

ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Key Decision [Yes/No]

Ward(s) Affected:

Review of progress on the delivery of the Housing Strategy

Report by the Director for Housing and Communities

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- To update the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee on progress made against the commitments in the Housing Strategy 2020-2023 'Enabling communities to thrive in their own home'

2. Recommendations

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note:-

- The progress made over the last 12 months; and
- Department for Levelling Up Communities and Housing (DLUCH) funding update
- To refer any comments on the Report to the Joint Strategic Committee

3. Context

- 3.1 The Councils' Housing Strategy 2020-2023 sets out the Councils' ambition to deliver secure and appropriate housing for the people of Adur and Worthing and support all sectors within the communities to live healthy, secure and purposeful lives.

3.2 The Council's Housing Strategy: Enabling People to Thrive in their Own Homes was widely consulted on, produced and agreed by the Joint Strategic Committee in March 2020, setting out four key ambitions:

- secure and appropriate housing for the people of Adur and Worthing;
- individual and community resilience, and economic growth;
- communities to live healthy, secure and purposeful lives;
- partnership with businesses, people, and statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

It also set out three key priorities for action, including:

- Housing-related wellbeing support
- Better homes, stronger communities
- Improving levels of affordable housing supply

3.3 The Council's housing strategy formed part of a connected set of plans and strategic vision for our places to build platforms from which people, communities, businesses and ideas can develop and thrive. However, the Councils' ability to deliver its ambitions in the Housing Strategy 2020-2023 has been impacted by a number of events and factors which have previously been advised to the committee and are detailed throughout this report. These included:

- The COVID-19 Pandemic changed the way we live and work including how services are delivered. The court system being effectively "closed" creating a significant backlog of potential cases of homelessness.
- The cost of living crisis which has seen more people on low income struggle to maintain their homes.
- An increase in private sector landlords leaving the market due to increased regulation of the sector through the Renters Reform Bill and increased interest rates impacting the financial returns

3.4 Ahead of the 2023 Autumn Statement, 158 Councils attended a summit of the District Councils' Network (DCN) to discuss the rapidly increasing scale of temporary accommodation. In total 104,000 households are in temporary accommodation nationally, an increase of 62% in the past five years. These numbers are being driven by a fundamental failure of the housing market.

Subsequently a letter, signed by 119 Councils, urged for six key actions:

- Raise Local Housing Allowance rates to a level that will cover at least 30% of local market rent and commit to annual up-rating.
- Provide £100m additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments in 2023-24 and an additional £200m in 2024-25.
- Provide a £150m top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2024-25.
- Review the cap for housing benefit subsidy rate for local authority homelessness placements (currently set at 2011 Local Housing Allowance levels).
- Develop policy to stimulate retention and supply in the privately rented sector.
- Give councils the long-term funding, flexibility and certainty needed to increase the supply of social housing.

Only the first of these asks has been responded to. The next three are immediate financial measures both to help keep more households in the preventative space, and to address the increasingly perilous financial position many local authorities find themselves in meeting their statutory obligations.

The final two points are, however, the only long-term solutions to the housing crisis.

3.5 Demand for homeless services and subsequent use of temporary accommodation continues to increase at a pace and is expected to continue to do so. The complexity of homeless households also adds to the challenges around securing appropriate accommodation. The biggest pressure for many councils is the financial strain from the steep rise in demand for homelessness services and Temporary Accommodation. The increase to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and homelessness prevention funding announced in the Autumn Statement will help but is not enough. The combination of a substantial rise in market rents and the growing demand for temporary accommodation, along with households spending more time in such accommodation due to the shortage of affordable homes, has made this issue more urgent than ever.

4. Issues for consideration

4.1 The events and factors above have driven a continued increase in homelessness service demand. The Councils accepted either a prevention or relief duty for most of those formally assessed. This does not include those not threatened with homelessness who were given general housing advice (pre 56 days).

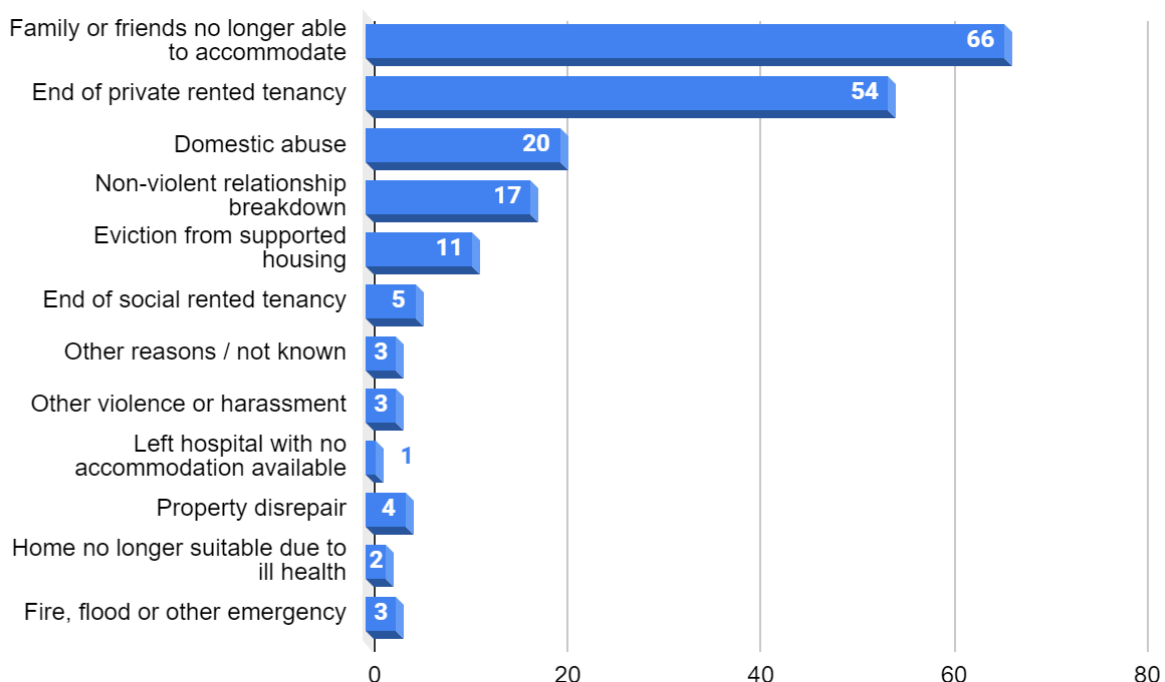
A prevention duty means to work with people who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days to prevent them from becoming homelessness

A relief duty means to take reasonable steps to help households that are homeless and in priority need to find suitable accommodation that will last for at least six months

