

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

19 APRIL 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide background information on the provision of emergency accommodation for people presenting as homeless within Bridgend, focusing on the hostel provision at Brynmenyn to respond to Committee's queries regarding its quality and appropriateness of provision. The report also identifies a number of 'long list' options for consideration for a potential replacement provision.

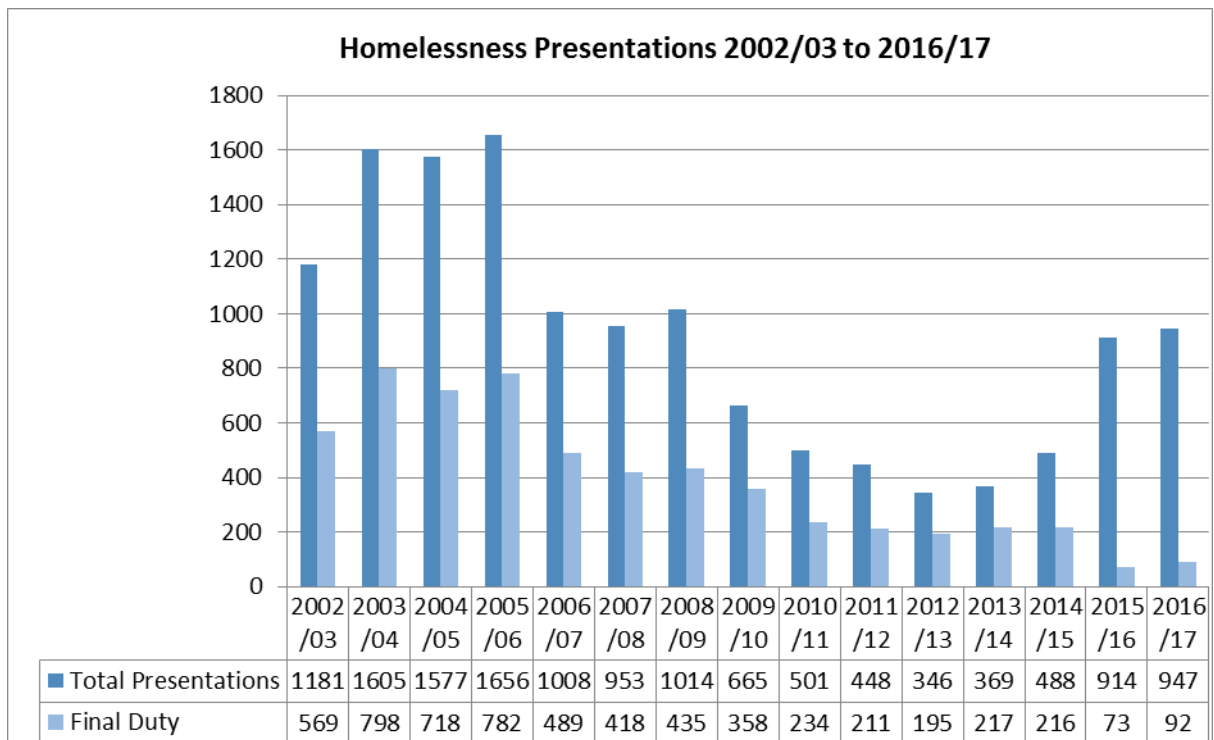
2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

The report contributes to the following outcomes within the Corporate Plan 2016/20:

- Smarter Use of Resources; and
- Helping People to become more self-reliant.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 changed the focus of support for homelessness and housing to prevent and relieve homelessness and to ensuring that people receive help as soon as possible. As a result (which is demonstrated on the chart below), the number of homelessness presentations has been increasing because everyone that is eligible is entitled to help, but the number of "final duty" priority need unintentionally homeless acceptances has substantially fallen. A 'final duty' is where the local authority must secure suitable accommodation for the applicant and their household members rather than help them to secure suitable accommodation. These can be cases where the applicant has lost their accommodation and attempts to prevent and/or relieve their homelessness have not been successful.
- 3.2 Having to respond in a reactive manner within short timescales places an increased pressure on the authority as it has to ensure that interim/emergency accommodation is available until suitable permanent accommodation is found. The reducing number of 'final duty' acceptances demonstrates that more homelessness is being prevented or relieved before it reaches the more critical stage of requiring temporary/emergency accommodation. Should the number of 'final duty' acceptances rise then the expected demand for interim/emergency accommodation would also be higher.



