LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

WARDS: All

REPORT TITLE: Risk Deep-Dive – Increasing Homelessness

REPORT OF: Executive Director Supporting Communities

FOR SUBMISSION TO:

DATE:

Audit and Corporate Governance Committee 3

3rd April 2025

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides Members with an overview of the Homelessness principal risk to enhance the Committee's understanding of how this risk is being managed. The purpose of the risk deep-dive is to enable the Committee to fulfil its duties regarding monitoring the Council's effective operation of risk management as set out in its Terms of Reference.

Local Government Act 1972 - Access to Information

No documents that require listing were used in the production of this report.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the committee notes how this risk is being managed.

Signed:

Date: 24/03/2025

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee (the Committee) is required to monitor the Council's effective development and operation of risk management. In addition to this, the CIPFA position statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities specifies a number of core responsibilities for audit committees, one of which is to "consider the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements and the control environment."
- 1.2 The purpose of the risk deep dive is for the Committee to obtain a better understanding of the chosen risk area and develop insight into the risk controls and action plan.

2 Current Risk Context

- 2.1 National Context The increase in homelessness and use of temporary accommodation is an issue across the country. Nationally in 2023-24, initial homelessness assessments were made for 358,370 households in England, up 10.4% from the previous year. Of these, 324,990 households were assessed as owed a homelessness duty, due to being homeless or threatened with homelessness. Shelter's detailed analysis of official homelessness figures reveals that one in 160 people in England are now homeless, and in December 2024 Shelter reported 326,000 individuals are now living in temporary accommodation a 17% increase in one year most of whom are in families with children.
- 2.2 London Context London Councils report that more than 183,000 Londoners are estimated to be homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by their local council. This is the highest-ever level of recorded homelessness in the capital equivalent to at least one in 50 Londoners. Government data on council spending figures show that in 2023-24 London boroughs spent almost £1.6bn on homelessness. This includes £114m per month spent on temporary accommodation or around £4million each day. These are the 'gross' upfront costs of providing homelessness services and indicate the total amount of homelessness and temporary accommodation spending.

3 Camden Context

3.1 Increase in demand for homelessness interventions - In Camden there are approximately 400 approaches for homelessness assistance per month, this is up almost 40% from last year. The main cause of homelessness in Camden is loss of private rented sector accommodation, parents and relatives no longer willing or able to accommodate and relationship breakdown. These are expected to continue as the main drivers for homelessness in the Borough - and are often areas in which we have limited control or ability to prevent. Most of our approaches are at a relief stage (56 days)- meaning we have limited time to prevent homelessness. Camden housing costs are incredibly high - and increasing. It is important to note that the overall average house price has increased by 73% in 15 years - from £509k in 2008 to £1,047,344 in 2025. The

average private rent in Camden makes up 65% of median pay - with the unaffordability of the Borough having a direct impact on households approaching for homelessness support. We have seen a 41% reduction across London in private rented accommodation since the outset of the pandemic in 2020, and a 20% increase in average rental costs. Only 2.3% of properties across London are affordable within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) limits – down from 18% at the outset of the pandemic. None of these are in Camden. Lack of affordability and a diminishing private rented sector (PRS) has made it harder for us to discharge homelessness duties into suitable accommodation which is the route for households who are in temporary accommodation. The number of households who successfully secured accommodation in the PRS has declined since 2019 from 207 households in 2019-2020 to 139 households in 2023/2024.