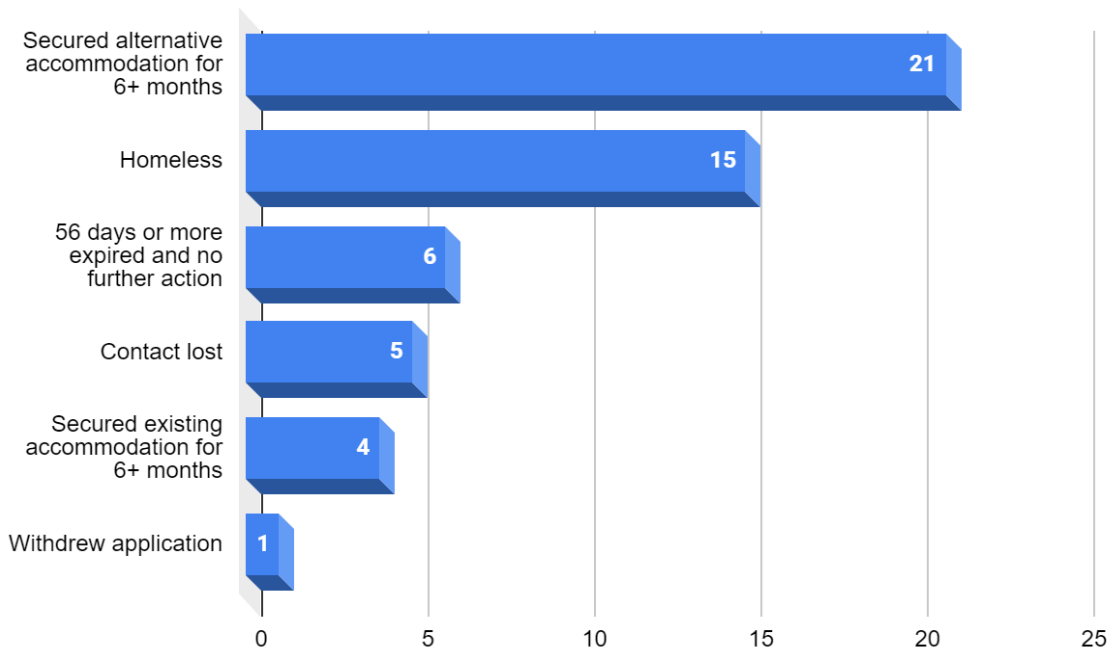
Preventing homelessness in Adur

4.2 191 households were assessed and 179 were accepted as having a statutory duty owed. 56 households were owed the Prevention Duty and 123 owed the Relief Duty. The graph below shows the reasons households presented as homeless or threatened with homelessness during the period July 2022 to June 2023.

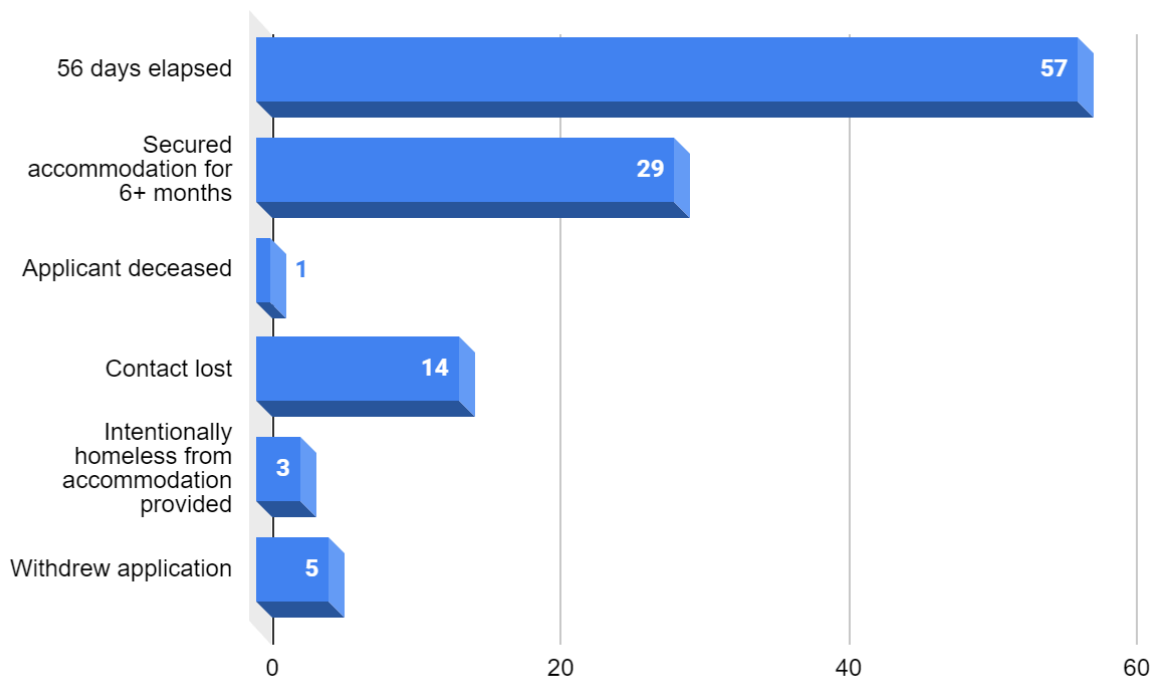
4.3 The graph below shows that private rented accommodation and accommodation with friends and family are the two most common types of accommodation from which households presented homeless between June 2022 and June 2023.



4.4 The graph below shows a breakdown of the outcomes where the prevention duty ended between July 2022 and June 2023. Of the 52 cases where a prevention duty was brought to an end, 48% (25) were assisted to find alternative accommodation or to remain in their existing accommodation.

