



St Albans
City & District Council



**Homelessness Strategy & Action Plan
2016 -2021**

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Homelessness Strategy Introduction

St Albans is a prosperous part of the country, with a very low unemployment rate and relatively high per capita income. Despite this we have seen a significant rise in the number of homeless people since the beginning of the previous three year strategy.

Most of the factors driving homelessness are outside the Council's control but we have addressed the need in various ways including:

- Prevention measures to enable people to stay in their homes wherever possible. The Housing Options service is accessible to all and provides detailed and tailored advice that focuses on attempting to keep people in their own property.
- Maintaining our grant funding to facilities such as the Open Door night shelter and supporting its severe weather provision of extra accommodation.
- Increasing our supply of temporary accommodation by using sheltered housing which is empty pending redevelopment. This has enabled us to substantially reduce expenditure on Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- Provision of low cost loans or rental guarantees to enable people to obtain private sector accommodation.

The Council works with other organisations providing support to homeless people with a view to maximising effectiveness. We remain committed to protecting vulnerable people in our district, including the homeless.

This Strategy will contribute to the Council's overarching vision – 'realising a high quality life for all residents by delivering outstanding services, by working with the community, county, town and parish councils'. It will also help the Council deliver on our commitment to protect the vulnerable and deliver for families.



Cllr Brian Ellis
Housing Portfolio Holder

1. Introduction to the Strategy

Homelessness legislation places a general duty on local authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district free of charge.

Generally, somebody is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in.

The Council has a duty to provide accommodation for households in priority need, eligible for assistance, and unintentionally homeless. The local authority can provide accommodation in their own stock or arrange for it to be provided by another landlord, for example, a housing association or a landlord in the private rented sector.

Protecting the vulnerable and delivering for families is a key Council commitment. The prevention of homelessness and being able to provide realistic housing options advice and solutions in line with statutory guidance is integral to the Council achieving this objective.

The City and District of St Albans is characterised by high house prices and low unemployment. Unfortunately this results in a high demand for housing of all tenures and means that not everyone is able to access suitable and affordable accommodation.

The Council has developed a Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan to respond to the challenges faced. This details how important the role of key stakeholders is in helping to prevent homelessness in the District in both the short and long term.

In order to complete this strategy the Council gathered statistical evidence around homelessness in the District. In addition, service users were asked why they had become homeless and what they thought would have prevented their homelessness. These results formed the basis of the workshop consultations with local partners and stakeholders to ensure that we are meeting the needs of those that require assistance.

The statistical evidence, consultation, and workshop event have informed the key areas the Council will focus on over the next five years. Within each specific area are a number of aims and associated milestones.

These will allow us to measure the success of the work the Council and its partners are carrying out.

The Strategy will be monitored throughout its five year lifetime. It will be reviewed by the Homelessness Forum on an annual basis and the Action Plan amended in line with changing legislation, best practice, and local conditions. The Forum is a group of key stakeholders and partners who work in homelessness. This could be in the area of homeless prevention, providing advice and support, or managing accommodation. The meetings are held every 3 months and are chaired by the Council.

The Strategy is required to be formally adopted by Cabinet under the current Scheme of Delegation within the Council's Constitution. The Strategy sits alongside, and should be cross referenced with, the following policy documents:

- St Albans City and District Council Housing Strategy 2014-2017
- St Albans City and District Council Allocations Policy
- St Albans City and District Council Tenancy Strategy
- St Albans City and District Inclusion Strategy 2016-2018
- St Albans City and District Corporate Plan 2016-2021

2. Introduction to the City and District of St Albans

St Albans City and its surrounding towns and villages, ringed by Green Belt, is based around 22 miles north of London, in Hertfordshire.

St Albans is a historic city which has become a popular location in which to live within the London commuter belt. Due to its proximity to London and good travel links, house prices are some of the highest in the country. The average house price in St Albans District (June 2016) is £637,000 (based on sales and valuations April-June 2016). This compares to a regional average of £328,000. The house price to income ratio in the St Albans District is currently 11:1 based on a household's disposal income. This compares to a regional average of 8:1 (Source: Hometrack).

This is clear evidence that home ownership is not an affordable housing option for all those who want to live and work in the District. This results in households looking to the private rental market as a way of securing housing. However the table below highlights the disparity between the open market value (OMV) rents for the District and the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The LHA is the maximum Housing Benefit payment for a particular sized property. The figures in the table below refer to weekly rental figures.

Size of property	OMV	LHA
1-bed	£201	£156
2-bed	£276	£197
3-bed	£346	£240
4-bed	£484	£359

(Source: Hometrack)

Not only are there affordability issues but also supply issues as highlighted in the table below.

Tenure type	Percentage
Owner occupied	73%
Shared ownership	1%
Social rented housing	12%
Private rented housing	13%
Other	1%

The Office for National Statistics 2015 census records the population at 145,800. The age split records 22% of the local population under 16, 61% of working age between 16 and 64, and 17% as older than 65.

It also highlights that there are a high number of professional people living in the district with 62% having NVQ Level 4 qualifications and above. The District is extremely popular for families with children.

3. Trends in Homelessness

St Albans City and District has had a persistent level of homelessness over the duration of the previous strategy document. Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 3 indicate the consistently high levels of homeless applications and acceptances and households in temporary accommodation. The figures indicate that, on average, approximately 70% of the households who approach the Council as homeless are 'accepted homeless'. Consequently they are owed the homelessness duty and are rehoused into Council or Housing Association properties.

There has been no significant change in the main reasons for homelessness. These are still primarily parental or family eviction (34%), fleeing (domestic) violence (19%) and ending of a private rented tenancy (14%). Other reasons that have been identified include alcohol and drug abuse and individuals being unable to secure a tenancy once they are released from prison. These reasons are reflected within some of the aims in the Action Plan.

There is also an increase in the number of applicants that have complex mental health issues. Working in partnership with the Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust and the reinstatement of the Mental Health Housing Forum will address some of the issues faced. As well as the Housing department, Mental Health is one of the priorities under both the Health & Well-Being Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership. There are a number of projects planned. For example Citizens Advice is running advice clinics with people with mental health concerns referred from GPs who need additional non-medical support. Working alongside internal and external stakeholders will be imperative in addressing this particularly challenging issue.

Appendix 3, Table 3 indicates the number of single households requiring temporary accommodation. This number has fluctuated over the duration of the previous strategy. The Council is working with Hightown Housing Association to refurbish an ex-care home in their ownership into self-contained accommodation for single homeless households.

Appendix 3, Table 4 shows the numbers of households on the waiting list by bedroom requirement (in line with the Allocations Policy) and by band (the category in which households are placed determined by the level of housing need). The table shows the highest level of applications for accommodation is in Band D. Households can find themselves waiting many years before being rehoused in a suitable property.

The numbers on the Housing Register, including households on the Transfer list, reflect the level of demand for affordable housing in the District. Consequently people have to consider alternative housing options. This includes privately rented accommodation and moving to another area to secure cheaper housing. This is a message the Housing Options team consistently have to give and is reflected by key partners and stakeholders who play an important part in managing service users' expectations.

