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# Homelessness Services Update

Overview Select Committee :12th December 2024

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin  
Lead director: Chris Burgin

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: v1.0

## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on homelessness in the City and progress in relation to the delivery of the Full Council Decision on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024 to invest £45m into additional Homelessness accommodation and services.
- 1.2 The Council declared a housing crisis in November 2022. The lack of affordable, quality housing drives homelessness, as well as pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis and many other national factors. This has impacted on households being able to sustain their tenancies and, in many cases, leading to homelessness. It has been challenging, nationally and locally, as we have seen rising levels of homelessness
- 1.3 The national picture of rising levels of homelessness are indicated by government data:
  - 3,898 people are sleeping rough in England (Autumn 2023). The number of people rough sleeping has increased by more than a quarter for two years in a row.
  - a new record high in both the number of households and the number of children who are homeless in temporary accommodation provided by local councils. 109,000 households are homeless in temporary accommodation – up 10% in a year. 142,490 children are homeless – up 16,960 (14%) in a year
  - Single households increased by 7.4% to 41,380 from the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2022. Compared to the previous quarter there was a 5.3% increase in households without children in temporary accommodation.
- 1.4 Significant works to deliver the Homelessness Strategy & action plan continue. An update is provided in 2.2 to 2.2.4 of this report.
- 1.5 The Full Council decision in March 2024 is forecast to save the Council £6m this financial year, rising to £27m in 25/26 and £45m in 26/27. More detail is provided in section 4 of this report.
- 1.6 Positively, all additional Homelessness staffing to enhance services to those facing Homelessness have been recruited, which is leading to reduced case loads of officers and a more targeted and proactive approach to support and intervention in the work being done to prevent people going through Homelessness.
- 1.7 As at the beginning of November 2024 the Council has committed £22.5m of the £45m securing a total of 181 new purchased temporary accommodation units of accommodation and expects the remaining funding to be committed by Summer 2025.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Picture of homelessness**

#### **2.1.1 Increasing numbers of people seeking support**

The numbers of people contacting homelessness services for help has risen by 11% from 22/23 to 23/24 (4,869 in 22/23 & 5,385 in 23/24). The numbers of unique individuals who are / were rough sleeping has also increased over the same period (447 in 22/23 and 464 from 01/04/2023 up to 31/02/24) although on our annual verified count the number of individuals found rough sleeping was down on the previous year (26 in 2023 whereas 34 in 2022). Leicester was one of a few local authorities that saw a reduction in this single night count in autumn 2023.

We are experiencing high levels of people approaching homelessness services; families leaving private sector accommodation or being asked to leave family/friends accommodation and also more individuals who have had a decision on their asylum claim and leaving national asylum support service accommodation because of the government's plan to speed up asylum decisions.

This pressures has continued throughout 2024 as anticipated adding ongoing pressure to Homelessness services and all accommodation options.

#### **2.1.2 Numbers in temporary accommodation**

As of the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 we had 517 families in temporary accommodation of which 143 in bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation and 226 singles in temporary accommodation of which 101 singles in bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation. This is a reduction in the overall peak that the Council has been in temporary accommodation which was in May/June 2024 when these numbers rose to 520 families and 552 singles.

Positively the work that has been going on to acquire new temporary accommodation has enabled the Council to move from a situation where we had 452 in B&B (families & singles) to a position where we now only have 244 in B&B.

The Council is required by law to provide accommodation to people who are statutorily homeless, this includes all families and some 'vulnerable' singles (priority need).

#### **2.1.3 Lack of settled accommodation options**

Either to prevent homelessness or when it does occur to enable a move-on from temporary accommodation there needs to be a range of affordable settled housing solutions, this could be in the private rented sector, housing association or council housing.

The housing crisis means that there is a shortage of settled accommodation options and people are waiting longer in bed & breakfast / hotel accommodation.

Currently the average length of stay for a family in temporary accommodation is over 6 and half months. In October 2023 the average waiting time for a 2-bed property on the housing register was 1 year with the highest priority, 1 year 5 months for a 3-bed property and a wait of over 5 years with the second highest priority (often individuals who are not in priority need but in temporary accommodation).