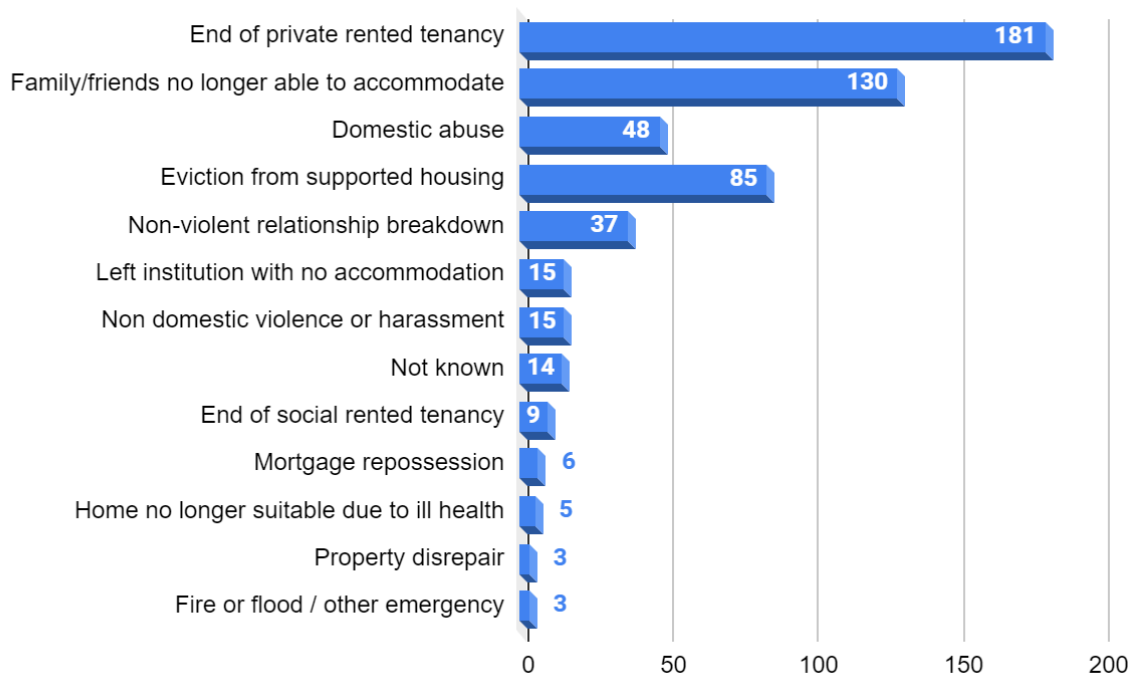


4.5 The graph below shows a breakdown of the outcomes for those cases where a relief duty was ended between July 2022 and June 2023. Of the 109 cases where the relief duty was brought to an end, 27% (29) were assisted to find alternative accommodation.

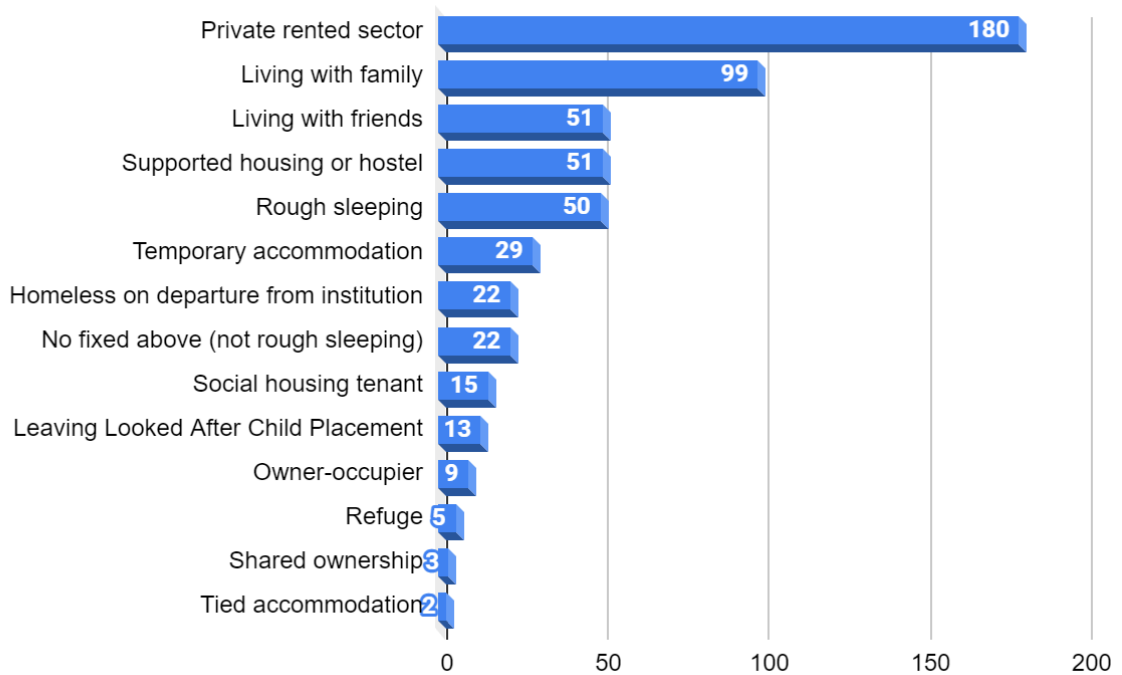


Preventing homelessness in Worthing

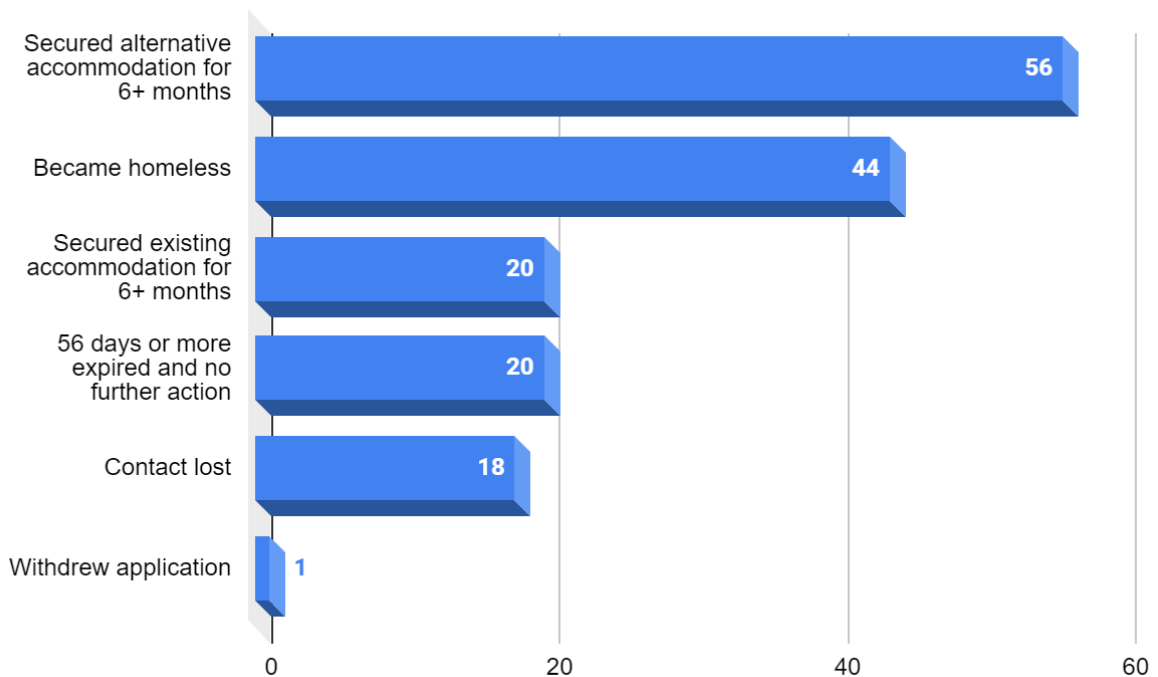
4.6 In Worthing, 551 homeless applications were assessed and 533 of those were accepted as owed either the Prevention Duty (149) or Relief Duty. (384). The graph below shows the reasons households presented as homeless or threatened with homelessness during the 12 months between July 2022 and June 2023.