3.3 For the purposes of this report ‘emergency accommodation’ has been defined as short term emergency and interim accommodation available to the Council’s Housing Solutions team for use on a short term basis when presented with cases that require an immediate response to homelessness applications (it does not include other housing projects which provide longer term provision). This provision meets the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 duties in providing emergency accommodation whilst cases are being assessed. This includes the homeless hostel, Brynmenyn, Ty Ogwr and Cornerstone provision, emergency bed space at the Kerrigan project and leased temporary accommodation. This accommodation is used where we have a duty to secure accommodation under the Act.

3.4 Although not part of our emergency accommodation as defined above, information on the nightly floor space (floor space at the Kerrigan run by Gwalia) has been included in this report to provide context to the needs of street homeless provision for those that we have no housing ‘duty’ towards but which nevertheless require a place to sleep overnight This is a direct access provision which has 9 nightly floor spaces for street homeless people

The provision of emergency and interim accommodation is as follows –

Scheme	Provision	Client Group
Brynmenyn	16 units	Various
Ty Ogwr/ Cornerstone	Ty Ogwr 16 units Cornerstone 5 units and emergency bed space	Single Homeless provision with support
Leased Accommodation	20 units	Various

Bed and Breakfast	Used as a last resort	Adults only. No under 18"s
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3.5 The services highlighted are resourced through a combination of Council funding, WG homelessness funding and Supporting People Programme Grant funding. Total expenditure is shown in the table below.

Year	B&B & Leased Void £	Brynmenyn Hostel £	Ty Ogwr £	Cornerstone £	Total Gross Expenditure £
2016/17	53,097.94	243,225.86	200,011.13	47,013.04	543,347.97
2015/16	119,721.79	260,422.25	266,452.18	49,421.84	696,018.06
2014/15	226,962.28	285,461.52	252,891.15	47,013.04	812,327.99
2013/14	297,095.16	179,617.37	166,187.96	49,266.80	692,167.29
2012/13	317,903.67	194,194.10	0.00	49,991.00	562,088.77

3.6. Some of the expenditure above is supported by the Supporting People Grant funding from Welsh Government and annual values for these contracts are – Brynmenyn £179,992, Ty Ogwr £178,898, Cornerstone £74,556 and Kerrigan £270,000 The Supporting People funded projects are commissioned on a contract basis from external providers and are assessed on both quality and financial criteria to ensure good practice, service delivery and value for money.

3.7 The wider economic costs and social costs of not providing such services, although difficult to quantify in financial terms, can be captured by looking at the causes of homelessness, examples of which can be driven by substance misuse, poor educational attainment, mental health, job loss and crime and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) agenda which has highlighted the long term effects to individuals and society of young people growing up in households dealing with child maltreatment and household dysfunction such as parental separation, substance misuse and incarceration.

3.8 Compared with people with no ACE's, those with 4 ACE's are more likely to be incarcerated, smoke cannabis, have been the victim or perpetrator of violence against another person, are susceptible to chronic diseases and have low mental wellbeing. Research suggests that the estimated average cost of a homeless person per year is £26,000 when you take into account the costs of convictions, accessing A&E, support needs, policing etc., therefore any preventative actions and support that can be put in place will help mitigate those circumstances and potentially reduce the overall cost to public resources.

3.9 Whilst anecdotally it may be expected that overall the largest proportion of household seeking emergency accommodation would be families, figures show that for 2016/17 the highest percentage of household type accessing emergency accommodation has been single males, with households with dependent children making up 18% of residents.