- 3.2. Increase in use of temporary accommodation - The increase in homelessness has resulted in a significant increase in the number of households living in temporary accommodation - from 498 in 2019 to over 1000 in March 2025. Limited move-on options mean households are staying in temporary accommodation for longer periods. There has also been a reduction in the number of private landlords willing to rent their accommodation for the use of Temporary Accommodation for councils with London Councils reporting an 18% loss of TA stock in London from September 2022 - April 2023. The hostile market conditions in the PRS have resulted in growing reliance on hotel accommodation for emergency accommodation, around 70% of households in TA are living in costly, nightly paid accommodation (annexes, B&Bs and commercial hotels). This delivers inappropriate accommodation in turn worsening crisis situations for families and often placing schooling and support structures at risk. In addition, this is driving a significant overspend in the service, putting immense pressure on the Council's General Fund. The allocated budget for temporary accommodation for 24/25 is £6.6 million, the forecasted overspend is estimated to be £13 million, with the overall net spend forecasted to be £19.6 million. While many of the factors contributing to the homelessness and TA crisis are not within the local authority control, it is imperative that we source accommodation for families that is better and cheaper than hotels and improve the end-to-end process to meet our statutory duties and corporate ambitions.
- 3.3 Growing housing register and wait times Our social housing waiting list is large and growing, we currently have over 8000 households on the register an increase of 58% since 2016. The joint highest proportional increase in London since 2016. Recognising the large demand for affordable, stable social housing in the Borough we have the highest waiting time for central London Boroughs and those waiting for a one-or-two-bedroom home on average wait for over 694 days (this figure only includes those successfully housed).
- **3.4** Lack of housing stock to meet the need 70% of households on the register are overcrowded and the size of properties available for letting do not correspond to the demand for them. 35% of households on the register require a 3 bed or more, but these property sizes only made up 18% of

- council lettings. Only 650 properties became available for reletting in 2023-2024 from a stock of 22,960 council and 12,306 housing association homes.
- Authority areas impacted by rough sleeping in the UK and is second only to Westminster in terms of London rough sleeping numbers this reflects our position in the centre of London with transport hubs connected to the wider UK. There were 298 rough sleepers seen in Q2 2024/25. In 22-23 London saw a 21% increase in rough sleeping. Comparatively, in Camden rough sleeping increased but by a far lesser extent at 8%. This represents Camden's ability to prevent rough sleeping where possible and ensure when it occurs find sustainable and suitable options for people.
- 3.6 Data and systems for Homelessness and Temporary AccommodationManagement of data continues to be an issue within temporary accommodation
 and homelessness which slows down processes, efficiency and the quality of
 service delivered to residents. The roll out of a new case system in
 Homelessness Prevention has since improved data management, however the
 ability for the system to speak to temporary accommodation data is a risk. This
 situation leads to inefficiencies in providing support, thus risking resident safety.
 It also leads to difficulties in managing resources effectively and risks in terms
 of regulatory compliance. In addition, performance management is an ongoing
 issue, however, is being mitigated by the housing transformation roll out of key
 performance indicators and leading performance indicators to better manage
 performance.

3 Risk mitigation and monitoring

3.1 Increasing resource and specialisms in Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Services - The forecasted spent this year (24/25) on tackling homelessness is £39 million, this figure includes the forecasted spend on rough sleeping, temporary accommodation, homelessness prevention and our supported pathways and commissioned services, it does however exclude additional spend in supporting homeless families in adult social care and health. In addition, Camden is investing in an additional five homelessness prevention officers to help manage the increasing homelessness demand. These officers carry out statutory homelessness services for the Council, providing housing advice and assessment to determine whether homelessness duties are owed and assist residents to find a suitable housing solution. Camden is also increasing homelessness prevention support for families at risk of homelessness by investing in the creation of two new Tenancy Sustainment Officer posts to work with tenants and landlords with an aim to keep people threatened with homelessness in their current home. We have also recently recruited to specialist roles to focus on preventing homelessness for certain groups; hospital discharge, domestic violence and abuse and prison release. This will increase the capacity of the team by 20%. Our investment also includes a housing adviser role focused on providing advice and prevention support to those with a history of rough sleeping and additional support also

includes resource focusing on PRS procurement and additional floating support officer to work with people rough sleeping.

