Council meeting • Establish a multi-agency support panel (including housing, health, DWP, education, resettlement, support service provider and other third sector agencies) |
| October – December 2016 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procure resettlement services • Work with the Voluntary Sector, Landlords and agencies known to the Council to identify suitable accommodation at LHA rates |
| January – March 2017 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree households with the Home Office • Begin accepting Syrian refugee households |

- 5.5 The Government has just over £20,000 in resettlement funding available per household member across 5 years to be paid directly to local authorities. There will be additional funding available for 'high cost cases' where families have additional needs concerning social care, education and medical care.
- 5.6 On the 13th of July Lewisham hosted a Lewisham community groups event to address the issue of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Lewisham. It was agreed that a Lewisham Syrian Refugee Offer would be developed and that voluntary sector and community sector offers of support and sharing of information would be coordinated through the development of a Directory.
- 5.7 Officers will update Housing Select Committee as Lewisham's offer for the resettlement of Syrian refugees develops.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

7 Financial implications

7.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on current housing issues. As such, there are no specific financial implications arising from the report itself.

7.2 As firmer details become available, in particular regarding the new legislation, officers will report back to Members with the implications of each issue.

8 Crime and disorder implications

8.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

9 Equalities implications

9.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

10 Environmental implications

10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

11 Background Documents and Report Originator

11.1 There are no background documents to this report.

11.2 If you have any queries relating to this report please contact Jeff Endean on 020 8314 6213.