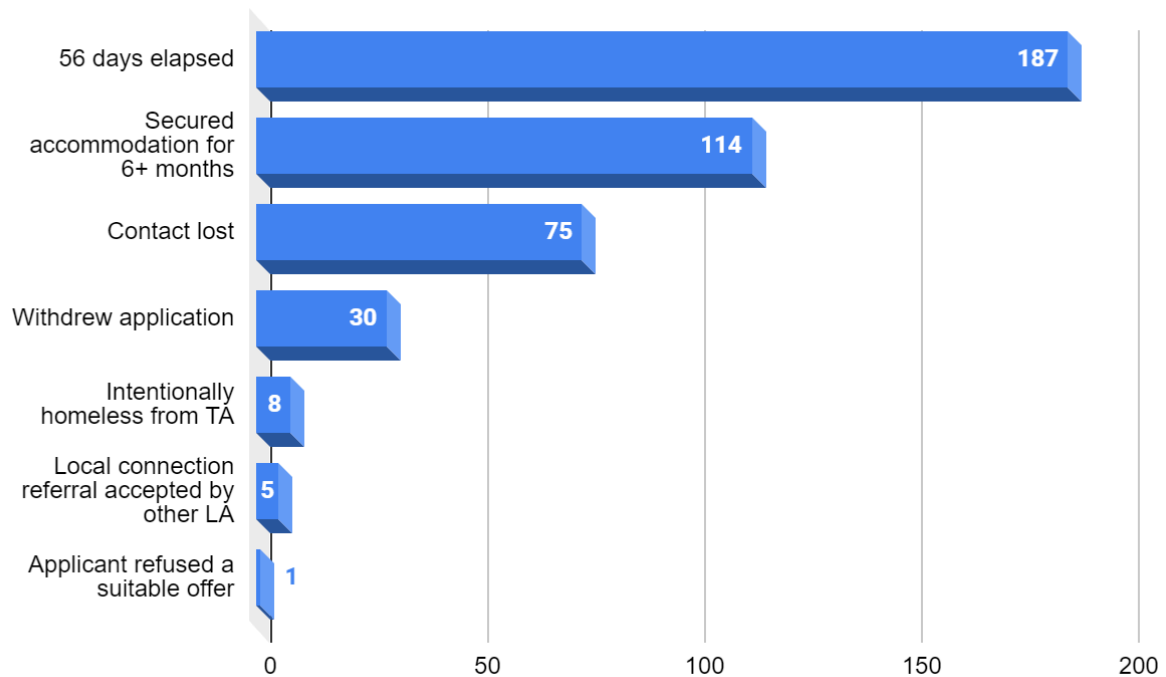
4.7 The graph below shows that private rented accommodation (33% of total) and accommodation with friends and family (27%) are the two most common types of accommodation from which households presented homeless or threatened with homelessness.



4.8 Of the 159 prevention cases that were brought to an end between July 2022 and June 2023, 48% (76) were assisted to find alternative accommodation. The graph below shows a breakdown of the outcomes for those applications where the prevention duty ended.



4.9 Of the 420 cases where the relief duty ended during the period July 2022 and June 2023, 27% (114) of households were assisted to find alternative accommodation. The graph below shows a breakdown of the outcomes for those cases where the relief duty was brought to an end.



4.10 Strong partnerships are essential for the Councils to the wider prevention and relief of homelessness. The Councils have a number of jointly funded roles to support the specific needs of some of our most vulnerable homeless households with associated specialists. These include:

- Pathways Home Homeless Prevention Support Service delivered by Southdown Housing. The service is accessed through the Housing Needs Teams and is aimed at people aged 18+ who need housing support to sustain independent living or prevent homelessness.

The support offered is responsive to people’s changing needs and builds on their strengths, allowing them to move along a pathway to independence.

The providers of Pathways Home services will work collaboratively with other organisations such as Housing, Health and Social Care, in order to meet a person’s support needs.

- Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT) supporting mental health case work. This advisor works between mental health inpatient settings and the housing service to ensure households discharged from inpatient settings are

managed in a planned and coordinated way. This reduces the risk for households to return to hospital settings at a point of crisis.

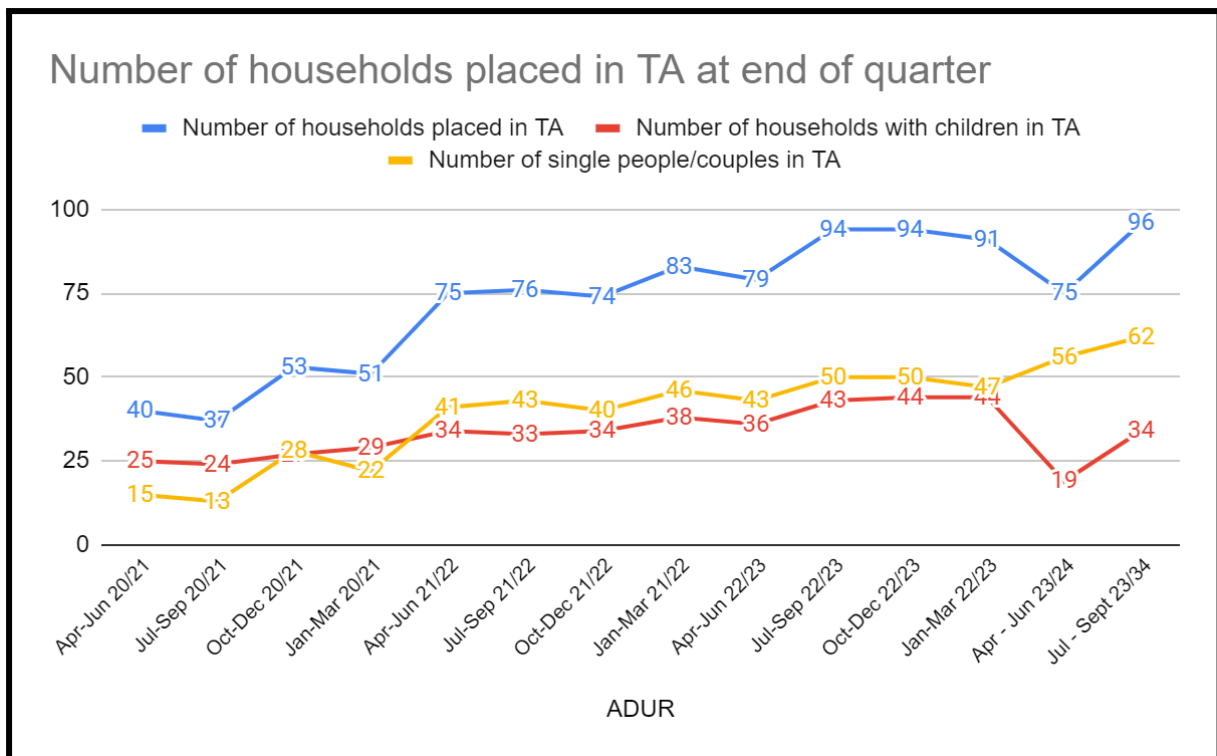
- WORTH services supporting domestic abuse survivors to navigate the numerous and complex options available to them including securing existing accommodation where appropriate, securing a place of safety in an emergency and planning for resettlement into new locations.
- Specific housing officers providing support and funding to support ex offenders to access the private rented sector.
- Specialist social work placement to work with adults in temporary accommodation needing care packages or needing to secure Extra Care or residential supported housing.