- 51% single males
- 26% - single females
- 12% - single female with dependent children

- 5% - couple with no children
- 4% - couple with dependent children
- 2% - single male with dependent children
- Less than 1% - 2 or more adults with no dependent children

3.10 Also significant are the age ranges that have presented as homeless. From the figures below 69% are under the age of 35. This has two main consequences - it limits the amount of Local Housing Allowance that under 35's can claim in the Private Rented Sector to a 'shared room rate' and also it limits the options for housing for this age group as the amount of shared move-on accommodation is difficult to source as supply doesn't always meet demand.

%	Age
7%	16 – 17
31%	18 - 24
31%	25 - 34
28%	35 - 54
3%	55+

3.11 It is relevant that 69% of people using all temporary accommodation are under 35 years of age (given the issues highlighted above) but these individuals often have multiple needs. There are a number of tailored services in place for complex cases at Ty Ogwr and Cornerstone (and other housing support projects currently in place) but where supported accommodation for this level of individual complexity is available, it can quickly become oversubscribed and move-on accommodation from the private sector or RSL's can be difficult to secure.

3.12 However, some complex cases exceed the level of support that housing can provide. The complexities of some individuals presenting for housing can at times be much higher than the level of support that can be provided at these projects. Although exhibiting mental health support needs, many of these individuals do not fit the medical model of mental health diagnosis and are therefore considered to have behavioral and lifestyle issues often linked to drugs and substance misuse. These individuals are often young (18 – 25), including young former looked after children, often lead chaotic lifestyles, have involvement with a variety of other services, and would not fit in with the generic housing provision provided at Brynmenyn. This has an impact on housing options for this client group – the potential risk to other service users can make it difficult to secure the appropriate shared accommodation and the number of accommodation units can be in limited supply. In cases like this housing work closely with Social Services, Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) Probation etc.

Direct Access/Floor Space

3.13 The Kerrigan, (Gwalia) direct access floor space pilot project based in Waterton has been operational since the 1st of November 2017 for 18+ age group. Although a number of other areas respond only to cold weather and a fall in temperature to provide floor space, a view was taken in early Autumn that wet conditions can be just as, or even more, detrimental and that the temperature alone was not a relevant measure to determine service provision. As a result, the provision of 6 beds of direct access floor space started in November. This has now been increased to 9 beds and during the recent spell of snow and cold weather the service expanded to accommodate up to 16 people. Individuals can access this

provision outside of housing solutions by presenting at the Gwalia Hub where advice and assistance is provided and a mini risk assessment is undertaken. Priority is given to those with a local connection. However, if there is capacity within the service this criteria is relaxed. Individuals are then allocated a space at the project for the night, leaving by 8.00 am in the morning. The Breakfast Run operated by the Wallich provides breakfast each morning.

3.14 Although intended as a pilot project to ascertain the needs of homeless people in Bridgend, it is apparent that the need is greater than originally thought. Analysis shows that the floor space (as at Feb 2018), had 53 unique individuals accessing the service. In order to support individuals using this service, to enable them to make positive sustained changes a unique person centered intensive support service has been provided alongside the floor space, subsequently 14 people have been supported to move into their own tenancy. As expected, service users had a combination of support needs which have no doubt contributed significantly to the loss of accommodation. Service users' needs go beyond a simple lack of accommodation –

- 20 people had substance misuse issues,
- 23 suffered from mental health issues,
- 17 were street homeless or sofa surfing,
- 16 were prison leavers,
- 7 had debt issues,
- 9 had domestic violence issues,

Brynmenyn

3.15 Brynmenyn is owned by BCBC and the hostel is managed by the Wallich who provide housing related support to residents on site on a contracted basis. The Wallich undertakes out of hours services for people presenting as homeless. This project provides support to families and individuals. The contract is due for renewal on 30th April 2018 but Cabinet has approved a waiver to 30th April 2020 in order to allow a review of service options and an options report on the use of Brynmenyn to be developed.

3.16 The Hostel has become established within the community. Its central location means that it is well served by buses, is fairly central for children to attend their schools without much disruption and has access to health and GP services. The main building is currently empty as work on emergency reconstruction of the rear wall takes place as well as the reinstatement of the kitchen and utility room (see Appendix 1- external works).