Application 3, Table 5 indicates the number of social rented properties that were allocated between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016. Almost half of available properties were allocated to households in Band B. This band includes homeless households. This also highlights why households in lower bands, especially Band D, will have to wait for a long period of time before being rehoused.

Appendix 3, Table 6 indicates the total number of additional rented properties delivered in the District over the past 3 years. These include properties delivered by Housing Associations; units for elderly persons requiring flexicare; key worker accommodation; as well as properties purchased by the Council to add to its housing stock.

The Council continues to work with Housing Associations active in the area to increase the number of homes available to households on the Housing Register. We are also being proactive in identifying suitable locations to develop our own housing, for example garage sites and sheltered housing schemes no longer fit for purpose.

Throughout the lifetime of the previous Strategy, the Council has had to manage the increase in the numbers of homeless households. This resulted in an increase in the number of households being placed in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. Appendix 3, Table 7 highlights the spend on B&B in the past 3 years. The amount is decreasing due to the Council proactively sourcing additional properties to use as temporary accommodation. Monitoring the supply of temporary accommodation remains a key aim within the new Action Plan.

Appendix 3, Table 8 indicates the number of households that have been placed in B&B accommodation since April 2015. The numbers fluctuate greatly but have stabilised in recent months. The Council has set itself challenging targets within the Action Plan to ensure no more than 2 households are in B&B accommodation at any one time.

Finally, Appendix 3, Table 9 compares the number of recorded rough sleepers in St Albans with the other 9 authorities in Hertfordshire. The numbers have been consistently higher in St Albans and highlights why it is included as a priority within the Action Plan. Nationally rough sleeping has increased by 102% since 2010.

A number of rough sleepers are able to secure shelter via the Open Door Night Service, managed by Hightown Housing Association. In 2015/16 Open Door had 180 people using the service, an occupancy rate of 90%. Open Door is able to offer advice and support and in 2015/16 exceeded its target of achieving 55% successful planned 'move ons'. Over 100 service users were able to realise a planned move on to secure accommodation.

Open Door offers an afternoon drop in service for homeless people or people facing a crisis housing situation. All service users are met by 2 Support Workers and the Safer Streets Outreach Worker when they arrive.

In addition, regular meetings are held between key partners to discuss the rough sleepers in the District. The issues identified include mental health, drug and alcohol, and European Economic Area (EEA) nationals with no recourse to public funds. Such EEA migrants are not able to satisfy the eligibility criteria attached to a specific welfare benefit, homelessness assistance or a council housing allocation. The reduction and prevention of rough sleeping in the District is key to the success of this Strategy.

A Community Impact Assessment has been carried out to make sure that the needs of all sections of our community are considered and that we do not inadvertently disadvantage anyone. This is included at Appendix 6. This assessment will be monitored throughout the lifetime of the Strategy through the Homelessness Forum.

4. National Context

This Strategy is set within the context of continual change in national housing policy. This can lead to uncertainty in long term planning of services designed to alleviate the affordable housing pressures in the District.

The Housing and Planning Act received Royal Assent in May 2016. The Act includes a raft of legislation that could impact on the provision of housing and homelessness services for the duration of this Strategy.

The headline issues for the Council to consider include the possible extension of the Right to Buy to Housing Associations; the potential enforced sale of Council owned high value assets; and the proposed introduction of Starter Homes. It is intended that Starter Homes will form part of the affordable housing contribution developers have to make on new housing developments. There is also a proposal to phase out secure lifetime tenancies. It is not known at this time what the impact of these initiatives will be, however all have the potential to increase levels of homelessness.

There continue to be major changes to the welfare system. Some of these have been implemented over the lifetime of the previous two Homelessness Strategies. These include a reduction in the LHA rates and the introduction of the spare room subsidy.

In May 2015 Universal Credit was rolled out in St Albans to single persons with no dependent children. Universal Credit makes payments directly to claimants and incorporates a housing element with which the claimant is expected to pay their rent.

Further welfare reform changes are being implemented that could have an impact on homelessness in the future. These include the reduction of the Benefit Cap from £26,000 to £20,000. This is the total amount of 'out of work' payments any one family can receive. The roll out of Universal Credit continues and will be extended to include all households of working age in receipt of benefits.

The Social Sector Rent Cap was announced in the 2015 Autumn Statement. Housing Benefit for those in the social rented sector will be capped to the relevant LHA rate for the claimant's household. This will include the shared room rate for single claimants under the age of 35 and will apply from April 2019 to all tenancies entered into from April 2016. This includes the renewal of existing tenancies. This could result in a reduced supply of housing that people can afford. In addition, households may find they are not able to pay their rent in

their current accommodation if they are charged an affordable rent that exceeds the LHA or are under 35.

Currently, there is a Homeless Reduction Private Member's Bill being considered by Parliament. The Bill aims to improve the support and advice offered to all homeless people. It includes provisions to change the meaning of 'homeless' and 'threatened with homelessness'; for local authorities to help to secure accommodation for all eligible households who are threatened with homelessness, and at an earlier stage; and offer households in priority need who refuse to co-operate with prevention and/or relief activity a minimum of a 6 month private rented sector tenancy.

The Bill has passed Second Reading and now moves onto Committee Stage. The Government has indicated its support for the Bill and committed to funding the duties associated with the Bill as new burdens to local government. Funding to provide support and accommodation over and above the services currently delivered would need to be taken into consideration by central government.

If the Bill were to progress through Parliament and ultimately receive Royal Assent, it will lead to a revised Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities Code of Guidance. The current Code dates back to 2006 and outlines service levels to ensure that every homeless person receives the support they need.

It is not known at this time whether the Bill will be successful, and if so what the final form will be. Obtaining realistic, affordable accommodation, especially in the private rented sector, to those impacted by the proposed amendments to the Code of Guidance will continue to pose a challenge for local authorities. This is especially the case for areas of high cost housing such as St Albans.

We remain in a challenging and uncertain economic climate which has seen reductions in public spending. It is important that the Council reacts to these and reaches out to those impacted. At the same time, interest rates have remained extremely low so mortgage repossession is not a key issue at this time. This could change throughout the course of the Strategy so will have to remain under review.

Through the Homelessness Forum the Council and our key stakeholders will monitor how changes in national legislation impacts service users across all agencies. The Forum will aim to be proactive as to how we adjust services to deal with any forecasted or emerging issues.

5. Local context

It is inevitable that policy determined at a national level will impact at a local level. The Strategy and Action Plan has been developed acknowledging the impact some of these policy changes have already had and could have in the future.

For example, a Welfare Reform Project Officer has been appointed. They will lead on overseeing the introduction of Universal Support delivered locally, the full roll out of Universal Credit. This is expected in St Albans in November 2017. Prior to going live, work is required to develop relationships with the Job Centre and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and other stakeholders such as Citizens Advice. Primarily though they will help to identify residents who may require support and are at risk of homelessness.