5.0 Temporary Accommodation

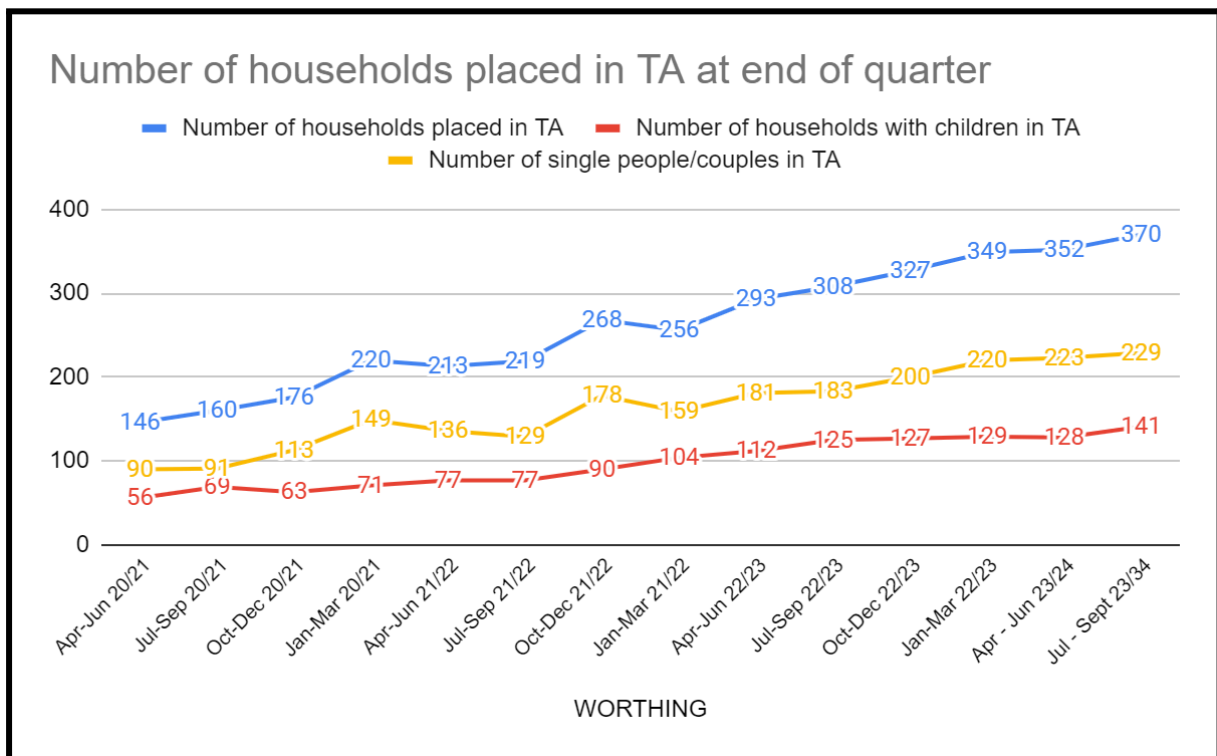
5.1 Over the last 12 months, demand for temporary accommodation in both Adur and Worthing continues to grow. Demand for temporary accommodation will continue to increase due to the factors mentioned in above Paragraph 3.

5.2 The number of households in temporary accommodation is broken down quarter by quarter in the graph below. It also breaks down the total number of households in temporary accommodation by how many are households with children and how many are single person households.

Adur temporary accommodation placements



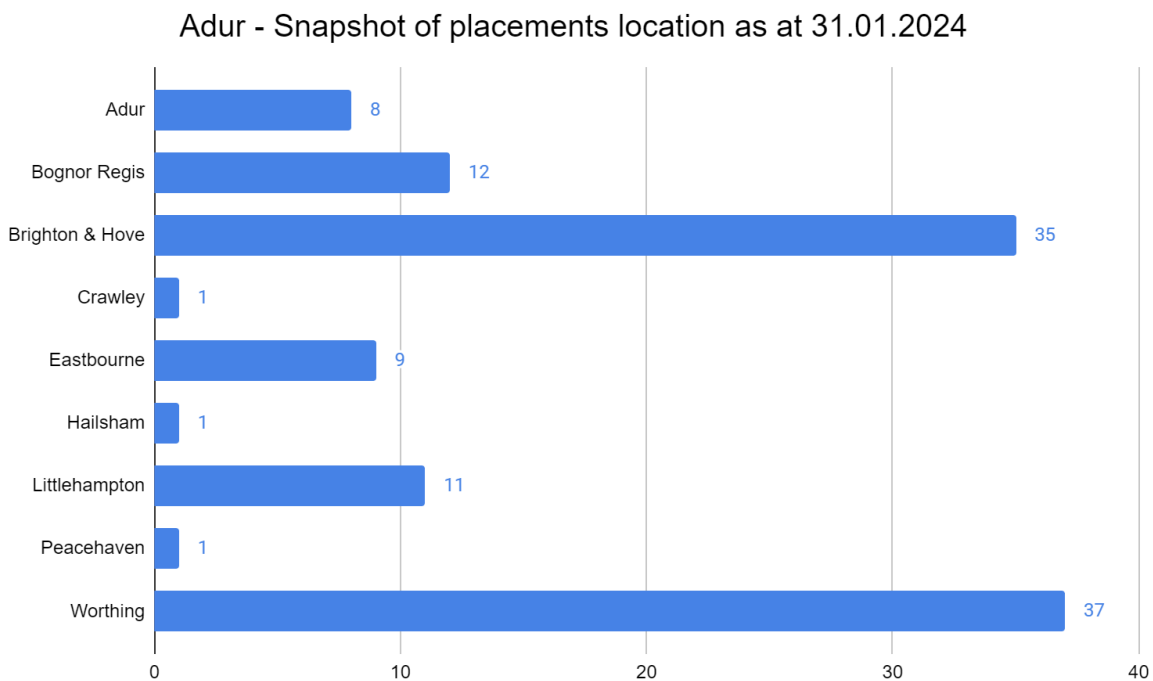
Worthing temporary accommodation placements