During 2024 the average wait time has continued to increase for all properties sizes for those in band 1 (highest priority) and as of October 2024 this wait time now stands at 9 months for 1 bed flats, 16 months for 2 bed houses and 19 months for 3 bed houses.

#### 2.1.4 Ongoing partnership working

The council commissions over 350 rooms of temporary accommodation with different specialist organisations providing accommodation and support services. Leicester has always provided a wide range of accommodation and support, above and beyond the statutory requirement.

In Leicester there are also a wide range of support services available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness:

##### **Outreach & Navigators**

There is an outreach team that operate 7 days a week, who whenever they find someone sleeping rough, encourage them to take up offers of accommodation or reconnect to their area of origin. They also receive Street Link referrals, from members of the public to identify individuals rough sleeping and offer them support. In 2017 additional funding was secured to extend outreach services into the evening. This extended outreach service is still operating as well as including services on the weekend. Services are provided by Leicester City Council and Help the Homeless and work in partnership with health services (Inclusion HealthCare) and drug, alcohol and peer support services (Turning Point and Dear Albert).

The council has also funded since 2019/20 more intensive support services for rough sleepers, Rough Sleeping Navigators. Two local charities are funded by the Council through the RSI programme to provide immediate support to rough sleepers, referred by the Council, and link with their pre-existing offers and networks of support. Individuals referred are entrenched/have complex support needs and who have previously refused offers of support.

##### **Specialist Primary care services**

###### **Inclusion Health Care**

There is a specialist service to provide primary care for homeless people (primarily rough sleepers and singles in temporary accommodation). The current service is provided by Inclusion Healthcare where GP, ACP and Nursing clinics are held Monday to Friday. While based primarily at the city centre location of Charles Berry House, the team are also able to provide outreach clinics at drop-in centres and aim to be flexible and responsive in meeting the needs of the homeless population.

In addition to the usual GP services offered by practices, the following services are also provided:

- Midwife appointments
- Specialist support for people with alcohol or drug related difficulties
- Extended appointment times to acknowledge complex needs
- Physiotherapy
- Visiting secondary care healthcare professionals- for example, ADHD nurses
- A proactive approach to preventative healthcare e.g., vaccinations and screening

A strong history of working collaboratively with partner agencies around the city

### **Homeless Mental Health Service**

The Homeless mental health service offers engagement, mental health assessment and referral to mainstream mental health and support services. This service provides a daily 'drop-in' service at the Dawn Centre and offer appointments at other homeless hostels. This service offers:

- Mental health assessment
- Access to mainstream mental health services
- Short term supportive counselling and coping strategies
- Access to mental health support, psychology talking therapies and psychiatric treatment
- Signposting to other relevant support services

### **Substance misuse recovery hub**

Inclusion Healthcare manage the No.5 Recovery Hub based on Hill Street and in partnership with local recovery organisation Dear Albert deliver the service which includes the provision of a 'wet centre' for street drinkers and provides a range of services to people with a street lifestyle and who have problematic substance use. This includes practical help with food, shelter, laundry, and a shower as well as harm reduction advice and access to other services such as Turning point, homeless mental health service, health & well-being, and housing support.

It provides an important role for helping services contact people that do not take up traditional appointment-based services, working closely with partner agencies to provide an outreach model. The hub contract has recently been extended to the end of March 2025 and is also partly funded by the OPCC.

### **Drug and alcohol services**

#### **Turning Point**

The council also funds Turning Point to provide drug and alcohol services who provide a range of services and support including:

- Group work sessions
- Recovery worker support
- Counselling
- Relapse prevention
- Peer mentors

- Substitute prescribing
- Mindfulness
- Harm reduction services
- Needle exchange

Turning Point's Homeless Outreach team which was set up in early 2019 but has expanded over 2022-3 thanks to central government funding through the Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant. This Grant focusses on the needs of rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping and has enabled the service to expand from 4 recovery workers to 11 alongside increased clinical and administrative support. This means that recovery workers now offer outreach and in reach to hostels and day services up to 7 days per week. This enables the service to move away from an appointment -based system and to spend time building trust and relationships with individuals who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. The service also receives some funding from the Changing Futures programme.