The Welfare Reform Project Officer will also help the Housing Benefits team in managing the introduction of the Benefit Cap to the District. The previous cap of £26,000 saw very few households in the area affected. However the reduction to £20,000 will have a proportionately greater effect on couples with one child or lone parents with 2 children in privately rented accommodation. In addition, social housing tenants will be subject to the cap.

The DWP gave the Council notice that the cap, introduced on 21 November 2016, will impact on 209 households, of which 77 are Council tenants. The average 'loss' to households affected is £62.11 per week, with the amounts ranging from £0.14 to £279.64 per week. The table below indicate the spread of the amount of money 'lost' per week.

Reduction in Housing Benefit per week (£)	0-20	20-40	40-60	60-80	80-100	100-120	120-140	140-160	160-180	180-200	200+
Number of Households	53	59	20	19	12	11	7	12	7	4	5

The Council has been pro-active in targeting households who face a reduction in their Housing Benefit. Alongside the appointment of a Welfare Reform Project Officer, the Council contacted the affected households to provide advice and support. At the same time, the Council also organised a local event in partnership with the DWP, Citizens Advice and local employers to identify ways of mitigating the impact of a reduced household income.

There is less certainty in other areas of the provision of homelessness services in the District. It is not yet known how much the measures contained within the Housing and Planning Act will impact on the supply and availability of affordable housing in the District. All of the measures could result in a reduced supply of affordable housing. This could then impact on the time households spend in temporary accommodation waiting for suitable accommodation.

As highlighted above, the cost and availability of private housing in St Albans means that this is not an option for some households in the District. Consequently the restriction of supply could lead to an increased demand for our services. It is particularly challenging for young people to access housing in the private rented sector. Not only are many properties unaffordable, the restrictions in Housing Benefit to those aged under 35 further reduces the amount of housing available.

This also impacts on the ability for households who are not considered to be in 'priority need' to access affordable housing in the District. How to offer a comprehensive housing advice service to all residents is one of the many challenges that the Strategy aims to address. While the cost of housing remains high, it will be difficult for the Council to provide housing solutions to all who need them.

The St Albans and Hertsmere Women's Refuge currently provides an invaluable service for those experiencing domestic violence. The Refuge provides a safe environment for women and women with children, as well as advice and support. This includes help with housing options. The Refuge has an excellent track record of moving families on to safe and secure accommodation.

The Safe Lives review of Hertfordshire's Domestic Abuse Commissioned Services 2014/15 has acted as a catalyst for change in the way that local partners work together to tackle domestic abuse. Consequently, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is seeking to re-commission accommodation based support services for people fleeing domestic violence. They currently have 6 contracts across the County which finish on 31 October 2017.

There does not appear to be any intention to reduce the number of bed spaces or funding. HCC favours a Leader Provider Contracting Model across the County which could then sub contract to a new or existing provider.

The existing arrangements in the District have demonstrated how successful this partnership can be. The Refuge is a key stakeholder in the Action Plan and there is a concern that service providers who currently deliver the support element

could be outbid. If this is the case, the Council would need to reconsider its existing arrangements and develop a new relationship with a different provider. The Council is represented on the HCC Project Group looking at this review of refuge provision.

HCC has also proposed changes to reduce the current levels of subsidy for Housing Related Support services. This is in order to achieve savings in line with their Integrated Plan. HCC's Integrated Plan brings together the financial impact of service plans and the available funding to resource these over the next three years.

The proposed reduction in funding directly impacts on services for single homeless people. Within St Albans District there are 5 services identified. Providers are expected to achieve a 15% efficiency reduction in contract value from 1 January 2017. The funding from HCC provides for a support function for these services. The support provided varies between services, but includes developing support plans, budgeting and life skills, signposting, accessing training or employment, managing and maintaining a tenancy.

Hightown Housing Association has confirmed the likely impact of the funding cuts will be on their resettlement service, i.e. the number of hours spent supporting each client. It is anticipated there will be no change to front line staffing levels.

As a result of the changes proposed by HCC, a county wide Supported Housing Strategic Board has been set up. The Board will have oversight of supported housing and related services and will be meeting on a quarterly basis. Officers from local authorities across the county, including this Council's Head of Housing, as well as key individuals from the County Council, will attend. Any outcomes from these workshops and meetings will feed into the Action Plan as it is monitored over the lifetime of the Strategy.

In June 2015, HCC implemented its Joint Housing Protocol, in partnership with all 10 local authorities in the county. This protocol was developed to improve the County's response to 16 and 17 year olds who become homeless; 18 year olds who leave care and require accommodation; and families with dependent children who are found to be intentionally homeless as a result of a homeless application. The Council has adopted this protocol fully and finds it works extremely well in responding to 16 and 17 year olds who become homeless.

We have seen a decrease in the number of 16 and 17 year olds having to go into temporary accommodation, with none being placed into B&B accommodation in the past 12 months. At the same time, there has been an increase in people who

are being supported into hostel accommodation, or to return home.

St Albans has worked closely with both HCC and neighbouring local authorities to provide an offer of accommodation to 18-21 year olds who are leaving care and ready for independent living. We have been able to work closely with HCC to ensure that young people are ready for independent living, and that they continue to get support from HCC if they are not.

This increased partnership working has benefited both organisations in its delivery of its statutory duties. It has also ensured that care leavers are supported to maintain their tenancies, preventing future homeless approaches from this client group.

St Albans City and District Council submitted its draft Strategic Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for public examination in August 2016. The draft plan sets out policies on development in the District until 2031 and has the potential to release a number of large Green Belt sites for housing development. Within the Plan there will be a requirement for 40% of the total number of units to be provided as affordable housing. Initial estimates suggest this could result in the delivery of 1,600 affordable housing units across the sites identified over the lifetime of the Plan. Some of these will be delivered outside of the lifetime of this Strategy, however they will contribute to planning for future homelessness service delivery.

In addition to the larger sites there will be small developments that make a contribution to the number of affordable housing units delivered. This includes development on Council owned sites and those provided by Registered Providers in the District.

The Council continues to monitor the supply of temporary accommodation it provides for homeless households. As set out in Section 3, the number of households in temporary accommodation has been in excess of 100 since February 2014. The Council currently has 136 units of accommodation available to use as temporary accommodation. This number includes the Council's own stock, some of which has been purchased on the open market in the past 3 years. This has been successful in managing demand, and ensuring sufficient supply. It also helps the Council to minimise the use of B&B for temporary accommodation.

Over the course of this Strategy, the Council will continue to identify development opportunities for additional temporary accommodation. It will also look to work in partnership with key stakeholders to maintain provision. For example, following

an approach from Hightown Housing Association, the Council will be using a former care home in their ownership as housing for 10 single homeless households.

