

Slough Borough Council

Information needed	Details
Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 th October 2025
Subject:	Overview and Improvement Plan for Housing Demand and Temporary Accommodation Services
Lead Member:	Cllr Stedmond – Lead Member for Housing, Temporary Accommodation & Estate Renewal
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes – Executive Director Regeneration, Housing and Environment
Contact Officer:	Lisa Keating – Director of Housing
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report is a review of Housing Demand (Homelessness) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) services. It summarises the issues facing the service, actions taken over the last 12 months as well as medium and long-term improvement plans.

Recommendations:

The committee is recommended to

1. Provide oversight of the Homeless and Temporary Accommodation Service Improvement Plan. (A summary of this plan is provided at [Homeless and TA Service Improvement Plan.xlsx](#).)
2. Receive a briefing from officers on a quarterly basis to understand progress being made on delivering the service improvement plan.
3. Review progress at CISC meetings on a six-monthly basis

The committee is recommended to note:

4. The Council's significant challenges in relation to delivery of its statutory homeless duties;
5. The significant financial pressure this is placing on the Council's budget for 2025/26 and over the medium-term financial period;
6. That six monthly updates will be formally reported to Cabinet, including presenting a more detailed plan and dataset in future updates.

Update:

The Council provides services to over 2,800 homeless households that are at various stages in the homelessness process; the Council having a statutory duty to provide housing to those who meet the criteria set out in legislation who present as homeless

The homelessness service has a total annual turnover of approximately £40m p.a. The Council makes a loss in the form of the gap between the subsidy it can claim back from the Government, and the actual cost of housing people to whom it has had to accept a legal duty as homeless. At the moment, this gap is currently forecast to be £22m p.a. in 2025/2026.

Provision of temporary accommodation will always be loss making, unless the Government changes national policy, because the amount of money the Council can reclaim from the Government through Housing Benefit is fixed at 90% of what benefit levels (Local Housing Allowance) were in 2011. Since 2011 there has been a significant increase in market rents in the Southeast of England. So, the gap between what the Council can claim back, and actual cost is now significant. Given the huge increase in the number of people presenting as homeless this level of gap is unsustainable. The number of presentations as homeless increasing by **27.9%** over the last three years from 2086 in 2022/23 to 2,668 2024/25. For first 6 months of 2025/26 they are 20% greater than in 2022/23.

The report sets out actions to mitigate the increase in presentations, decrease the subsidy gap and to reduce the number of people being housed by the Council.

These will bring the overall cost to within a more sustainable level, as benchmarked against boroughs with similar demographics and housing supply costs.

Key actions will focus on preventing households from becoming homeless in the first place, in acquiring properties to discharge families into permanently and significantly increasing the rate at which families are helped to move out of temporary accommodation.

The only way the Council can reduce the built in deficit caused by the subsidy gap, is to have less people in temporary accommodation and to discharge them into permanent accommodation where they become responsible for their own costs and to reduce the time families spend in temporary accommodation without permanent housing.

The root cause of the current budget problem being the over 1300 currently in temporary accommodation for which only a part of the cost can be recovered from Government and the fact that the rate people can be moved out of this accommodation is not keeping pace with new acceptances of duty.

Though even if the number of households in temporary accommodation was reduced to 600 the overspend against what could be reclaimed would be circa £10million

Other key actions are looking to acquire cheaper property to use as temporary accommodation both in and outside Slough and increasing the supply of affordable housing in Slough in line with the wider Housing strategy.

Commissioner Review

There is a need for more joint working and shared accountability between services working with homeless people, to ensure robust process, good governance, efficient use of resources and that people get the appropriate support in a timely manner.

The Improvement Action Plan when fully developed must work alongside both the developing Homelessness Strategy and Housing Strategies to ensure all housing-related challenges are addressed comprehensively and effectively. It must be recognised that this will need to be an iterative improvement plan, as the broader economic, health and social factors can impact on the homelessness system in an unpredictable way. It will be essential that the plan is subject to continual review based on ongoing analysis of data, trends, lessons learnt and takes account of the up-to-date broader emerging pressures and other influencing priorities and has appropriate corporate oversight.

The delivery of the Improvement Action Plan will require significant investment to enhance, the skills and knowledge of staff, tools and technology and change the culture. Given the tight financial constraints on resources and borrowing the funds agreed (in the forthcoming resource plan) will need to be targeted to where it will make the most impact and deliver value for money.