3.17 The Service provides 16 accommodation based units with the intention to offer a homely, safe environment for residents and to assist them with access to services to develop or prolong independent living, including access to 24 hour on-site support. The Service also provides floating support to facilitate the smooth and seamless transition from Brynmenyn to sustainable permanent accommodation within the wider community. A full list of services provided is attached at Appendix 2. Members are requested to note the broad range of support as residents are supported to develop domestic life skills, facilitate contact with local community groups eg education, liaise with statutory or other professional services, health, and access rehabilitation and specialist counselling if required. Support services will be

part of the re-tender process going forward and would be shaped by discussions on any future model.

3.18 Families with children using the Service has reduced over time, from 93 families using the Service, during 2014/15 (peaking at 13 families using it at any one time), to 67 families using it in 2016/17 (with 9 families at any one time). Figures for 2016/17 show that overall more single people/couples without children (59%) used Brynmenyn, than families with children (41%).

- 26% were single female
- 24% single male
- 8% couple with no children
- 26% single female with children
- 9% couple with dependent children
- 6% single males with children

3.19 Further analysis of the use of temporary accommodation shows that between 2011/12 and 2016/17 that there has been an overall reduction of 22% in the use of temporary accommodation (because of the preventative duty). There has been a significant decrease in the number of households placed in Bed & Breakfast (B&B) accommodation because of a deliberate policy decision taken in recent years that B&B's are not suitable accommodation for families. As this reliance has reduced, there has been a 70% increase in the use of the hostel and emergency accommodation.

3.20 Demand and supply of emergency accommodation fluctuates throughout the year and is unpredictable but it can be clearly influenced by a number of factors -

- The number of cases presenting as homeless on a daily basis which the Council has a duty to investigate.
- The reduction in the use of B&B (72% since 2011/12) has led to an increase in the use of more suitable emergency accommodation (i.e. hostel). Whilst B&B is used, it is as a last resort only and we do not place under 18s in such accommodation.
- The unpredictability of household type can severely limit the number of options available to housing as steps are taken to manage potential risks in mixing certain household types together i.e. families residing with young single homeless clients, or individuals whose behaviours are a cause for concern.
- The availability of move-on accommodation (accommodation which is suitable for clients to live independently) for individuals which cannot be guaranteed and has the potential to silt up the accommodation if suitable premises cannot be found.
- The difficulty in nominating or placing complex cases which is dependent upon RSLs accepting nominations and private sector accommodation being available.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1. The leased accommodation units are a valued resource in supporting the council to meet our housing duties within Bridgend and offer a flexible option for the provision of emergency accommodation. In addition the temporary accommodation provided through Ty Ogwr and Cornerstone for single homeless people with support is an invaluable resource. However, the current provision is at times under pressure, not only due to the number of cases presenting but also due to the increasing complexity of cases that are presenting for housing. It is therefore proposed to investigate opportunities to increase the number of private sector leased properties and establish a specific project working in partnership with Social Services to establish a jointly supported project for young people with both social services and housing needs. This is at the early stages of discussion and is currently being developed.
- 4.2 The complexity of street homelessness cannot be overlooked. Some analysis into the background information of some of the individuals accessing floor space has found that there were many reasons for people not securing or maintaining accommodation available to them. Some had previous accommodation but could not maintain it; some had been evicted from hostels because of their behavior; some had been sleeping rough for a long time and spent time between Swansea, Bridgend and Cardiff and this was a chosen way of life. The apparent and evidenced need makes a strong case for a continued direct access service throughout the year, rather than only through the winter months. Although it is expected that numbers would drop in the summer months, it is nevertheless a valuable resource which offers an alternative to people living on the streets. It is therefore, proposed to establish this service all year round but with the flexibility to increase/decrease the number of bed spaces depending upon the pattern of use and requirement. A permanent provision would allow us to develop the model further and build synergy with other housing and support projects.
- 4.3 The main emergency homeless hostel at Brynmenyn has to be used on a flexible basis as demand fluctuates during the year. Although its primary purpose was intended to house families only, over time it has had to respond to other needs. However, whilst it serves a much needed purpose in providing emergency housing for immediate homelessness presentations and provides a responsive and quality service, the building standards are not of good quality. The building -
- Does not currently meet the needs of service users. The internal layout limits our ability to respond to those with certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act (See Appendix 3 – internal layout).
 - Is not conducive to a supportive and positive environment for children and families (See appendix 4 – typical family room).
 - The current building and layout does not easily allow the use of the accommodation to be maximized or is flexible enough to meet the variable needs and variable household make-up.
 - It has shared bathroom and kitchen facilities limiting privacy for residents (See appendix 5– shared kitchen).