### **Dear Albert**

Provides an addiction rehabilitation centre In Leicester open 5 days a week and they offer a breakfast service on Sunday mornings. Dear Albert also host the citywide homelessness service user forum.

### **Day Services**

### **YASC**

The Y Advice & Support Centre (YASC) operated by Leicester YMCA which was based within the Dawn Centre is part funded by the Council to see up to 60 clients a day on a drop-in basis. Following the COVID pandemic, this service had to close for a temporary period and has resumed operation from East Street. The Y Support service provides a range of practical support as well advice and information.

### **The Bridge – Homelessness to Hope**

The Bridge provides a safe and non-judgemental service to the homeless and vulnerably housed in Leicester. They offer support and mentoring to anyone who is homeless or who is at risk of becoming homeless, this includes rough sleepers, people that are sofa-surfing and those that are in temporary or unsuitable accommodation. The Bridge provides a safe space for people to wash and dry their clothing, shower, access WIFI, get clothes and toiletries as well as eat a hot meal whilst socialising with others. Since the pandemic the centre is open as a day centre, and they have increased the recreational arts as art therapy and have more staff at the centre.

### **The Centre Project**

The Centre project is a local charity based in the city that supports vulnerable people. They aim to reach those who are most excluded from society to reduce isolation and promote wellbeing. They are open Monday to Friday and offer a range of services and support (from a food bank to games and activities).

## Other voluntary and community services

The voluntary and community sector has an important role to play in preventing homelessness and supporting homeless people. These services are often provided by faith groups as free provision based on need.

There are a range of groups providing food and drinks; some provide other assistance and a place to meet and chat or creative activities. These include:

- Midland Langar Seva Society
- Triangle at Holy Trinity Church
- Sound café, St Martins House
- Rachel's Table
- Lighthouse Saturday kitchen
- Church of the Martyrs Tomatoes Café
- Chroma church / Vineyard
- St Peter's Lunch club
- Robert Hall Church
- Open Hands

## 2.2 Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy Update

We have an agreed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and action plan, developed in conjunction with partner organisations. This was published in December 2023. Actions & improvements are scaled over the length of the strategy 2023-2028. It is an agile document responding to the challenges and pressures arising throughout the length of the strategy.

Below we have detailed some key progress to date by each of the four main aims of the strategy.

### 2.2.1 Prevention (wherever possible stop people from becoming homeless or rough sleeping for the first time)

- Successfully tendered for a contractor to undertake building work for development of a prevention of rough sleeping hub.
- Prioritisation of resources to prevention of homeless wherever possible, and continuation of specialist PRS Prevention Team resulting in good outcomes for Tenants and Landlords.
- Recruitment completed to get service to full establishment with 27.5 Homelessness Prevention Officers now in post.
- Call Before You Serve is active and serving landlords who are interested in maintaining tenancies and avoiding evictions.
- Approx. £38K spent to secure short-term extensions with landlords, preventing entry into TA and saving the Council an estimated £109K in temporary accommodation costs.

Last 4 quarters prevention of homelessness KPI:

**Percentage of Prevention Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter with the outcome "Secured accommodation for 6+ months" as a percentage of all Prevention Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter.**

	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24
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<b>Leicester</b>	53%	62%	60%	67%
<b>National Ave.</b>	51%	51%	52%	51%

The Council has maintained strong performance compared to the National average when it comes to prevention of homelessness, with a marked improvement in Q4. It should be noted however, that this continues to be a very challenging area of work made more difficult by increased cost of living. The Council continues to work to identify issues upstream and develop initiatives to combat this to enable continued performance.

