

# **Rutland County Council**

## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Scoping Document: Task and Finish Groups; Working Groups; Evidence Gathering etc.**

#### **1. Topic**

- 1.1 To gather evidence on homelessness in Rutland and make recommendations to Cabinet/Council on how to improve Rutland's offer regarding homelessness in the context of legislation and budget constraints.

#### **2. Purpose**

- 2.1 For members of the Council to get a better understanding of the legislation related to homelessness; how RCC responds to both legislative demands and needs of residents and make recommendations for improvement.
- 2.2 For members of the Council to better understand who in Rutland is at risk of homelessness and to explore ways which might reduce such risk.

#### **3. Members (Identify Chairperson)**

- Cllr Gale Waller (Chair)
- Cllr Leah Toseland
- Cllr Stephen Lambert
- Cllr Joanna Burrows

#### **4. Portfolio holder(s)**

- Cllr Lucy Stephenson (ref. Housing Services review meetings)
- Cllr Sam Harvey (homelessness)

- Cllr Rosemary Powell (Housing planning)

## **5. Officers**

- John Morley (Director)
- Alison Morgan (Team Manager – Housing Options)
- Kim Sorsky (Head of Service –Prevention and Complex Care)
- Jane Narey (Scrutiny Officer)

## **6. Rationale**

- 6.1 Members to have a better understanding of homelessness; the challenges the Council faces and the reasons for the increase in homelessness in recent years.
- 6.2 Homelessness can be prevented for more residents.
- 6.3 Fewer residents present as homeless.
- 6.4 RCC is able to meet its obligations to refugees without adversely impacting on other residents.
- 6.5 RCC is able to meet its obligations to Care Leavers.
- 6.6 RCC is able to meet the particular needs of the armed forces community.
- 6.7 Scrutiny is committed to making a positive difference for local residents. RCC's Corporate Strategy 2022-27 Priority 4: "A County for Everyone" includes the statement "Housing and the cost of living: We will ensure fair access to affordable and sustainable housing, prevent homelessness and provide support to those most effected by the cost of living."

## **7. Background**

- 7.1 There is an existing RCC policy on housing and homelessness and one outcome of this work is that

there might be a recommendation to review this policy.

7.2 Legislative and regulatory changes in recent years and anticipated changes impact considerably on this work. The changes include:

- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Changes to tax relief for landlords with buy-to-let mortgages
- Right-to-Buy being extended to tenants in social housing
- The operation of the Homes4Ukraine Scheme, Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy/Afghan citizens resettlement scheme

7.3 RCC transferred its housing stock (council houses) to social landlords in 1979 and therefore has no housing stock of its own to use for homeless people and those facing homelessness.

7.4 Residents locally are staying put in their social housing homes and without turnover there are no voids to provide for those facing homelessness. This problem is particularly acute for families needed 3 bedroom accommodation or larger.

7.5 RCC's allocations policy is more generous than that found in neighbouring authority areas.

## **8. Timetable**

8.1 To be determined

## **9. Methodology/Approach**

- Desk-based review of legislation; data (to include that held by the homelessness team; housing prices; wage rates locally).
- Gathering an understanding of the work of the homelessness team through a “walk through” of their role; “shadowing” an officer.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of both RCC policy and the terms of reference/minutes of the Housing Services Review Meeting
- Comparisons with other authorities (specifically SKDC who have their own housing stock).
- Reviewing our Housing and Homelessness Policies and/or Strategies with those of neighbouring councils (possibly SKDC, Melton Borough, North Northamptonshire and Leicester City).
- Gaining understanding of the private rented sector.

## **10. Evidence Sources**

- Government guidance / legislation.
- Current RCC policy.
- Performance Indicators held by RCC.
- Private landlord data held by Peterborough City Council.
- Independent research articles and papers.
- Data on second homes/holiday lets both trend data and as a % of total housing stock.
- Housing and Homelessness Policies and/or Strategies from neighbouring councils (see above).
- Case studies.

## **11. Witnesses**

- Cabinet Member(s).
- Housing Associations.
- Officers from SKDC and Peterborough.
- CAB (Duncan Furey).

## **12. Other considerations**

None