- It has little outdoor space for families and one communal area (Appendix 6 – general living).
- It is shabby and psychologically uninviting for people who are in a vulnerable and stressful state.
- We are unable to place people who have greater vulnerabilities and complex needs.

Future Provision

4.4 The information provided above highlights the unpredictability of the provision required at any one time. It cannot be predicted who will make a homeless presentation, when, or what specific needs that have to be met. It is clear that the current generalist ‘one size fits all’ approach to Brynmenyn does not have the physical capacity to cater for the different circumstances and different needs for each resident. It is also clear that the current building has many limitations. Basic requirements for any future provision would be a building that -

- Is Equality Act and Health and Safety compliant
- Is of a flexible design and capacity to respond to the varying needs and client groups which can be sectioned off to meet the demand at any particular time
- Has suitable and individual bathroom facilities for residents
- Has suitable cooking and eating facilities
- Is in a suitable location within the County Borough
- Is self-contained allowing privacy for residents whilst also offering communal space

Additional requirements could include –

- Psychologically informed environment – design and decoration
- Internal and external children’s playing space
- Meeting rooms for professional support

4.5 The costs will vary considerably depending on the level of specification and design that is decided. If a new build is required an estimate, based on RSL redevelopment, could be in the region of £1.75 - £2m based on like for like provision but this would be dependent on the availability and cost of land and would rise as specifications became higher. Although at this stage a full cost benefit analysis has not been undertaken, a long list of potential options has been drawn up for consideration. Attached at Appendix 7 is a long list of potential options with a number of constraints identified. Options are -

Option 1: A provision can be retained at the same location

Option 2: A new build provision can be provided elsewhere

Option 3: An alternative Council building is identified for the provision and the future use of Brynmenyn is investigated

Option 4: No direct hostel provision maintained and new model of dispersed accommodation developed

4.6 The long list of options attached has had initial exploration. Consideration of the opportunities and constraints have been taken into account to develop a short list for further investigation. These considerations include –

- the availability of resources – council funding, Social Housing Grant (58% grant) and land/property availability
- whether needs of service users and statutory requirements can be met
- location - planning and community issues
- value for money – does it provide longevity and meet future needs, and on-going financial commitments

4.7 After taking into consideration the criteria above, it is recommended that from the long list attached a reduced shortlist of options is agreed for further exploration and detailed analysis of financial costs, availability and suitability is undertaken from which a final decision can be made. It is proposed that the following options be worked up as proposals for consideration –

4.7.1 (Option d on the attached) Demolition and re-build by RSL as part of a negotiated deal

4.7.2 (Option e on the attached) The property is sold on the open market to fund an alternative location

4.7.3 (Option f on the attached) The property is 'part exchanged' in a deal with a local RSL for an alternative use

4.7.4 (Option g on the attached) The property is utilised for another purpose by the Council and an alternative property is allocated from those already in Council ownership

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An EIA will be undertaken during the development of the short list options

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 At this stage the capital and revenue cost of any new provision is unable to be quantified and will depend on the option going forward. Financial information will be part of the option appraisal of any shortlisted options and will be reported to Members.

Current resources available to the Council from Welsh Government Grants include Social Housing Grant (for RSL expenditure), Supporting People Grant Programme monies, and Homelessness Prevention monies. Capital funding from the Council may be required, but this would have to be bid for through the capital programme

bidding process as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and is subject to available funding and competing priorities.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 It is recommended that Members note the report and provide comment on the -

8.1.1 short list of options for the future provision of emergency/hostel provision

8.1.2 proposals for a permanent 'floor space/direct access provision throughout the year

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Background documents

None