**2.2.2 Intervention** (improve early action and support so homelessness is as brief as possible, and that individuals rough sleeping are supported to move off the streets)

- The Council has also secured a cumulative total of £7.7m additional funding through the Governments Rough Sleeping Initiative and other programmes to strengthen services locally from 2018/19 to 2024/25 including £486k in 2024/25.
- Leicester City Council recently supported two successful bids to DLUHC’s Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) to support rough sleepers with complex/high support needs. These will deliver 4 x 1-bed flats, owned and managed by East Midlands Housing and 14 units of temporary accommodation with 24/7 staffing, owned and operated by Action Homeless Leicester, bringing over £1.5m to the City.
- The Council has also recently agreed to invest £45m to buy a further 225 units of temporary accommodation to house homeless households. This will be a mix of 1-bed to 3-bed properties. This will help ensure homeless households do not have to stay in unsuitable bed & breakfast accommodation for long-periods and reduce use of bed & breakfast accommodation.
- Work ongoing with Prisons and Probation to improve the pathway for people leaving prisons without accommodation.

**2.2.3 Recovery** (enable access to settled housing and support for those who need support so homelessness doesn’t reoccur. Enhance support for those who have slept rough to ensure they don’t return to the streets)

- The Council has invested over £250m to develop and acquire new council housing. The Council has a commitment to deliver 1,500 more new council, social and extra care homes by 2027.
- Homelessness services private rented sector team delivers 200 private rented tenancies a year to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Work planned to expand on PRS Incentive Schemes and grow team to enable bringing on increased landlord portfolios, and therefore more solutions within the PRS

Last 4 quarters relief/recovery from homelessness KPI:

**Percentage of Relief Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter with the outcome “Secured accommodation for 6+ months” as a percentage of all Relief Duty cases that came to an end within Quarter.**

	<b>Q1 23/24</b>	<b>Q2 23/24</b>	<b>Q3 23/24</b>	<b>Q4 23/24</b>
<b>Leicester</b>	37%	29%	27%	33%



<b>National Ave.</b>	33%	34%	33%	30%
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The Council has improved performance in the last quarter back in line with the National Average. The investments and initiatives cited above should allow us to maintain performance in this area, and in doing so, drive down the number of people who are homeless and waiting in temporary accommodation.

#### 2.2.4 **Working in partnership** (enhance partnership working to improve services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness)

- The Homelessness Charter held a successful event for front line staff sharing information from the Council and other homelessness organisations.
- A homelessness resource map for service users was developed by the Homelessness Charter and distributed by partner agencies.
- Creation of a Criminal Justice Pathway Manager to help coordinate working across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland and with probation and prison services.
- A new joint specific needs assessment (JSNA) completed specific to the health & well-being needs of people who are homeless to help inform decision making.
- The Council are working with Inclusion Healthcare to fund a Homeless Engagement Practitioner.
- Funding through the Rough Sleeping Initiative funding homeless partners such as Action Homeless, The Bridge (Homelessness to Hope), Help the Homeless & One-Roof Leicester to provide specific initiatives to help tackle rough sleeping in the City.
- Internal partnerships within LCC are also critical, and we have joint working protocols in place with Childrens Social Care, focussed on 16/17 years olds and care leavers. Further protocols are due to be developed around families with children at risk, and with Adult Social Care around vulnerable adults facing homelessness.

### **3.0 Housing Building & Acquisitions Delivery**

3.1 Our Housing Development team are responsible for the delivery of the manifesto commitment to delivery 1,500 permanent Affordable and Council homes in the City during 2023 to 2027.

3.2 As well as external acquisitions and new builds the Council continues to review all internal opportunities in relation to both land and buildings at the Strategic Asset board.

3.3 All of these Affordable Housing and Council homes are available to those facing Homelessness as permanent homes through the Choice Based Lettings system. To this end this delivery works alongside the provision and delivery of the £45m decision and temporary accommodation.

3.4 Projected delivery for permanent new affordable homes the period 2023 to 2027 is set to exceed the 1,500 target with over 1,600 due to be delivered as set out in the table below;

#### **Summary**

	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	totals
Delivered	165				165
LCC new build		40	140	77	257
LCC Acquisitions		347	175	53	575
Delivery by others		116	373	23	512
Other schemes			10	153	163
totals	165	503	698	306	1672

#### 4.0 Full Council decision Homelessness pressures to invest £45m.

4.1 On the 21<sup>st</sup> March Full Council took the decision to approve the proposals included within the Exceptional Homelessness pressures on Housing report. This report included the recommendations to acquire up to 225 units of accommodation utilising an addition to the capital programme of £45m.