Whilst it is impossible to accurately predict the levels of homelessness over the next 3 years, there is an expectation that the numbers are not going to decrease. Nationally there has been a 10% increase in the past year, and a 52% increase from 2010. As such, we have developed a robust Action Plan aimed at delivering a comprehensive homelessness service that meets the needs of all its customers. Essential in achieving the outcomes of the Action Plan will be partnership working. The key stakeholders who will attend the Homelessness Forum and assist in accomplishing the aims of the Strategy are detailed in Appendix 4.

6. Successes from the Previous Homelessness Strategy

The previous strategy covered the period 2013-2016. The main areas that were identified as a priority were:

- Homeless Prevention
- Making Every Contact Count
- Utilising the private sector effectively
- Welfare Reform

Some of the most notable successes from the Strategy were:

Action	Progress
Explore possibility of working with Herts Young Homeless to deliver information to young people.	810 students attended information sessions delivered by Herts Young Homeless in 2015/16.
To prevent crisis presentations to the Council (or other providers).	SADC appointed an Emergency Homelessness Officer who deals with on the day emergencies. Since November 2013 they have responded to 384 crisis presentations.
The Homelessness Partnership Board will meet quarterly to ensure that the ten local challenges (Gold Standard) are being met and that stakeholders continue to work alongside the Strategy.	Combined with the Homeless Forum Summer 2015. Peer assessed as delivering a Gold Standard Housing Options service. Awarded the Bronze Standard by the National Practitioner Support Service.
To sign up to the Government's Gold Standard Pledge and ensure that this is adhered to.	Peer assessed as delivering a Gold Standard Housing Options service.
Signposting customers to organisations offering training and employment opportunities to assist them to make the choices that allow them to rebuild their lives.	Introduced the Local Services HUB. Key partners include Citizens Advice, St Albans Credit Union, North Herts Homes, Oaklands College, and the Council for Voluntary Services. They all provide services directly at the Council Offices.

Work with the Private Sector Housing Officer to develop the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.	Started Summer 2015. Ongoing project to assist households into private rented accommodation.
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Of great success over the past 3 years has been the relationship with St Albans' Credit Union which is helping to prevent homelessness. The Council provides financial support to the Credit Union in order for them to assist households with low cost loans. These can be used to help pay for a deposit to secure accommodation in the private sector. It can also be used to finance white goods, carpets and curtains and the like for people moving into unfurnished properties.

As well as being successful in helping to secure accommodation, funds are now recycled. The Credit Union relies on individual's honesty and ability to repay each loan according to an agreement. Occasional departures from the payment schedule, preferably after prior discussion, are tolerated.

Consequently there has been a reduction in the amount of money the Council has given to the Credit Union allowing its resources to be used on other homeless prevention methods. Since 2013/14, when a grant of £47,700 was awarded to cover initial set up costs, only a further £20,000 has been given. During this time over 140 households have been provided with financial assistance.

Detailed below are 2 case studies which reflect how the Credit Union helps individuals who approach them for assistance.

Ms X

Ms X was in her 40s, homeless and having to camp out with friends after her marriage break-up. There was also some history of debt from her ex-husband not paying rent. She had recently started a good job, and could afford rent, but needed a deposit. Ms X was loaned £1,000 for a deposit to be paid back over 2 years. This has been paid back steadily and the loan balance is now under £500.

Mr Y

Mr Y's marriage had broken up. 2 children had remained with him, and he needed to find adequate accommodation in the St Albans area. His job was modestly paid. He had obtained Child and Working Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit would enable him to cover the rent. The Credit Union judged he could

just about afford a £1,950 loan to cover a deposit on a house. Mr X has honoured his repayments to the Credit Union despite times of pressure on day to day expenses. After he had paid his original loan down by more than half, we were pleased to be able to agree a further £500 loan for household expenses.

One of the aims that we were unable to achieve during the last Strategy was to monitor information sharing between agencies. This was because not all agencies would agree to signposting. The sharing of the same, relevant, information with different agencies who work with homeless applicants should increase effectiveness in managing a homeless application. This is something that we hope to achieve during the lifetime of this Strategy with the introduction of a multi-agency signposting form.

7. The 2016-2021 Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

The Action Plan was developed after a series of consultations:

- Initially an anonymous survey via a questionnaire was completed by 102 current or previous homeless service users in the District. As part of this exercise we asked:
 - i. why they are, or were, homeless;
 - ii. what may have stopped them becoming homeless;
 - iii. what services they found most useful when they were homeless;
 - iv. what services they would have liked more support from;
 - v. what would be their idea to stop becoming homeless; and,
 - vi. whether they had been affected by the recent changes in the benefit system.

A summary of the responses to some of the questions is included at Appendix 5.

- Once this information was returned, it was used as the basis of a consultation event in February 2016. This was a Homeless Strategy Workshop that was attended by the Council's key internal stakeholders, and stakeholders from other organisations.
- Information gathered from the Homeless Strategy Workshop was discussed at the Homelessness Forum held in June 2016. This was an opportunity to finalise the aims of the Action Plan and to agree who would monitor each action.
- The Strategy and Action Plan was discussed by the relevant scrutiny committee prior to formal approval by Cabinet.

At the February consultation event five workshops were held to determine the key priorities for our stakeholders. These then formed the basis of the action plan. The 5 priorities agreed at the event were:

- Homeless Prevention
- Rough Sleeping
- Helping Victims of Domestic Abuse
- Helping People With Mental Health Issues
- Welfare Reform

Homeless Prevention will primarily focus on preventative measures that can be taken to ensure people do not become homeless in the first instance. This will include increased education on homelessness and the assistance that is available and better information sharing amongst agencies.

Rough Sleeping will focus on measures that can be taken to provide people who currently sleep rough, with accommodation. This will include increased promotion of the reconnection funding that is available.

Helping Victims of Domestic Abuse is an objective to help those who are victims of domestic abuse to retain their tenancies. There will also be a greater focus on helping male victims of domestic violence ensuring that they have the same access to services as female victims.

Helping People with Mental Health Issues will provide a more joined up approach with mental health services in order to tackle homelessness. It will include increased working with Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust in order to identify mental health issues that may be the cause of homelessness.

Welfare Reform will identify homeless cases that could be a result of welfare reform. It is aimed to identify those who will be affected by the changes to benefits and ensure that correct advice and assistance is given.

The proposals in the Action Plan are based on a set of principles for the way we intend to work to tackle homelessness across the District. These are:

- Develop or seek supply of temporary accommodation sufficient to allocate circa 10 suitable properties per month to homeless households
- Meet the need in the District
- Minimise the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation wherever possible
- Provide homelessness prevention and relief funding
- Work to strengthen our links with local mental health services, probation and other agencies
- Provide accurate, up-to-date, advice and support for people affected by welfare reform
- Provide low cost loans or rental guarantees to enable access to private sector accommodation

8. Funding

A range of internal funding sources from the Council will be used. Larger budgets will cover costs such as salaries. Smaller budgets and grants will enable smaller schemes to be successful, including potential invest-to-save projects. This may include clearing rent arrears or providing a deposit for housing in the private rented sector.