5.2 In 2022/23, the net spend on providing temporary accommodation was £899,000 for Adur and £2,371,000 for Worthing. The projected net spend to

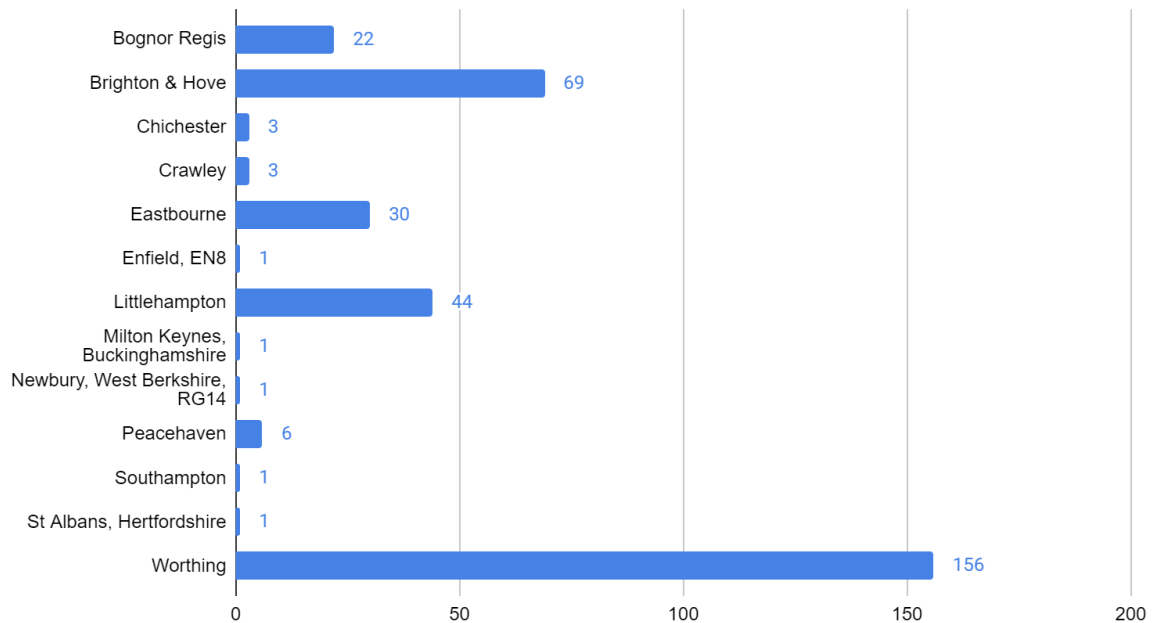
the end of 2023/24 for Adur is £1,061,000 and for Worthing £2,936,000. However, it is possible that the spend on temporary accommodation could exceed these projections due to the uncertainty driving homelessness presentations.

5.3 It is increasingly difficult to source temporary accommodation locally due to increasing demand. Current temporary accommodation portfolio include owned, leased, contracted and spot booked units. As much as possible, households are placed within the Sussex area where they cannot be placed within Adur or Worthing. Placements are dependent on availability on the day, though efforts are being made to bring households back into the area as soon as possible.



5.4 It is challenging finding suitable temporary accommodation placements within Adur District. The graph above is a snapshot of Adur Council's temporary accommodation placements as at 31/01/2024. Of the 115 temporary placements, 93% are accommodated out of the area.

Worthing - Snapshot of placements location as at 31.01.2024



- 5.5 Due to the significant demand for temporary accommodation placements from Worthing residents, some residents are accommodated further out of the area, especially single individuals. The graph above is a snapshot of Worthing Council's temporary accommodation placements as at 31/01/2024. Of the 353 placements, 56% are accommodated outside the area.
- 5.6 The Councils continue to seek opportunities to own or procure temporary accommodation locally. The Councils are also in discussion with local proprietors however it is becoming increasingly challenging to secure family units at a competitive cost.
- 5.7 Adur Council is developing 7 units of temporary accommodation as part of the South Street development. Other sites are also being considered for suitability.
- 5.8 Worthing already owns 17 units of temporary accommodation in Downview Road and 19 units in Rowlands Road. Sites in Victoria Road for 11 units and Marine Place for 5 units are also being considered and have secured Homes England funding to support their delivery. As part of the wider Worthing Integrated Care Centre (WICC) development, when decommissioned, Shelley Road surgery will be transferred to Worthing Council for redevelopment. Additional sites are also being secured.