- 3.2 Increasing support in our street outreach team, Routes off The Streets and mobilisation of Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) funded supported accommodation schemes - The forecasted spend on rough sleeping in 24/25 is £3.8 million, inclusive of grant funding received through Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and SHAP. With this we have invested in additional posts in our outreach team, Routes off The Streets to focus resource on encampments and working with women who are rough sleeping. In adult social care, we have created two social work posts focused on homelessness which will work in a flexible way, supporting a multidisciplinary approach to finding solutions for those living in encampments to move away from the streets. A governance framework is being set up in the form of a monthly multi-disciplinary steering group through community safety for work on encampments. This will bring together colleagues from substance misuse and street outreach services, adult social care, community safety and green spaces. This will feed into a broader governance framework, reporting back to Cabinet Members and senior leaders as appropriate. New specialist services to increase our accommodation options for people rough sleeping are currently in mobilisation using Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) central government funding.
 - A Housing First scheme in partnership with Notting Hill Genesis and Westminster City Council comprising of 30 units of accommodation specifically for Camden including 10 council acquisitions, 10 Notting Hill Genesis acquisitions and bringing 10 Council general needs voids back into use. This Housing First scheme will provide a social housing tenancy and the wrap-around support for residents with a history of rough sleeping with multiple disadvantage to help them sustain tenancies and a life away from the streets.
 - 16 beds of off-the-street accommodation with a high level or support provided by Single Homelessness Project (SHP) at Grays Inn Road. This is specifically designed for short stays with move-on included in the offer
- 3.3 Temporary Accommodation Taskforce In October 2024, Housing Services kick started the Temporary Accommodation Taskforce to oversee the delivery of an action plan to radically improve the day-to-day experience of homeless residents and those at risk, and to tackle the rising financial cost to the Council of meeting the growing demand to provide emergency and temporary accommodation for these residents. The programme is delivering the following 3 workstreams:
 - Increasing supply of cost effective and quality temporary accommodation: (Supply) This includes tackling an over reliance on expensive commercial hotels and nightly let (annexes) accommodation as well as diversifying the temporary accommodation provision. The group will also explore the potential for delivering or purchasing new housing

developments, utilising general need stock with a focus on void properties on regeneration estates and developing new family hostels.

- Improving systems and processes within the homelessness system: (Demand) The Housing Division has recently undergone a redesign to rationalise roles and processes, to make them fit for the current and future challenges, with a view to making it easier for staff and residents to understand and navigate the process and be more strategic in our allocation of resources. The task group will review and consider the impact on the delivery and experiences of those navigating these services and ensure the collection and reporting of data relating to households within the temporary accommodation delivers on our priorities.
- Improving conditions and the support available for residents in Temporary Accommodation: (Support) Underpinning all of these outcomes is an overarching ambition to ensure residents who do have to live in temporary accommodation are better supported whilst living there. As households remain in temporary accommodation for longer, the task group will oversee work to review the support offer for those in temporary accommodation, the adequate supply and blockages around the supported housing pathway, options to discharge our statutory duty and the impact of the allocations policy alongside prevention activity to reduce numbers entering temporary accommodation in the first place.

Since launching the TA Taskforce, we have delivered several successes that contribute towards tackling the issue of overspend on Temporary accommodation:

- The team have been tackling the Council's over reliance on costly commercial hotels such as Premier Inn & Travelodge. Within the last 6 months, we have moved approx. 180 households from the most expensive form of TA into alternative, less expensive forms of TA.
- In the six months to 20th February 2025, we do not have any homeless households in Premier Inn or Travelodge hotels which has reduced weekly costs by £68,000
- We have re-negotiated rates with current nightly accommodation providers,
 the reduced rates are equivalent to a £1.2m annualised saving
- Onboarded 20 new property providers in the last 6 months focusing on affordability and quality
- Replaced expensive nightly provision with more affordable units, the reduced rates are equivalent to £750K annualised saving
- Use of short life leases across the borough for TA
- Commenced with the construction of two new family hostels at Camden and Chester Road which will provide 89 hostel units.