Funds come from the Council's General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account, and the Homeless Prevention Grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government. Over the next few years, the grant for St Albans has been confirmed as below, offering a degree of funding certainty:

2016/17	£76,747
2017/18	£76,853
2018/19	£77,002
2019/20	£77,260

The Council also receives an annual contribution from the DWP in order to administer Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs). These are payments made to help those suffering financial hardship. This enables the Council to assist those in greatest need meet their housing costs by more than the 'normal' benefit regulations allow.

St Albans is pro-active in encouraging DHP applications in order to prevent homelessness and mitigate the effect of welfare reform. In 2015/16 the Council spent 100% of its allocated funds of £124,205.43. In 2016/17 the government contribution was equal to £152,715. There is no certainty over future DHP funding. However it is anticipated that whilst the impact of the changes to the benefits systems are still being experienced, similar annual contributions will be made by the government. These can also be topped up by the Council if required.

The Strategic Housing team, with its key partners, will continue to source extra funding from any other national funding programmes on homelessness prevention that might arise throughout the lifetime of this Strategy.

9. Monitoring and Next Steps

Appendix 2 details how the Action Plan will be monitored over the lifetime of the Strategy. In addition, the Housing Options team will monitor trends in homeless approaches and housing advice approaches. These may inform any necessary adjustments to the Strategy.

The Homelessness Forum will continue to meet quarterly to monitor the Homelessness Strategy. This Forum is chaired by the Council. The next meeting is arranged for December 2016 following formal adoption of the Strategy. Likewise stakeholders will be responsible for assessing any changing trends in homelessness or those seeking housing advice.

The development of this Strategy comes at a time of uncertainty in terms of the impact of the proposed welfare reform changes. There is also some uncertainty in relation to the provision of Housing Related Support services in the District. This could make the achievement of some of the aims within our Action Plan challenging.

However, the Strategic Housing team will work with partners to oversee implementation of the Action Plan. Delivery of the objectives requires effective partnership working. We are grateful to its many partners who have helped with drawing up the strategy and who will work with us to deliver the priorities.

Appendix 1

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2016 – 2021

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION					
Aims	Actions/milestones	Outcome	Timescale	Resources required	Responsible Officer/Stakeholder
<p><u>Aim 1: Housing Advice and Options</u></p> <p>Develop good quality and easily accessible housing advice materials</p> <p>Make information available online which reflects both the diversity and needs of the community</p>	<p>To renew and continue to revise the information around housing advice, options and homelessness</p> <p>To monitor the Council's website and other resources to ensure the most detailed and up to date information is available</p> <p>To make the website more user friendly and information on homelessness more of a focal point</p>	<p>Production and promotion of a comprehensive suite of information and advice leaflets.</p> <p>Website updated</p>	<p>August 2017</p> <p>August 2017</p>	<p>Someone from each organisation to offer their time to produce and publish the relevant information</p>	<p>All stakeholders monitored through the Homelessness Forum</p>

<p><u>Aim 2: Education in schools</u></p> <p>Fund the Herts Young Homeless (HYH) education service in schools to raise awareness of the realities of homelessness and of obtaining affordable housing</p>	<p>Continue to explore possibilities of working with HYH to deliver information to young people</p> <p>To develop and deliver a clear, consistent message in schools</p> <p>Create joined up working between HYH and St Albans Women's Refuge</p>	<p>To educate 700 students in 'Home Truths' sessions</p> <p>Council Officers to attend a 'Home Truths' session</p> <p>The Women's Refuge to deliver 3 education talks in conjunction with HYH</p>	<p>July 2017</p> <p>July 2017</p> <p>July 2017</p>	<p>Council funding to HYH</p>	<p>St Albans Women's Refuge</p> <p>HYH</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p>
<p><u>Aim 3: Homeless Prevention Funding</u></p> <p>For the Council and residents to have access to a fund that can be used to prevent and relieve homelessness</p>	<p>To work with St Albans Credit Union to provide budgeting advice and expertise to ensure funding remains available</p>	<p>To assist 20 households into private sector accommodation annually</p>	<p>October 2021</p>	<p>The Council to monitor and review level of funding to St Albans Credit Union</p>	<p>St Albans Credit Union</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p>

<p><u>Aim 4: Work with the probation service and other related agencies</u></p> <p>Information to be shared with agencies such as the Probation Service and Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders to flag up those being released from prison</p>	<p>To share information with agencies and Community Protection Team and to be more aware of those who are at risk of re-offending due to homelessness</p> <p>To consider whether prison drop in sessions are feasible to provide information to those who are due to be released</p>	<p>To hold quarterly meetings with Community Protection and Probation Service</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	<p>Staffing to coordinate drop in sessions with other authorities</p>	<p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p> <p>Community Protection Team</p> <p>Probation Services</p>
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<p><u>Aim 5: Ensure Information Availability</u></p> <p>To ensure information on services within the local district is available to all agencies</p>	<p>To compile and provide a comprehensive list of organisations and their functions to all partners and agencies</p> <p>To work collaboratively with other agencies and build stronger relationships</p> <p>To link the Council's website to Herts Help</p>	<p>A signposting form to be used by all stakeholders developed</p> <p>Herts Help website updated to reflect Hightown's supported housing, homelessness and outreach services available within the District</p>	<p>January 2017</p> <p>January 2017</p>	<p>All stakeholders to buy into use of signposting form</p>	<p>All relevant stakeholders monitored through the Homelessness Forum</p> <p>Hightown Housing Association</p>
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<p><u>Aim 6: Strengthen relationships with the travelling community</u></p> <p>Seek to form a better relationship with those in the travelling community</p>	<p>To work with Herts County Council (HCC) and their liaison officer to share information and build stronger relationships with the travelling community</p> <p>To work with the St Albans Women's Refuge where necessary</p>	<p>To attend quarterly meetings with HCC to raise awareness of homelessness issues in the travelling community</p>	<p>June 2017</p>	<p>Make use of expertise and work of the Traveller Liaison Officer to strengthen relationships</p>	<p>Traveller Liaison Officer</p> <p>St Albans Women's Refuge</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p>
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<p><u>Aim 7: Monitor the supply of temporary accommodation</u></p> <p>To ensure the supply of temporary accommodation in the district is sufficient for ongoing demand</p>	<p>To monitor ongoing trends in homelessness</p>	<p>Reduction in use of Bed and Breakfast to a maximum of 2 households at any one time</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	<p>The Housing Support team to work in collaboration with the Housing Options team</p>	<p>Housing Support Team Leader</p>
	<p>To review redevelopment options for existing Council owned temporary accommodation sites</p>	<p>Redevelopment of The Hedges mobile home site</p>	<p>October 2019</p>	<p>Working in partnership with a Registered Housing provider</p>	<p>Strategic Housing Manager</p>
	<p>To secure additional temporary accommodation as required</p>	<p>Completion of St Claires to provide 10 self-contained units</p>	<p>March 2017</p>	<p>Housing Investment Programme/Homelessness Grant</p>	<p>Hightown Housing Association</p>
		<p>To keep the Homelessness Contingency Plan under review</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>		<p>Strategic Housing Manager</p>