4.2 Since the 21<sup>st</sup> March multiple Council Divisions have been working to take forward and deliver the approved recommendations.

#### 4.3 Acquisitions

4.3.1 The Council has proactively promoted the fact that it is working to secure an increased number of residential acquisitions through press releases and multiple news articles and interviews. This promotion has led to significant interest in the Council's offer and the Council having to sort and sift through a significant number of offers.

4.3.2 Resource in relevant Council Divisions has been significantly increased to do this work and to date our EBS team have considered the equivalent of 1473 units of accommodation. Again, this equates to a hit rate of 12%. Unfortunately, due to multiple reasons, including property conditions, suitability, affordability and the nuances involving a property purchase not all options have been taken forward and delivered.

4.3.3 Currently as at the beginning of November 2024, the Council has committed £22.5m of the £45m and has 181 properties acquired or in the process of being acquired.

The profile of these properties equates to:

Bedsit/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed and above
134	17	30

4.3.4 To this end the delivery of these accommodation units will have a significantly positive impact on Council budgets with the Council saving a total of £6m in the current 24/25 year and next two years through the delivery of this work. This is set out per year in the table below.

2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
£6m	£27m	£45m

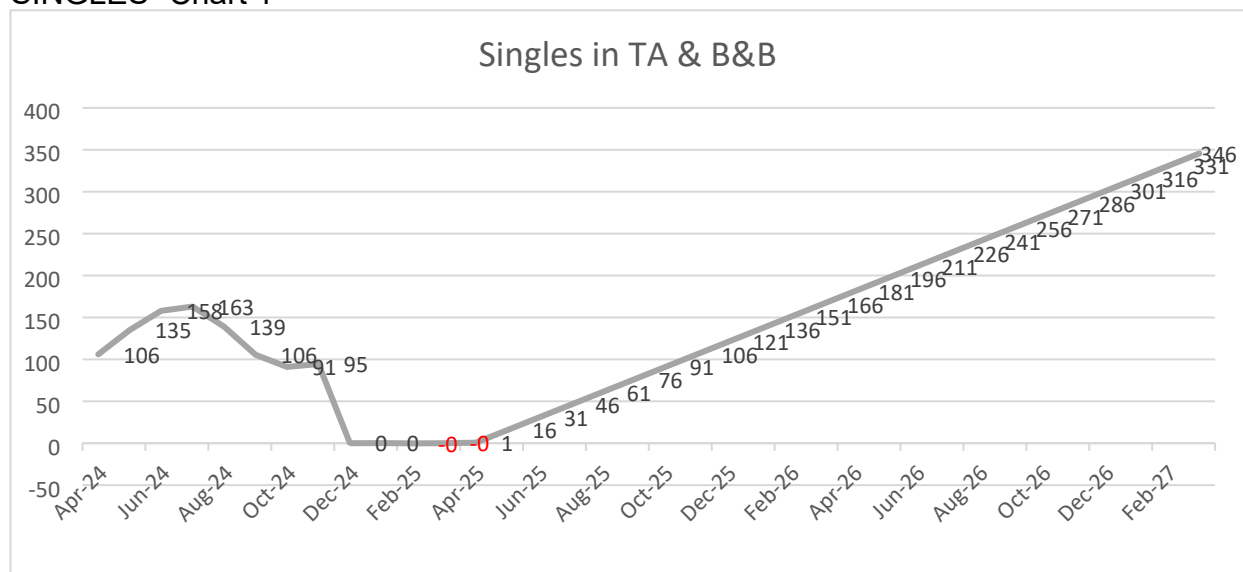
4.3.5 Even with significantly high ongoing demand for Homelessness services, it is anticipated that the delivery of the new temporary accommodation options and the permanent housing delivery will significantly reduced down the numbers of both families and singles in Temporary accommodation especially B&B and the length of time people have to remain in B&B.