- Developed improved placement systems to better understand, monitor and control moves into temporary accommodation.
- Carried out an audit which has reduced the number of single households in temporary accommodation
- We have identified approximately 30 suitable void properties on regeneration sites which are to be relet as temporary accommodation on a short-life licence basis.
- Reletting a small number of general need void properties as temporary accommodation to help us meet some of the demand for self-contained units particularly for households with more complex needs and have an essential need to remain in the borough and sustain support networks.
- Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) To alleviate 3.4 the ongoing financial pressure of homelessness, the council is continuing to increase its in-house provision through the Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) and the development of hostels via the Community Investment Programme. The development of in-house temporary accommodation supply will enable the council to meet its statutory duties in tackling homelessness and reduce financial pressures associated with private sector temporary accommodation costs. Camden has invested in three phases of TAPP bringing the total number of homes we expect to purchase for temporary accommodation to 179. The Council is also investing £10m of existing corporate resources retained through Right to Buy receipts for procurement of residential properties which will be let as temporary accommodation whilst bolstering Camden's social rented housing stock. This has been enabled by the Government relaxation around the use of Right to Buy receipts in November 2024 where Councils no longer have to use 50% of receipts on new build homes - meaning we can use receipts to bring more properties back into social housing use.
- 3.5 Community Investment Programme Investment (CIP)- The Community Investment Programme has delivered 1,780 homes, 70% of which are genuinely affordable, as well as estate improvements and new community facilities since the programme was launched in 2010. Since April 2022, 368 affordable homes across various tenures have been completed, including 100 social-rented homes, 133 homes for temporary accommodation, 97 homes for refugees, and 38 homes as part of an extra care specialist scheme.
- 3.6 Increased support in the Adult Pathway and move-on- Camden has 682 bedspaces across 16 accommodation sites which form our supported housing pathway for single homeless people it is one of the largest in London and provides accommodation-based support to our more vulnerable residents who most often will have poor mental health, physical health and/or substance misuse needs we are seeing an increase in multiple-disadvantage across our pathways. The annual budget for the Adult Pathway is £10.7m.

We have a dedicated pathways move-on team that:

- Works directly with support staff and managers in the hostels to identify people who are ready for move on and support them
- Works with residents in the pathway on their finances, debts and medical needs encouraging engagement with support services and working to remove barriers to accessing support
- Works with residents to get on the Council's housing register or to access other housing options
- Provides training to residents on independent living skills and tenancy management

As part of the TA taskforce programme, a review of the pathways into and out of supported housing to improve through-put including:

- Recognising the barrier presented by our current allocations scheme not
 effectively prioritising homeless people, we are exploring direct offers of
 social housing to people ready to move on from our pathways to create
 space and throughput, with a full allocations scheme review underway
- In order to learn from best practice and increase hostel move-on, we
 intend to undertake a benchmarking exercise with boroughs who have
 higher rates of move-on than us; namely Barnet and Haringey
- 3.7 Data and Systems work The Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Digital Change Programme has been initiated to tackle the data and information management issues in Housing. The programme aims to achieve improved systems and use of systems for homelessness and temporary accommodation services, ensuring we have robust systems that meet our statutory requirements around data, document storage and integrated workflows.

Homelessness casework moved on to a new database, Locata, in 2024 which has now bedded into the service. Despite an initial challenging bedding-in period, the system has allowed us to better record and monitor statutory casework. Improved performance reports are now available which are assisting with better performance management. Work is now underway to ensure the data on Locata is linked with information on homes held elsewhere.

4 Outlook for the next 12 months

4.1 Service Restructure - The Housing Service is undergoing a large-scale restructure to better align services, enhance the procurement and management of temporary accommodation, and strengthen our frontline prevention resources. As part of this transformation, we are actively recruiting for key roles that will provide critical support to households experiencing homelessness and those living in temporary accommodation. These include the increased homelessness prevention resources including the two new tenancy

sustainment posts to focus on preventing homelessness. As well as property procurement specialisms and roles to undertake tenancy audits, property checks & deliver welfare support in the temporary accommodation team.