Report

Introduction

- 1.2. The fundamentals for having a homelessness service which has the smallest possible gap between total costs and what can be reclaimed in the form of housing benefit are:
 - To do as much as possible to prevent people becoming homeless.
 - To be as robust as possible in assessing homelessness cases for relief and main duty within the statutory time frame
 - To avoid the use of hotel and B&B accommodation as much as possible
 - To procure good quality property on the best possible terms via long term leases rather than weekly or nightly arrangements
 - To ensure that claim for housing benefit is maximised
 - To have an effective discharge strategy to move people out of temporary accommodation
 - To have access to sufficient property at affordable rents to move clients into so they then become responsible for their own costs.
- 1.3. Some of these tasks are harder than others particularly preventing evictions and securing long term accommodation which people on benefit can afford. Slough has historically failed to be really effective in all these areas.
- 1.4. Slough's geographical position on the edge of London means that the Council has experienced very high levels of increase in homelessness and therefore demand for temporary accommodation as the London housing market remains overheated. Having slightly lower property prices while enjoying good public transport connections to London, also means London Boroughs secure accommodation and place households in Slough which reduces available supply and inflates rental prices in Slough.
- 1.5. The primary cause of homeless presentations is eviction from the private rented sector caused by landlords looking to increase rents or deciding to leave the rental industry (90% of UK landlords are micro businesses). Most people

accepted as statutorily homeless are on benefits and struggle to pay market rents.

- 1.6. Moving people out of temporary accommodation means in most cases, finding them permanent accommodation whose rent is at or close to the housing benefit cap or helping them into employment so they can pay market rent.
- 1.7. Slough has traditionally under budgeted for homeless services and been poor in processing cases, reconciling benefit claims and procuring properties for temporary accommodation. It has also struggled to recruit suitable staff. This placing it at an extremely vulnerable position as the number of presentations rose rapidly and rental prices increased.
- 1.8. In the Autumn of 2024, the Council identified a significant problem as it emerged the Council had lost track of 500 temporary accommodation cases so had been understating its budget position and the resulting benefit gap loss. A £10m budget pressure occurring because the Council was being charged for 500 clients it was not collecting housing benefit for.
- 1.9. The Council had also traditionally failed to ensure it was procuring good quality, well maintained and good value properties to use for temporary accommodation. Not carrying out sufficient checks on either properties or landlords.
- 1.10. The Council has also historically not looked to procure move on accommodation for temporary accommodation clients and to discharge them into the private rented sector where possible. JEH was used for this purpose at one point, but further acquisitions stopped in 2020.
- 1.11. Slough's own stock of municipal housing is small (6000 homes) and is heavily oversubscribed. Maximum possible use is now being made of this to discharge TA clients but there are legal limitations to this and the number of vacant properties that become available is small.
- 1.12. To get a view of the size of the challenge Slough faces as of 19th September 2025, key numbers were:
 - 1,038 homeless cases for which duty accepted,
 - 685 cases still being assessed
 - 200 new applications a month
 - 20 new acceptances a month
 - 7 families in B&B
 - 140 other clients in B&B
- 1.13. This has led to:
 - Forecast TA spend of £34.8m p.a.
 - Shortfall in housing benefit claimed - £22m p.a.
- 1.14. This is compounded by £8.34m of rent (primarily Housing Benefit) to be claimed for current tenants and £5.7m of rent (again primarily Housing Benefit) to be claimed for former tenants; a considerable amount of which may not be recoverable. At present, the Council has over 300 clients for whom a benefit claim has not been made though these are being processed as a priority.