4.3.6 Detailed forecasts and projects have been created that map out expected levels of TA for singles and families. Positively if the large acquisition purchase is completed later this calendar year as planned then it is expected that no singles will remain in B&B accommodation by March 2025 as can be seen in the Singles chart 1 below.

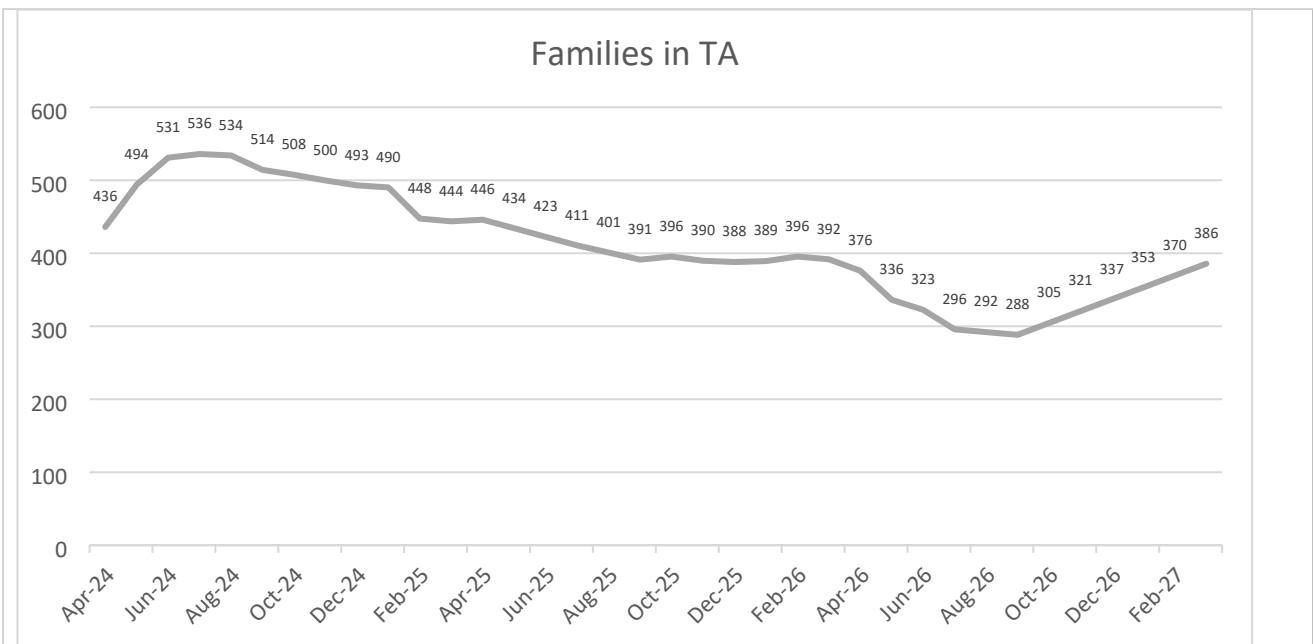
4.3.7 Again positively for families the delivery of new affordable housing and the £45m temporary accommodation will have a very positive impact on reducing down the numbers of families in Temporary accommodation and B&B. It is expected by March 2025 numbers will reduce to 446 with the majority of these accommodated in suitable and appropriate temporary accommodation and not in B&B with this figure continuing to reduce further during 2026 to a low of 288 by August 2026 as more permanent Affordable Housing is delivered. See chart 2 below

Projected Forecast Position

SINGLES- Chart 1



FAMILIES – Chart 2



## 5.0 Future Need

5.1 Even with all the delivery of new permanent affordable housing and the additional temporary accommodation it is clear to see that the Council will continue to see ongoing demand for both temporary and more permanent accommodation. Work has been ongoing to map, monitor and respond to this huge pressure the City and Council face.