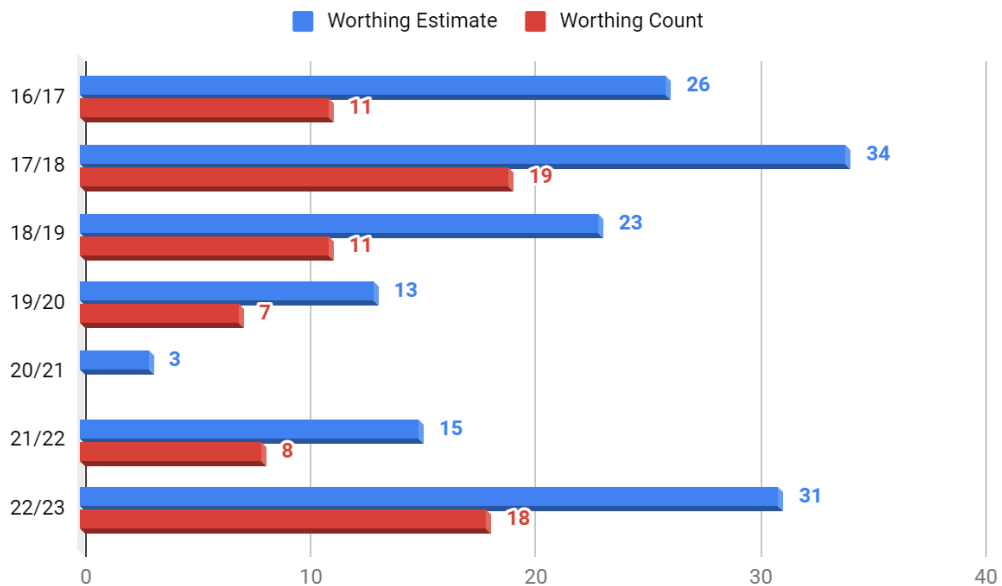
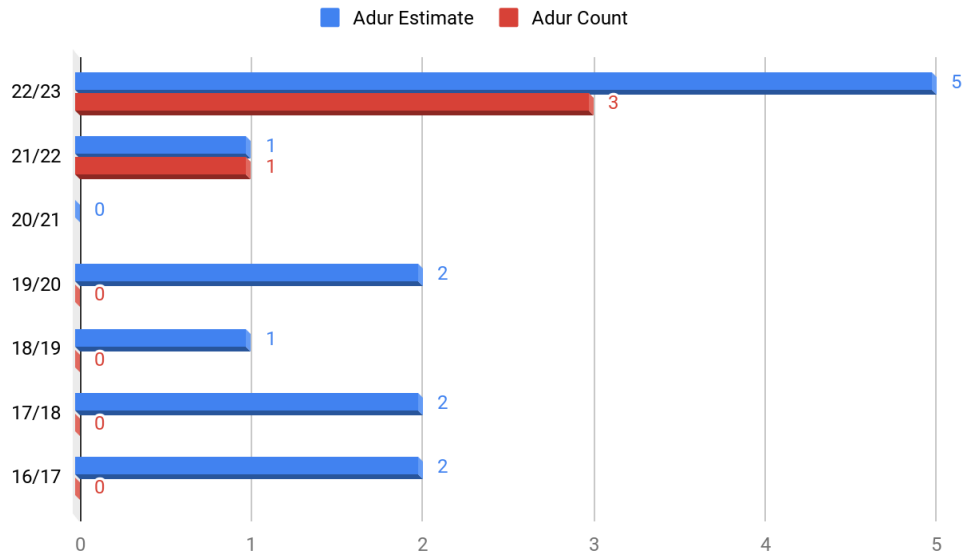
5.9 The increasing numbers of homeless households and lack of temporary accommodation has historically resulted in families with children being placed in Bed and Breakfast (B&B), and for longer than 6 weeks. In previous reports members were advised that as a result of demand Worthing Borough Council was being monitored by DLUHC regarding its use of B&B for families. Since the new approach to secure spot-purchased self contained temporary accommodation units there have been no households with children residing in accommodation with shared facilities since Summer 2023.

6.0 Rough Sleeping

6.1 The number of individuals sleeping rough is rising. In part this is due to the Homeless Reduction Act, which places additional duties on local housing authorities for single homeless people. It is also as a result of the impacts of the pandemic, the cost of living as well as the closure of Turning Tides' Lyndhurst Road accommodation, which provided 34 beds of supported accommodation. In addition, individuals sleeping rough are unable to sustain temporary accommodation due to the complexity of their support needs, resulting in multiple temporary accommodation placements until accommodation options are exhausted.

6.2 Two new sites of supported accommodation are being developed in partnership with Turning Tides and Worthing Homes. The sites, Skywaves in Ivy Arch Road, Worthing, will provide 21 accommodation units in addition to hub, clinical and counselling space. A further site at Clifton Road, Worthing will provide 13 units of accommodation as move on from supported accommodation.

6.3 The increasing numbers of single homeless people with complex needs means that there are fewer suitable housing options other than temporary accommodation, which often doesn't meet all of an individual's needs. There is also a very limited number of specialist supported accommodation to move them into from temporary accommodation and rough sleeping situations. Where supported accommodation is being secured in our areas it can often trap residents into it due to the high rental costs which are unmanageable if not in receipt of housing benefit or housing related support through Universal Credit. The graphs below show the street counts for the last 7 years.



6.4 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding opportunities to support the work to tackle rough sleeping has been maximised. Worthing has more eligibility for funding than Adur in recognition of the level of need in Worthing, there are no plans to extend Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding beyond 2025 and we are reliant on it for our delivery of core services to this client group. The bids are required to be submitted in partnership with a provider and co-designed with our appointed DLUHC advisors:

- I. **Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 (RSI5)** in partnership with Turning Tides - £629,491.00 for the period 2022 - 2025 with interventions being delivered by the councils and Turning Tides.
- II. **Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP)** - Worthing x2 flats within Rowlands Road and x9 flats in partnership with Southdown, Adur x2 flats within Albion Street. The funding awarded capital funding of £150K capital for the Albion Street development and £100K for the Southdown development as well as revenue to provide support workers across the 3 sites at £175,550pa. The workers will be employed by Southdown for their site and by the councils for Albion Street and Rowlands Road. The x9 flats with Southdown are ready to let but recruitment issues have resulted in Southdown delaying opening.
- III. **Accommodation for Ex Offenders (AFE0)** in partnership with Stonepillow - £135,750 (for period until 31.03.23) with a further award of £230,871.00 for the period 2023-2025

6.5 Since the winter of 2019 when we had two night shelters, we have not had a traditional night shelter provision since this time. Initially driven by the covid restrictions and reduced need. Rough sleepers were housed under the Everyone In, and Protect and Vaccinate initiatives under which we were able to procure hotels and HMOs with support.

6.6 HMO's previously used have been absorbed into our temporary accommodation stock as demand has continued to increase. Securing placements within our wider emergency accommodation provision as an alternative to previous night shelters aligns with DLUHC directives and is how we have met cold weather provision during the most recent period.

7.0 Supporting our residents to live in safe and suitable homes

Maintaining Standards in the Private Rented Sector

7.1 Our councils are committed to continue to use their powers to drive up standards in the private rented sector by making landlords carry out improvements where these are necessary and by licensing Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

7.2 Between April 2023 and December 2023, the Councils received 179 complaints from residents; 153 (Adur - 46, Worthing - 107) of which were about their housing conditions.

- 7.3 The Councils carried out 22 (Adur - 8, Worthing - 16) formal Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspections and served 44 formal notices (Adur - 10, Worthing - 34). About 11 enforcement notices have been revoked meaning that required actions have been completed by the landlords and the properties in question are now safer to use. The Councils served 12 Fixed Penalty Notices (Adur - 4, Worthing - 8), where owners have failed to maintain properties in a safe condition or have not complied with statutory notices .
- 7.4 In Adur and Worthing, there are now 186 licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). 19 of these are in Adur and 167 are in Worthing. There are 6 new HMO properties awaiting HMO licences (Adur - 3, Worthing - 3). Four properties in Worthing are currently under active investigation as an unlicensed HMO.