- 4.2 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Camden's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2029 (currently in draft) sets out clear priorities for the next 4 years on the Council and partners will tackle homelessness. These include making preventing homelessness a whole system priority, joining up housing, health and social care to reduce harm caused by homelessness, securing more affordable housing for the long-term and campaigning to address the structural barriers to preventing and relieving homelessness. Following the publication of the strategy, an action plan will be developed to progress these key areas of focus.
- 4.3 Winter Pressures Funding Winter Pressures funding has given us the opportunity to work with colleagues across North London, working together as a subregion to tackle rough sleeping. This funding will help us tackle rough sleeping around transport hubs in the sub-region (Camden has three key hubs-Kings Cross, St Pancras and Euston) which increases the import of those with no fixed abode. The plans for the approach will bring together the police, station staff, outreach support and community safety to take a coordinated response to rough sleeping hot spots. We will take a test and learn approach to this work.
- **4.4 TA Taskforce ongoing work -** The Temporary Accommodation Taskforce will continue to address the key areas outlined in section 3, focusing on:
 - Identifying barriers that prevent people from moving out of hotels and B&Bs into more suitable, long-term accommodation. This includes working with Good Work Camden and Debt Prevention to explore opportunities to deliver better support.
 - Expanding our floating support service to work more closely with families in temporary accommodation, providing guidance and options on their next steps toward stability.
 - Partnering with another local authority to conduct a comprehensive peer review of our private rented sector (PRS) service, identifying areas for improvement and best practices.
 - Recruiting additional resources to increase the procurement of selfcontained temporary accommodation.
- **4.5 Private Rented Sector Incentives-** We are actively increasing our supply of providers whilst building on existing partnerships with private landlords. We are also reviewing our landlord offer to improve access to the Private Rented Sector in which to support residents to sustain tenancies.
- **4.6 Review of our Housing Allocations Scheme -** Recognising the growing demand for homelessness assistance and increased cost in providing temporary accommodation in pursuance of our statutory duty, we will review our Housing Allocations Scheme. The scheme was last reviewed in 2018 and

currently provides very low priority for homeless households residing in temporary accommodation. On average, only 5% of our annual social housing lets are to homeless households.

- 4.7 Community Investment Programme investment in additional affordable and social housing As part of the Community Invest Programme, construction has also begun on a further 332 homes, 239 of which are genuinely affordable, including the start of construction on two new family hostels at Camden and Chester Road giving a total of 89 units that will be ready in Autumn 2026. By the end of the current Community Investment Programme, Camden will have built 4,850 homes, including 1,800 social rent homes, as part of a total investment of £2.3bn in Camden's communities.
- 4.8 Review of Sheltered Housing Assets In 2025, we will conduct a comprehensive review of our sheltered housing assets to assess its condition and long-term suitability for older residents. This review will evaluate key factors such as accessibility, maintenance requirements, and demand levels. The findings may highlight opportunities for improvement or alternative use. Where properties are deemed unsuitable for continued use as sheltered housing, we will explore repurposing them for temporary accommodation or other housing needs.

5 Legal Comments of Borough Solicitor

- 5.1 The Housing Act 1996 (Part 7) provides the statutory framework underpinning the duty and powers of the Council to provide assistance and make enquiries following an approach by applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 5.2 The Council is required to have a Housing Allocation Policy which clearly sets out the offer of the council to meet its Part 7 duties.
- 5.3 Any offer of accommodation must be suitable for the applicant and those reasonably expected to reside with the applicant and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2003 provides guidance on suitability.
- 5.4 The Homelessness Act 2000 introduced the requirement for a Homelessness Strategy to tackle homelessness and the Strategy should be reviewed every five years. The Strategy must set out the local authority's plan for tackling homelessness, securing suitable accommodation and support to be provided to applicants who are facing homelessness or threatened homelessness.
- 5.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced both a prevention duty and a relief duty aimed at tackling homelessness earlier and extended the scope to include assisting applicants who did not meet the homelessness criteria of priority, local connection and intentionally homeless.

6 Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

6.1 The Executive Director Corporate Services has been consulted, and his comments are incorporated within the body of the report.

