

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

15 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE

WELSH GOVERNMENT HOMELESSNESS PHASE 2 CAPITAL BIDS

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update regarding Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC) response to the Welsh Government Homelessness Phase 2 Guidance.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
1. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 2. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of the Covid 19 response, all local authorities were expected to ensure that no individual was street homeless and was provided with suitable temporary accommodation. Suitable temporary accommodation was defined as having en-suite facilities and where possible access to own kitchen. For BCBC this entailed re-purposing its current temporary accommodation and under-occupying premises to ensure it met those requirements as far as possible; reducing the numbers in floor space; securing bedrooms within the local hotels that had remained open; the use of Air BNB; purchasing four homeless pods; providing flat pack furniture, microwaves, and small fridges where needed; and providing take-away meals for those without access to a kitchen. 24 hour security has also been provided for hotels.
- 3.2 A Guidance Note from the Minister for Housing and Local Government extended the definition of vulnerable with regards to the 'priority need' criteria set out in the

Housing (Wales) Act 2014. In effect this makes all homeless persons eligible for an offer of temporary accommodation. This Guidance Note remains in place, with no known timescale for review.

- 3.3 In accordance with Welsh Government (WG) Guidance, BCBC has accommodated significantly increased numbers in temporary accommodation. Between March to November 2020, 587 households have been provided with temporary accommodation.
- 3.4 On 3rd June 2020, WG issued Phase 2 Guidance, which makes it clear that those individuals being temporarily accommodated are to be provided with permanent accommodation, with no one returning to homelessness. A Rapid Rehousing approach is to be taken to help enable this.
- 3.5 To support these plans WG provided Phase 2 capital and revenue funding for projects aimed at providing additional accommodation and support services for people housed under Covid 19 conditions. A competitive funding process was set out to bid for an initial £20 million funding pot. This pot was subsequently extended to £50 million. Funding bids could be made for both revenue and capital projects but is only in place until 31st March 2021, with no current commitment for funding past this date.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Currently Bridgend Council has around 125 households being supported in temporary accommodation.
- 4.2 On 30th June 2020, BCBC submitted a funding application and Phase 2 Plan to WG. The application included funding bids for 7 capital projects and 8 revenue projects. Liaison with providers and partner Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) took place and bids focused on the following key areas:
 - 1) To free up the Council's current supported housing projects by securing move-on accommodation for those that can live independently and may only need low level of support for a short period of time. This will then make accommodation available for more challenging clients;
 - 2) Increase the stock of accommodation in the County Borough as quickly as possible in addition to the schemes and projects programmed through the use of the Social Housing Grant by seeking capital funding to purchase property from the open market;
 - 3) Maximising the Council's current support projects, and if required look at enhancing support, in particular the substance misuse outreach support;
 - 4) Re-purpose some of the current projects to provide a triage/assessment centre to replace floor space and pods which WG do not support;
 - 5) Providing additional incentives to private sector landlords i.e agreement to cover damage costs etc in an attempt to overcome any reluctance to take on some of the Council's clients.
- 4.3 The decision making process for the capital bids was carried out by WG. WG scrutinised applications taking into consideration minimum standard requirements and a financial viability model. Clarification meetings were held between WG and

the RSLs prior to an indicative allocation of funding. Funding will be paid directly to RSLs from WG. The RSLs will supplement the grant funding with private finance.

- 4.4 Three of the capital projects require planning permission and as such are going through the application process. Once delivered the capital projects will provide up to 34 units of accommodation. These will increase BCBC's social housing stock and also allow for increased temporary accommodation units. The revenue projects will enable increased support packages to those who are homeless.
- 4.5 In addition to funding bids, as part of its Phase 2 Plan BCBC committed to working with RSL partners to develop a Rapid Rehousing Protocol (RRP) to help meet WG requirements as quickly as possible.
- 4.6 Following an agreement between BCBC and RSL partners, a RRP has been agreed and has been operational since June 2020. The Protocol explains the context within which BCBC is now working and outlines a new operational process that is being followed, to meet the pent up demand currently housed in temporary accommodation, such as hotels and Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- 4.7 The RRP is operating a dual allocation system with:
 - a) housing allocations (mostly family accommodation) through the Common Housing Register using the Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP) already in place, and;
 - b) a separate Rapid Rehousing process for a period of time to deal with the current situation.
- 4.8 To date 70 households have been rehoused via the RRP, with a further 21 pending a move in date. Without this process it is likely that the numbers in temporary accommodation would be higher than the current 125 households at present.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Council should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report:

Long term	Increasing the stock of homes will support objectives
Preventative	Would prevent street homelessness
Involvement	Would involve partner agencies to deliver
Integration	Benefits community development and sustainability
Collaboration	Involvement with a range of agencies and partners is required to deliver

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 BCBC has claimed £1.565 million from the WG Hardship fund covering the period March to October 2020 which has funded the support highlighted in paragraph 3.1. Further claims will be made on a monthly basis for the remainder of the 2020-21 financial year, however the funding is only in place until 31 March 2021, with no current commitment from WG for funding past this date. Should additional revenue funding not be forthcoming from WG then further financial support will be required, if these projects are to continue and a budget pressure will need to be submitted by the service area as part of the budget setting process for 2021-22.

9. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet note the report and support:

- 9.1 the collaborative working arrangement with Welsh Government (WG) and the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to increase the temporary accommodation units across the Borough;
- 9.2 the partnership working with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) through the Rapid Rehousing Protocol (RRP) to reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation.

Gill Lewis

Interim Chief Officer - Finance, Performance and Change.

December 2020

Contact officer: Martin Morgans - Head of Partnership Services

Telephone: (01656) 642154

Email: martin.morgans@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend

Background documents: None