Helping people stay home for longer

- 7.5 To assist more residents remain in their home safely, especially those who have disability or mobility related issues, the Councils provide grant assistance and support for adaptations and equipment such as stair lifts and level access showers,
- 7.6 Between April 2023 and December 2023, the Council received 231 new applications (Adur - 94, Worthing - 137) for both Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) Repairs Grant Assistance (RGA). 136 of these applications (Adur - 46, Worthing - 90) were recommendations from West Sussex County Councils (WSCC) Occupational Therapists for DFGs for major adaptations.
- 7.7 176 grants for disabled residents were completed during the same period. Due to the long term nature of these projects, some of these were started before 1 April 2023. In total 88 of the applications received during the period have so far proceeded to completion, with the rest likely to complete in the next year.
- 7.8 The total spend over this period in Adur was £870,070 and in Worthing £1,422,736. This level of spend has been possible because of Government funding through the Better Care Fund.

8.0 Our role as a Social Landlord (Adur District)

- 8.1 Adur District Council continues to focus on ensuring our social housing stock is safe and meets the required standards continuously.

- 8.2 Members are well aware of the factors leading to the self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing in March 2023. As a result of this there is now a housing improvement plan in place which forms part of the first fundamental steps to reshaping the service and getting it onto a more stable footing by addressing the issues raised to the Regulator of Social Housing (providing properties that meet the Decent Homes Standard and improving health, safety and compliance).
- 8.3 Quarterly reports are presented to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee in respect of the Housing Improvement Plan, Key Performance Indicators and priority focus areas.
- 8.4 The Council is also undertaking a strategic review of Adur Homes and the associated finances (Housing Revenue Account) to create a 30 year business plan. This would set out the strategic objectives and financial strategy for the management and maintenance of the housing stock held within the Housing Revenue Account. This will sit alongside an Asset Management Plan which will detail the approach to stock management and the forward plan for investment. Adur Homes aspires to provide first class landlord services for tenants and leaseholders and the themes under which this will be delivered will be outlined in the plan.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 8.5 Rent setting for the HRA is now governed by the Regulator of Social Housing and the council has the ability to increase rents by CPI (Sept) +1% under normal circumstances. It is proposed to increase the rents for most tenants by the maximum amount allowable (7.7%) to enable the HRA to tackle the deficit that has been generated from the previous government policy of enforced 1% rent reductions and build capacity to address known issues. This will increase the average rent for general needs tenants by an average of £8.16 to £114.26 per week.

9.0 New and Next Steps

- 9.1 In March 2023 Members of Joint Strategic Committee approved an extension to the Housing Strategy 2020-2023, Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy and Community Homelessness Strategy. A number of changes within the service and wider councils have impacted the ability to implement a revised set of strategies and policies as previously intended.

These changes have been positive and help set our foundations for proactive development of an organisational redesign for housing. The redesign will transform how we work alongside wider teams within the councils and community partners to develop greater resilience within our teams, maximising external resources and partnerships to support the work that we do. It also aims to create an earlier, more preventative and early help approach that uses technology and data to maximise our ability to reach more people and enable them to self help as early as possible.

10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 The cost of delivering the housing strategy is built into the Councils' revenue and capital budgets.

10.2 The Councils have significant revenue budgets for the provision of the housing need service:

- Adur District Council £1,330,600
- Worthing Borough Council £3,126,270

The housing service benefits from grant funding through an annual DLUHC Homeless Prevention Grant and additional grants we have bid for as detailed in section 6.4.

10.3 In the current year, these budgets are likely to overspend due to the pressure of increasing demand. Whilst these pressures will be accommodated as part of the development of the 2024/25 budget, increasing demand for the service is placing both Councils under financial pressure.

It is therefore essential that we develop greater resilience within our teams, maximising external resources and partnerships to support the work that we do. An organisational redesign for housing is currently underway to transform how we work alongside wider teams within the Council and community partners. One of the aims is to create an earlier, more preventative and early help approach that uses technology and data to maximise our ability to reach more people and enable them to self help as early as possible.

10.4 Contained within the capital budgets for both Councils is provision for new delivery of new Council owned temporary and emergency accommodation.

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 Section 9 of The Housing Act 1985 confers power on the Local Authority to provide, repair and maintain houses for rent.
- 11.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3 April 2018. It places legal duties on housing authorities, with a focus on preventing homelessness. The most significant change is that anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness is able to access support, regardless of their priority need status.
- 11.3 Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 continues to place a duty on every local housing authority to carry out periodical reviews of housing needs and to consider housing conditions in their district and the needs of the district with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation.
- 11.4 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
- 11.5 S1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation.

Background Papers

- Housing Strategy 2020-2023

Officer Contact Details:-

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

A thriving economy is a key priority for the council and through our new Economic Principles for Worthing we will seek to achieve this, wherever possible, through community wealth building approaches. Community Wealth Building is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people

Providing a decent home that is secure, affordable, warm and modern, supports the wellbeing of our residents, enabling those who are able to work to enter and sustain employment and contribute to economic activity.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

Helping communities to thrive is a key priority for the Council. Through facilitation and investment we will work to ensure people are healthy, resilient and resourceful, that they can access the right help when they need it and everyone has a safe, secure and sustainable home.

Our overarching principles of fairness and participation are based on the explicit intention to work more closely with citizens, to involve them in deeper and more meaningful conversations about service design and delivery. Our work to provide affordable and good quality housing therefore forms a central part of the council's commitments.

2.2 Equality Issues

The council is subject to the general equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

In delivering housing services the council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

The participative principle in Our Plan describes the council's commitment to providing truly inclusive services by listening to underrepresented voices, creating equal access and meeting our equality duties. As part of our commitments to fairness we want to ensure everyone has access to safe, secure and sustainable housing. We recognise the deep inequalities that exist and that some of our residents face deep seated inequalities.

These commitments and the council's legal duties (Equality Act 2010) will inform the development and delivery of the road map, in relation to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

Decisions, actions and areas of investment relating to the road map may require Equality Impact Assessments.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

The council is committed to the promotion of communities as safe places. We will progress delivery of the councils' community safety commitments by strengthening communities and working in partnership with the Police, communities, businesses and multidisciplinary teams across the council.

As part of our ongoing work to create fair and safe neighbourhoods we will cooperate with relevant partners to promote wellbeing and help prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

The actions set out in the report will enable the council to identify solutions that will enable our residents, communities and neighbourhoods to flourish.

3. Environmental

The Strategy supports the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through our commitments to help those in poverty and prevent homelessness, to promote health and wellbeing and to ensure our developments are sustainable by design.

4. Governance

Considered and no matters identified.