<p><u>Aim 2:</u> <u>Reconnection</u> <u>funding</u></p> <p>To continue to provide a resource available for helping those reconnect with their originating area</p>	<p>To ensure availability of funding to rough sleepers to assist in obtaining accommodation</p> <p>To work in partnership with Community Protection Officers to benefit from their reconnection policy for entrenched rough sleepers</p>	<p>A year on year reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the district as measured by the annual Rough Sleeper count</p>	<p>October 2021</p>	<p>Community Protection funding to be used for reconnection</p>	<p>Community Protection Team</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p>
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<p><u>Aim 3: Explore options for move on for both those sleeping rough and in local night shelters</u></p> <p>To help those move on into more secure accommodation</p>	<p>To work with stakeholders to develop protocols around early contact. This will enable more comprehensive advice and assistance</p> <p>To record details of those who have moved on into accommodation</p>	<p>100 planned move-ons from Open Door every year</p>	<p>March 2021</p>	<p>Open Door to nominate a member of staff to monitor and provide an update on Rough Sleepers</p>	<p>Open Door</p>
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<p><u>Aim 4: No Second Night Out</u></p> <p>Adopt principles set out in No Second Night out</p>	<p>Focus on adopting the No Second Night Out approach as a project that will help to prevent entrenched rough sleeping</p> <p>Encourage the public to make organisations aware of those sleeping rough to ensure support is provided in the first instance</p>	<p>A year on year reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the district as measured by the annual Rough Sleeper count</p> <p>Information relating to Homeless Link added to Council's website and web link provided</p>	<p>November 2017</p> <p>January 2017</p>	<p>Use the assistance of the public to inform when they see somebody sleeping rough</p>	<p>Public to report</p> <p>Homeless Link</p>
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HELPING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Aims	Actions/milestones	Measurement	Timescale	Resources required	Responsible Officer/Stakeholder
<p><u>Aim 1: Prevention</u></p> <p>Increase prevention of homelessness caused by Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>To keep victims safe in appropriate accommodation</p> <p>To offer advice and support by signposting to relevant agencies</p>	<p>No more than 10 referrals per year to the Housing Options department</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	<p>Take advantage of resources offered by Women's Refuge</p>	<p>St Albans Women's Refuge</p> <p>Community Protection Team</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p>
<p><u>Aim 2: Early Intervention</u></p> <p>To identify those at risk at an early stage to prevent crisis presentations</p>	<p>To develop a protocol between services to ensure those at risk are provided with advice at the earliest possible stage</p> <p>Make people more aware they are at risk when they are highly likely to become homeless</p>	<p>Protocol developed</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	<p>Floating Support Service offered by Hightown</p> <p>Communication increased between organisations</p>	<p>Hightown Housing Association</p> <p>All stakeholders monitored through the Homelessness Forum</p>

<p><u>Aim 3:Support Male Domestic Abuse victims</u></p> <p>To provide more information and assistance for male victims of Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>To work with St Albans Women's refuge service to launch an outreach service for men</p> <p>To promote Mankind as a National Helpline for men</p>	<p>Training delivered to staff</p> <p>Promotion material produced and made available</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>	<p>Take advantage of resources offered for men by the St Albans Women's Refuge</p>	<p>St Albans Women's Refuge</p>
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HELPING PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Aims	Actions/milestones	Measurement	Timescale	Resources required	Responsible Officer/Stakeholder
<p><u>Aim 1:</u> <u>Understanding of services available</u></p> <p>To create a better understanding of support available for those affected by mental health issues</p>	<p>To have information available on Mental Health Services to all those who approach for housing advice and assistance</p>	<p>To produce performance figures in relation to the number of approaches by applicants with mental health issues</p>	<p>October 2017</p>	<p>Communication and support from Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust and Hightown Floating Support</p>	<p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p> <p>Senior Social Worker/Approved Mental Health Professional, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust</p> <p>Hightown Housing Association</p>

<p><u>Aim 2: Information sharing</u></p> <p>To ensure that relevant information about vulnerable people with mental health issues is shared adequately amongst professionals</p>	<p>To work more closely with Mental Health Services with an aim to develop an information sharing protocol with them</p>	<p>Development of the protocol</p>	<p>September 2017</p>	<p>Use resources available from Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust to assist those who approach with mental health issues</p>	<p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p> <p>Senior Social Worker/Approved Mental Health Professional, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust</p>
<p><u>Aim 3: Joined up working</u></p> <p>To strengthen links to ensure more joined up working between the mental health services and other agencies</p>	<p>To continue to develop links with the mental health services</p> <p>Deliver training session to highlight issues faced by mental health services</p>	<p>Quarterly meetings of the Homelessness Forum</p> <p>Training delivered</p>	<p>September 2017</p> <p>September 2017</p>	<p>Use the signposting form for everybody who is instructed to approach another organisation</p>	<p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p> <p>Senior Social Worker/Approved Mental Health Professional, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust</p> <p>Hightown Housing Association</p>

<p><u>Aim 4: Reinstate the Mental Health Housing Forum</u></p> <p>To organise regular meetings between partners who attended the Mental Health Housing Forum</p>	<p>To ensure individuals with Mental Health needs are known to relevant organisations</p>	<p>Quarterly meetings of the Mental Health Housing Forum</p>	<p>September 2017</p>	<p>Time and commitment from all those who attend to engage with one another where mental health issues arise</p>	<p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p> <p>Senior Social Worker/Approved Mental Health Professional, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust</p>
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WELFARE REFORM

Aims	Actions/milestones	Measurement	Timescale	Resources required	Responsible Officer/Stakeholder
<p><u>Aim 1: Working with partner agencies</u></p> <p>To help mitigate the effects of Welfare Reform including Universal Credit and the Benefit Cap</p>	<p>Make timely referrals to partner agencies</p> <p>To raise awareness of impact of the Benefit Cap to all effected customers</p> <p>Utilise Discretionary Housing Payment funds to mitigate the effects of Welfare Reform</p>	<p>Appointment of Welfare Reform Project Officer</p> <p>Joint workshop held by SADC and DWP</p> <p>Spend 100% of allocated funds</p>	<p>October 2016</p> <p>October 2016</p> <p>March 2021</p>	<p>Housing department to work together to spend time ensuring all those who need to be are contacted</p>	<p>Welfare Reform Project Officer</p> <p>Principal Benefits Officer</p> <p>Housing Income Team Leader</p> <p>Hightown Housing Association</p>