- 1.15. One of Sloughs key problems is around having accurate data about whom was housed and where. This has led to the issues with claiming back housing benefit and avoiding overpaying rent and not managing arrears and costs.
- 1.16. This is exacerbated by having a number of computer systems (four) which do not effectively “talk to” each other. A key issue in terms of ensuring benefit recovery maximisation and being able to link each tenant to the invoice for their accommodation.
- 1.17. From a compliance side statutory policies and strategies were also out of date or not implemented correctly. For example, the homelessness strategy and allocations policy were out of date, and it was unclear if the Out of Borough Placement policy had been formally approved or not, though placements were occurring.
- 1.18. Processes and human resources had also been aligned to a much smaller perceived number of households in TA i.e. 800 instead of the approximate 1,300. This leading to a back log of assessing cases and progressing housing benefit claims. This is a problem because if a case accepted into relief is not assessed within the statutory timescale, then a duty owed becomes automatic.
- 1.19. Additionally, there were no records of formal written leases or other property agreements between some providers of TA and the Council. As such the Council could not track compliance or cost information accurately or identify liabilities for repairs.
- 1.20. The borough has a particular market challenge that with Crossrail even East London boroughs like Redbridge are within the statutory 1 hours travelling distance.
- 1.21. The following immediate actions were taken from October 2024 to deal with budget pressures and service issues:
 - 1.21.1.1. Manually gathering compliance documents e.g. Gas certification and electrical safety certificates
 - 1.21.1.2. Re-negotiating nightly spot rates with providers
 - 1.21.1.3. Reconciling the four systems Jigsaw (Homeless Case Management), NEC (tenancy, rents and property), Agresso (Finance) and Academy (Benefits)
 - 1.21.1.4. Creating and uploading the ‘missing’ 500 case accounts so benefit could be claimed
 - 1.21.1.5. Recruiting interim staff to deal with the backlog of cases
 - 1.21.1.6. Identifying and dealing with fraud which was an issue both in respect of landlords and staff
 - 1.21.1.7. Working with the Council’s Risk Management Team to raise the risk profile of TA.
 - 1.21.1.8. Implementing a scrutiny framework including weekly updates to the Section 151 officer, weekly updates to Corporate Leadership Team, a fortnightly meeting with the lead Member, monthly reporting to MHCLG and update reports to Commissioners.
- 1.22. Following on from the emergency actions the team then looked at the next steps to tackle the longer-term problems:

- 1.22.1. Setting up a focussed project team dealing with homeless assessment backlog
- 1.22.2. Further data reconciliation including bespoke work with outside specialist consultant PwC to reconcile TA provider invoices to TA placements held on the NEC. Computer system
- 1.22.3. Development of a B&B elimination plan, agreed with MHCLG, targeting zero families in B&B greater than 6 weeks and less than 50 households in total in B&B.
- 1.22.4. Increased TA step down activity involving the pro-active transfer of households in expensive Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's) and B&B accommodation to more affordable self-contained accommodation.
- 1.22.5. Gathering of additional compliance certification from TA providers and decanting households from unsafe homes.
- 1.22.6. Drafting and rolling-out Private Sector Lease (PSL) and Private Licence Agreement (PLA) documents to standardise the commercial agreement between the TA provider and SBC including clarity on the provision of compliance and fit-for-purpose accommodation. Drafting was completed by the Council's external legal provider in 2024 and final documents submitted early in 2025.
- 1.22.7. Specifying the IT system requirements that will form a business case to seek investment in improved information technology solutions.
- 1.22.8. Working with the housing operational group which meets monthly to carry out strategic planning around housing supply and management
- 1.22.9. Expanded reporting. The table below summarises how this was delivered:

Channel	Method and Frequency	Method
Cabinet Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly meetings between Member & Director of Housing Formal briefings 4th March and 8th July 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person meetings Power Point Slides
CLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly CLT meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal updates from S151 and Exec Director
Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly CLT meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal updates from Exec Director and Director of Housing
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly 'TA Exec Review Meetings' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person meeting
A&G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly update of Risk Register Quarterly update of Risk Log Attend A&G Board as requested TA Audit and response – November 2024 / January 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings with Audit to update Power Point Slides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Risk Dashboard Housing Risk Register Formal interviews, recommendations and response paper November 2024 – Jan 2025
Operational Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly data reconciliation meetings Daily stand-ups and huddles Performance management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole service Teams Meeting Teams huddles In person 1 to 1's
Council wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2024 project room August 2025 Housing Away Day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person Project Room In person away day at the Curve
MHCLG (Central Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person and Teams meetings

- 1.23. A 'one-Council' approach has been adopted with a range of non-housing functions supporting recovery work:

- Finance, incoming recovery and benefits – leading on collecting current and former tenant arrears, processing Housing Benefit claims and subsidy loss calculations, supporting forecasting and financial reporting.
- DDaT (IT Department) working on – production of a Power Bi dashboard, on-going data analysis, short and medium-term systems projects
- Workforce – support in the recruitment of backlog teams
- Transformation – support with short and medium-term systems projects.
- Customer services – ensuring responses to members enquiries and the housing Ombudsman were compliant and helping re-design the digital front door.