5.2 To this end proposals have been included in the Housing Revenue Account budget that will be considered over the coming few months politically. It is anticipated that the budget will include a proposal for a significant financial capital injection to deliver more permanent Council housing beyond the 1500 units set for delivery already in order to create ongoing and increased numbers of permanent move on accommodation for those facing Homelessness.

## 3. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

### 3.1 Financial implications

This report presents an update on the homelessness pressures facing the Council. The interventions approved by Full Council in March 2024 to acquire properties are forecast to be saving the Council £6m on temporary accommodation spend in 2024/25, rising to £27m in 2025/26 and £45m in 2026/27. Despite this positive work, this continues to be a high-risk area for Council finances.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance  
7<sup>th</sup> November 2024

### 3.2 Legal implications

As the report identifies, the demands on the council are such that it is struggling to meet its statutory obligations to homeless persons. In particular, families are being accommodated in temporary accommodation (frequently Bed & Breakfast accommodation) for significant periods of time. The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003

limits the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for families and pregnant women to no more than six weeks and then only in exceptional circumstances where no other accommodation is available.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation)

Legal Services are actively working with Estates and Building Services and Housing to achieve the very high completion targets being demanded. Additional recruitment is currently ongoing within Legal Services in an effort to achieve the targets and to reduce the need for externalisation, which can be more expensive in the longer term. In addition to recruitment, since the EM Lawshare service ended, a procurement exercise is also currently being undertaken so that external legal support can also be available should the need arise.

Zoe Iliffe, Principal Lawyer (Property Highways & Planning)

### 3.3 Equalities implications

When carrying out its functions (including decision making, policy and service development, projects and service delivery) the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. In doing so, the council/ decision makers must consider the possible impact on those who are likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics. Protected groups under the Equality Act are age, disability (including mental health as well as physical disabilities), gender re-assignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This report provides an update on homelessness in the City and progress in relation to the investment into additional Homelessness accommodation and services. This is against the backdrop of the challenges, nationally and locally of rising levels of homelessness. The lack of affordable, quality housing drives homelessness, as well as pressures arising from the cost-of-living crisis and many other national factors. This has impacted on households being able to sustain their tenancies and, in many cases, leading to homelessness.

Housing is a human right and the investment outlines Leicester's commitment to ending rough sleeping and tackling all forms of homelessness.

The impacts of homelessness can be devastating for individuals and families. It can affect both physical and mental health, educational and employment opportunities (for both adults and children) and has long term consequences for those affected. The local authority has a statutory duty to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category.

The Council also provides advice and other assistance to help prevent homelessness and has an enhanced offer to help more households than its statutory duty. Certain categories of household, such as pregnant women, families with children, young care leavers and households that are homeless due to an emergency such as a fire or flood, have priority need if homeless. Other groups may be assessed as having priority need because they are vulnerable if homeless due to, for example, old age, or physical or mental ill health, or

because they are vulnerable as a result of being in prison, or care or as a result of becoming homeless due to domestic abuse.

Those affected by homelessness are likely to include individuals from across various protected characteristics. Support provided to homeless people and those facing homelessness helps to develop skills to live independently in their own homes. This includes integration into the community, taking part in leisure activities and support to find education, training or employment. Continued partnership work that strengthens ways of working together across agencies, disciplines and sectors, should lead to positive impacts for people from across all protected characteristics.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

### 3.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are limited climate emergency implications directly associated with this report. More widely, however, housing is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions in Leicester, responsible for 33% of emissions. Following the council's declaration of a Climate Emergency addressing these emissions is vital to meeting our ambition, particularly where the council has a higher level of influence and control.

As such, work to address homelessness in the city should include consideration of opportunities to reduce the carbon emissions of housing, as appropriate and relevant to the project. This could include working to ensure that properties involved have high-performing insulation, energy efficient heating, low energy lighting and low carbon/renewable energy systems, especially where they are under local authority ownership. Improving the energy efficiency of homes should also help to ensure that housing is comfortable for occupants, reduce energy bills and help to limit maintenance costs.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284  
18 October 2024

**4. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?** No

**5. Is this a “key decision”?** If so, why? No, update report.