<p><u>Aim 2: Creating awareness</u></p> <p>To create awareness amongst all partners and agencies of the provision of financial support and services available both nationally and within the district</p>	<p>Provide information to all partners and agencies on the impact that it will have on people</p> <p>Identify those that will be affected and issue leaflets to inform them what these changes will mean for them</p>	<p>Development of Universal Support Delivered Locally (Usdl) Strategy</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	<p>Ensure there is sufficient funding for the provision of information</p>	<p>Welfare Reform Project Officer</p> <p>Principal Benefits Officer</p>
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<p><u>Aim 3: Provide advice and support</u></p> <p>Promoting an effective system that can provide accurate, up to date and meaningful advice on welfare reform, in partnership with local partners and agencies</p>	<p>To continue to work with our own Housing Management department, Housing Benefit, Housing Associations and other stakeholders to identify those at risk</p> <p>To provide or signpost relevant support for those at risk</p>	<p>Development of Usdl Strategy</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	<p>Shared resources from across Housing</p> <p>For officers to take the time to ensure relevant information is readily available</p>	<p>Welfare Reform Project Officer</p> <p>Housing Management</p> <p>Housing Benefits</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p>
<p><u>Aim 4: Learn from other authorities</u></p> <p>Share best practices with other local authorities</p>	<p>Learn from pilot areas about the impact that welfare reform has had on people in these authorities and incorporate in Usdl Strategy</p>	<p>Development of Usdl Strategy</p>	<p>November 2017</p>	<p>Utilise useful resources from other Local Authorities</p>	<p>Welfare Reform Project Officer</p>

<p><u>Aim 5: Helping to sustain tenancies</u></p> <p>Prevent homelessness by helping people to sustain their tenancies across all tenures through the increased provision of advice and support</p>	<p>To hold regular meetings with the Housing Benefit Team, Housing Management, Citizens Advice, Housing associations and other agencies.</p> <p>To provide relevant advice or to signpost to the relevant agency including the Floating Support service.</p> <p>To also work with key partners and stakeholders via the Homelessness Forum</p> <p>Utilise Discretionary Housing Payment funds to mitigate the effects of Welfare Reform</p>	<p>0 homeless applications made as a result of welfare reform</p> <p>Development of Usdl Strategy</p> <p>Quarterly meetings of the Homelessness Forum</p> <p>Spend 100% of allocated funds</p>	<p>October 2019</p> <p>November 2017</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p>	<p>Make use of the services provided by other stakeholders that help residents sustain their tenancies</p>	<p>Welfare Reform Project Officer</p> <p>Housing Management</p> <p>Housing Benefits</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)</p> <p>Citizens Advice</p> <p>Hightown Housing Association</p>
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Appendix 2

Action Plan Monitoring

Group/ Individual	Frequency	Monitoring purpose
Scrutiny Committee	Prior to adoption	To review the Strategy and Action Plan prior to Cabinet approval
Cabinet	Adoption	To formally approve the Strategy and Action Plan
Homelessness Forum	Quarterly	To agree actions to enable targets and milestones to be met and ensure these actions are delivered on
Strategic Housing Manager and Housing Options Team Leader (Housing Demand)	Quarterly	Review progress and resolve any barriers stopping delivery
Portfolio Holder and Head of Housing	Every 6 months	Review progress
Housing Options Team	Quarterly	Meetings with the Housing Options team to review action plan progress and resolve any issues which may arise
Individuals	Annual appraisals and 1-2-1's	Targets to be set in appraisals and 1:1 meetings to be held regularly
Homelessness Forum	Annually	Review Strategy to identify changes in legislation and local conditions that will impact on Action Plan

Appendix 3

Trends in Homelessness

Table 1 - Number of Homeless Applications by Year excluding preventions and number accepted as being owed a full duty