7 Environmental Implications

- 7.1 If the proposals have environmental implications you must describe the impacts here and, in instances where they are detrimental to the environment, explain how they have been mitigated.
- 7.2 If the proposals have no environmental impacts, this section should say so.

Appendices

1. Principal Risk information and action plan ('risk on a page').

REPORT ENDS

Appendix 1: Principal Risk information and action plan (risk on a page)

Risk Title – 3. Increasing Homelessness	Risk Scores	Existing Controls			
Risk: Increasing number of people presenting as homeless put financial pressure on the Council due to expensive use of temporary accommodation. Cause: Sustained increase of people applying as homeless or sleeping rough due to the current economic climate, cost of living, central government asylum policy, and lack of suitable affordable homes. Consequence: Considerable pressure on general funds budget, hardship for Camden residents facing homelessness. Risk Update: Pressures on the Council's homelessness service has increased significantly over the last few years. This increase is caused by various factors including a reduction in affordable housing; delay in move-on from emergency accommodation leading to fewer vacancies; and an increase in refugees leaving Home Office accommodation homeless and in a destitute situation. Between April and June 2024, 387 people were seen rough sleeping in Camden. This represents a 38% increase compared to the same period last year. Q1 2024 also saw a 51% increase in statutory homelessness presentations compared with the same quarter last year with 721 applications in Q1 2023/24 compared to 1086 in Q1 2024/25. Camden is responding to this rise by ensuring that all people who rough sleep in the borough are provided with a service offer by Routes off the Street team. The council has been awarded over £4million via the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme to increase short and long-term accommodation for people who have slept rough. All London authorities are seeing large increases in spend on temporary accommodation. Camden's total spend on TA increased by 200% between 2021-22 and 2023-24 and is mostly made up by spend on B&B and commercial hotels. Camden has a duty to secure temporary and emergency accommodation for certain homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. At the end of Sept 2024, the Council was providing temporary accommodation to around 900 households. Numbers in temporary accommodation has increased by 42% since the end of ye	Current Score: L: 4 I: 5 Target Score: L: 2 I: 2 Gap to target: L:2 I: 3	enhanced of people and psych 2. Building cl and increa PRS proposustain ter 3. Identifying of hotels a accommod 4. Identify su for use as 5. Converting into TA to contained 6. To increas TA units, (to open in units 7. Following properties Purchase secured fu TAPP3, w the end of	blockages prevend B&Bs and indation options itable void proper TA (e.g., West Right as a small number help us meet so units are our in-house proper and Carlate 2025, proving through Tempo Programme (TA anding from MHC hich will deliver a 2025.	ch team to mee leeping by hiring eam. It is with private less with private less with private less with private less on regence to more suitable erties on regence Kentish Town er of general neame of the demanden Road host ding an extra 8 cess in securing rary Accommoderly 1 and 2, we be concerned to the cest of the demander of the de	et the needs ag a nurse landlords ss to more ents to moving out e, long-term eration sites estate) eds voids and for self- f-contained stels are due 6 family g 133 dation e have also phase, ts of TA by
Action	Expecte d impact	Resource	Owner	Due Date	Status
Deliver the housing restructure to align services to better procure and manage temporary accommodation and increase our frontline prevention resources.	Reduce L&I	Staff	G Marston	April 2025	In progress

A review of our sheltered housing service and stock may identify potential opportunities to consider a change of use to temporary accommodation where the building is deemed unsuitable for older persons living or underoccupied	Reduce L&I	Staff	G Marston	July 2025	In progress
Undertake Peer to Peer review of our Private Rented Procurement service with a view to increase our placements into the private rented sector.	Reduce L&I	Staff	G Marston	July 2025	In progress
Recruit additional resource to procure self-contained temporary accommodation.	Reduce L&I	Staff	G Marston	May 2025	In progress
Re-negotiate nightly rates with current accommodation providers.	Reduce L&I	Staff	G Marston	April 2025	In progress