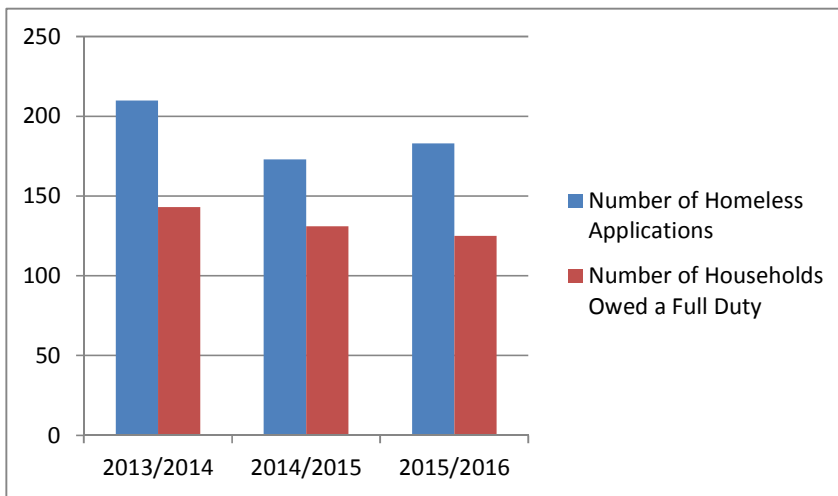


Table 2 - Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation

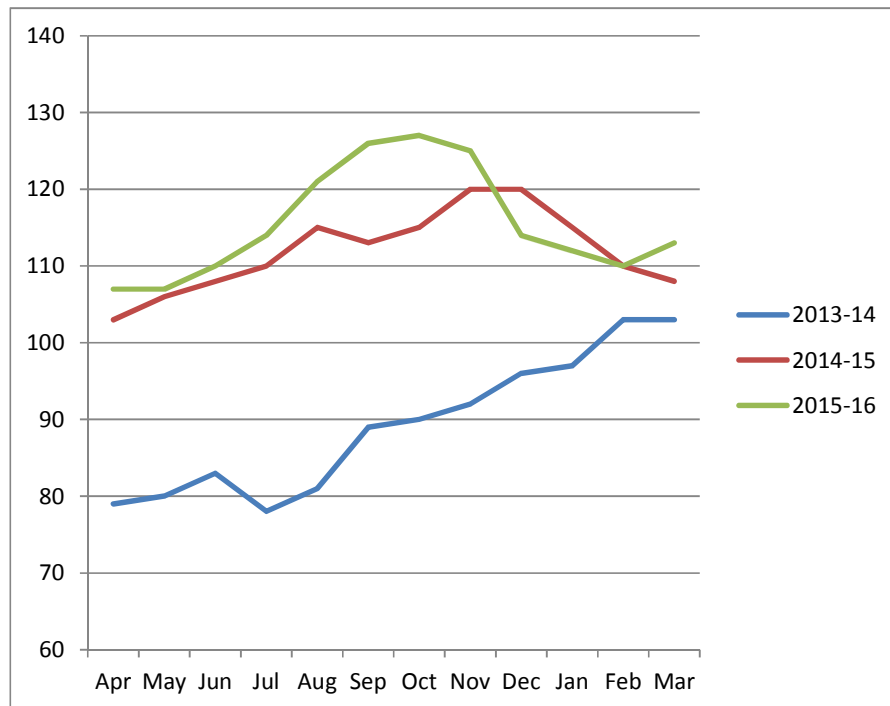


Table 3 - Number of Single Person Households in Temporary Accommodation

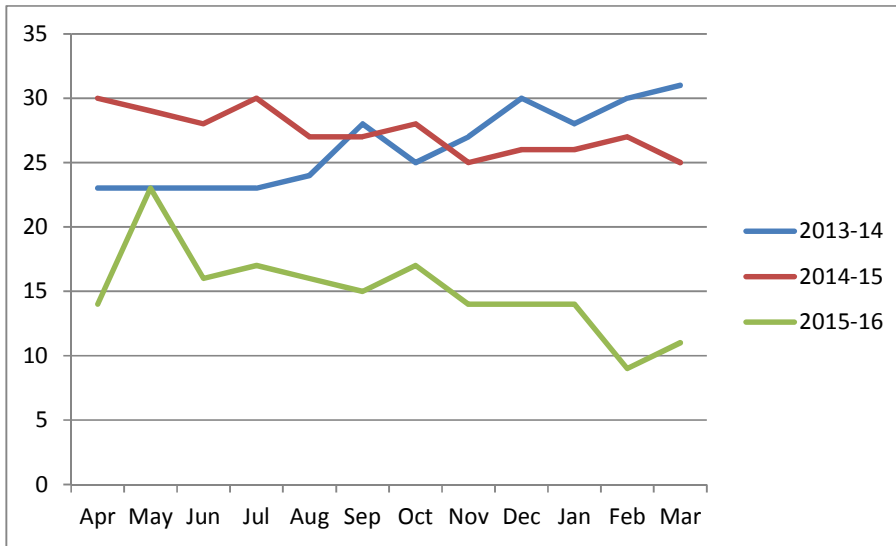


Table 4 - Number of applicants on the Housing Register (inclusive of Transfer applicants) as at 1 December 2016

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom	Total
Band A	35	2	1	0	38
Band B	80	82	19	2	183
Band C	24	72	26	6	128
Band D	171	144	165	25	504
Band E (over 60s only)	105	5	0	0	110
Total	415	305	211	33	963

Table 5 - Number of social housing properties allocated 1st April 2015-31st March 2016

	Studio flat	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom	Total
Band A	0	26	7	1	0	34
Band B	3	66	86	36	2	193
Band C	0	19	28	11	4	62
Band D	9	47	13	16	0	85
Band E	0	12 (age restricted)	2	0	0	14
Total	12	170	136	64	6	388

Table 6 - Number of additional rented properties in the district

2013/14	62
2014/15	42
2015/16	107

Table 7 - Bed and Breakfast Spend

Year	B&B spend (£)
2013/14	33,923
2014/15	121,703.64
2015/16	56,300.02
2016/17 (to October 2016)	13,324.20

Table 8 - Number of households placed in B&B accommodation

2015/16

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
1	10	3	5	12	11	16	6	3	2	0	0

2016/17

Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
3	2	2	5	3	3	4

Table 9 - Number of recorded rough sleepers in Hertfordshire

Local Authority	2013	2014	2015	2015 Rough Sleeping Rate (per 1,000 households)
Broxbourne	6	1	0	0.00
Dacorum	9	7	4	0.06
East Hertfordshire	2	5	5	0.08
Hertsmere	2	3	10	0.24
North Hertfordshire	0	3	5	0.09
St Albans	16	11	19	0.32
Stevenage	13	8	5	0.14
Three Rivers	0	0	1	0.03
Watford	15	22	12	0.31
Welwyn Hatfield	1	1	14	0.31

Appendix 4

Key Stakeholders

- Hightown Housing Association
- Aldwyck Housing Association
- Open Door Charity
- Centre 33
- St Albans and Hertsmere Women's refuge
- EMMAUS
- Citizens Advice
- St Albans Credit Union
- The Community Mental Health Team
- Herts Young Homeless
- Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services
- The Life Hostel
- SACDC Housing Management team
- SACDC Housing Benefit team
- SACDC Community Protection team
- YMCA
- Private Rented Sector landlords
- National Landlords Association
- London Strategic Housing Association
- North Hertfordshire Homes
- Hertfordshire County Council Travellers Liaison Officer
- Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust

Appendix 5

Summary of Service User questionnaire responses

Male	48%
Female	52%
16/17	2
18-25	23
26-35	27
36-45	18
46-55	22
56-65	9
65+	1

Reasons for Homelessness	
Affordability	2
Domestic Violence	23
Drugs and Alcohol	3
Eviction-sale of property	2
Eviction-Family	7
Loss of home	4
Loss of job	7
Medical	1
Overcrowding	7
Prison	4
Property uninhabitable	1
Relationship Breakdown	19
Rent Arrears	4
Restraining Order	1
Social Services referral	1
Not Homeless	9
Return from abroad	1
Not stated	6

Affected by Welfare Reform	
Yes	21
No	81

Appendix 6

Community Impact Assessment

1. About the service or policy development

Name of service or policy	Housing Services- Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2021
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Why is this service or policy development/review needed?
<p>The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on all housing authorities to have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. They must be renewed at least every 5 years. Our current Strategy expires this year.</p> <p>The Strategy will shape the work of the Housing Options department and its approach to the provision of advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness.</p>

2. Community impact

<p>What impacts will this service or policy development have on the community? The <i>Community Profile</i> highlights key demographic considerations for the District including our duty towards characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.</p>					
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	What are the positive and negative impacts?	How will benefits be enhanced and negative impacts minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general	X			Prevention of homelessness and protection of vulnerable households	The Strategy will be monitored throughout its lifetime by officers, managers, Head of Service, Portfolio Holder, key partners and stakeholders
Age		X			
Disability		X			
Gender reassignment		X			
Marriage and civil partnership		X			

Pregnancy and maternity		X			
Race		X			
Religion or belief		X			
Sex		X			
Sexual orientation		X			
Any community issues identified for this location , if the project is based in a specific location – state if this is not applicable e.g. if there are no specific issues for this location or if the project is district-wide		X		This is a district wide strategy	

What steps have you taken or plan to take to consult the whole community or specific groups affected by the service or policy development e.g. on-line consultation, focus groups, consultation with representative groups?

The Action Plan was developed after a series of consultations:

- Initially an anonymous survey via a questionnaire was completed by 102 current or previous homeless service users in the District.
- Once this information was returned, it was used as the basis of a Consultation event in February 2016. This was a Homeless Strategy Workshop that was attended by the Council's key internal stakeholders and stakeholders from other organisations.
- Information gathered from the Homeless Strategy Workshop was discussed at the Homeless Forum held in June 2016. This was an opportunity to finalise the aims of the Action Plan and to agree who would monitor each action.
- The Strategy and Action Plan was submitted to the Council's Scrutiny Committee prior to formal approval by Cabinet.

3. Monitoring and review

How you will review the impact once the service or policy has been implemented?
These actions should be picked up in the departmental business

Action	By when	By who
A detailed monitoring and review statement is included within the Action Plan.		

4. Sign off

Name	Role (i.e. Project Sponsor, Head of Service)	Date
Karen Dragovic <i>K. A. Dragovic</i>	Head of Service	8 November 2016