- Fraud, internal audit and risk teams – investigating historical and live fraud cases and enhanced reporting and management of risks, including reporting to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.
- Investment (Property Team) – identification of new units for TA and / or permanent ‘move-on’ e.g. Rigby lodge, Grand Heights
- HB Public Law – drafting of PSL and PLA agreements that formalise our contractual relationship with the TA provider.

- 1.24. One of the problems for the service has been difficulties recruiting good quality permanent staff in a very competitive market for people willing to work in what is a high stress and challenging area. This leading to an over reliance on temporary staff some who have proved to be of variable quality.
- 1.25. This turnover of staff has complicated the data reconciliation exercise. Staff continuity and competence being a big factor behind the loss of the 500 hundred active files in the first instance.
- 1.26. Clearly specifying the staffing needs of the service both to clear the current backlog fully implement an improvement plan and then long-term running of the service in a stable state being a priority for the service. This requiring a considerable increase in budget and effective planning in and then stepping down resources as back logs cleared.
- 1.27. A function closely linked to but not directly part of the housing needs service is the allocations process for the Councils own housing stock.
- 1.28. Slough has had significant difficulties in this area historically with an IT system failure and poor staff performance leading to the build-up of very high levels of voids and letting being suspended for a period to enable this to be fixed. These problems have now been fixed and the only void homes now in the system are those being worked on or actively being allocated.
- 1.29. Fraud has also come to light in this area in part enabled by the historic system failure and staff recruitment challenges.
- 1.30. The introduction of a Choice Based Letting system, which is now proposed, will speed up the letting process, give tenants more choice and make fraud significantly harder. While the low turnover rate of Council properties will mean that it will not massively effect numbers in TA it will mean properties are reallocated faster.

1.31. Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation strategic goals

- 1.32. To get to a state where the benefit gap / subsidy loss is minimised the following has to be done.
- 1.33. The development and implementation of a clear prevention and early intervention strategy with the identification of staffing and other resources required for this. This will require the establishment of a robustly managed rent deposit and rent top up scheme and an effective response to supporting tenants under new legislation which will make eviction harder but will be proceed by ongoing increase in evictions.
- 1.34. The establishment of a robust front door function with a housing options team that encourages and helps applicants; even those in statutory need who must remain in the private sector or move into housing and association or other “social” housing rather than into TA. This must be closely linked to employment advice and support as well as health and wellbeing advice and signposting.

- 1.35. The establishment of a clearer out of borough strategy which covers both short-term placement into temporary accommodation but also discharge into private sector or HA properties. This will need to tie in with a property acquisition strategy and involve building partnerships with other authorities and housing providers.
- 1.36. It should be noted that out of borough placement is not a magic bullet but moving clients to parts of the country where they can afford market rent or there is a supply of vacant social housing can be a tool in reducing numbers in TA. The Council acknowledges that this has to be done sensitively and requires working to acquire out of borough stock and / or partnership with a local authority or housing association with letting challenges.
- 1.37. Establishment of a clear move on action plan and establishment of a move on team able to support tenants into taking control of their own housing choices, providing support claiming benefits and accessing employment training
- 1.38. The above will all require proper resourcing in terms of the recruitment and funding of specialist staff teams but given the savings that could be made an appropriate resourcing plan needs to be worked up as a priority.
- 1.39. Reducing the use of temporary homes from 1,300 to 900 over a 2-5 year period by purchasing or leasing new homes that the Council can discharge duty into. This will require the development of a clear acquisition and funding strategy which links to the overall Housing Strategy and the HRA Business Plan. The root cause of the Council's overspend issues being the number of clients in temporary accommodation and the only way this can be brought down is by reducing that number in absolute terms
- 1.40. Reducing the cost of each individual temporary accommodation placement by better procurement and market management. At the moment, Slough has 65 different accommodation providers this needs to be reduced, and better procurement mechanisms and controls put in place which is focused on larger scale longer term leasing deals and placement contracts to get better value and security of supply.
- 1.41. Eliminating use of B&B by implementing the elimination plan, agreed with MHCLG, will aim to ensure that no families are in B&B for more than 6 weeks and less than 50 household's total at any one time are in B&B if only for a day
- 1.42. The Council will achieve its strategic goals by
 - Implementing the Landlord Services Service Improvement Plan for the allocations team agreed with the Regulator of Social Housing following our April 2025 inspection.
 - Implementing the TA and Homeless Service Improvement Plan
 - Updating all statutory policies, strategies and plans. This will require a review of departmental resourcing of the policy and strategy functions in the Housing Service.
- 1.43. If these goals can be delivered, and the Council is able to reduce the use of TA from around 1,300 units to 900 units then the Council would achieve the following financial outcomes over the next 5 years:

Description	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
	Revised Budget	Planned Budget				
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Estimated TA Households	1.300	1.300	1.200	1.100	1.000	0.900
TA Accommodation costs	£31.200	£34.841	£28.800	£26.400	£21.600	£17.820
TA Rental Income charged	£30.420	£34.061	£28.020	£25.620	£20.820	£17.039
Variance	£0.780	£0.780	£0.780	£0.780	£0.780	£0.781
Net TA pressure/savings		£3.641	-£6.041	-£2.400	-£4.800	-£3.780
Total HB TA Expenditure	£9.899	£32.698	£26.899	£24.595	£19.987	£16.358
Total HB TA Subsidy Recoverable	£3.365	£11.117	£9.146	£8.362	£6.796	£5.562
Total HB Subsidy loss (£)	£6.534	£21.581	£17.753	£16.233	£13.192	£10.796
Total HB Subsidy loss (%)	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%
Net HB pressure/(savings)		£15.046	-£3.828	-£1.520	-£3.041	-£2.395

- 1.44. The Rough Sleeping team will continue to deliver key interventions, including No Second Night Out (NSNO), the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP), and structured discharge pathways from hospitals and probation services. A lawful route for individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) is being established, supported by the recruitment of OISC-accredited adviser.
- 1.45. Though a lot of progress has been made in this area the service needs to establish a clearer pathway for care leavers to help meet our longer-term Corporate Parenting role.
- 1.46. The service also needs to establish a more effective Registered Provider Forum that will evolve into an Alliance of Preferred Partners to support the delivery of the overall Housing Strategy, help increase the supply of affordable homes in the borough and jobs for local residents and ensure that nomination rights and opportunities to discharge into HA properties are maximised.
- 1.47. The team also needs to work with the Economic Development team major employers and FE/HE providers, to provide employment and training opportunities for clients to increase their ability to sustain tenancies, utilising S106 monies where appropriate to fund these interventions.
- 1.48. The Council needs to improve invoicing and payment systems investing in new technology to ensure better control of payments to landlords. Over charging and charging for clients who have moved on being a historic problem in Slough.
- 1.49. Ending the use of short-term nightly rents-based model of procurement is a priority and needs to be a key component of the property acquisition policy as it is no longer an effective way to manage supply given the demand. The implementation of 10 year + 1 day long term leasing for which we are seeking legal clarification, should also be part of our TA acquisition strategy.
- 1.50. The service also needs to work in a more integrated fashion with the Empty Homes team (within Public Protection and Housing Regulation Team) to utilise, on a short-term basis, homes in probate or otherwise vacated and being investigated for temporary accommodation.

1.51. In addition, the service will continue to pro-actively work with central government partners who have already had input to and forward visibility of our phased recovery plans. Central Government partners are:

- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) – Who provide challenge to our plans and help identify opportunities on temporary accommodation cost mitigation. Note – this is not typically the role of DWP however, as Slough BC has an un-precedented volume of backlog cases, the amount of HB paid is higher than normal and has attracted additional scrutiny.
- Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – Who provide monthly challenge and clarity on H-CLIC returns, B&B Elimination on-going benchmarking of Slough Position to others
- Regulator of Social Housing – regulates the social housing sector, including local housing authorities and registered providers to ensure standards are met for current and future tenants. This includes properties utilised as low-cost accommodation by social landlords regardless of whether it is permanent or temporary accommodation.

1.52. There are significant IT issues still to be resolved for the service. Issues arising from shutting down the previous Capita system prematurely before the new NEC system went live continuing to course problems.

1.53. This being compounded by the decision in February 2023 for the Council to move away from paying Housing Benefit into a generic account covering all cases, to paying Housing Benefit against each individual tenancy and rent account. At the same time, the Council agreed to replace the LHA rate as the property charge with the actual market rate charged by the provider. This significantly increased the complexity of managing Housing Benefit and systems need to be improved to deal with this.

1.54. The Housing service is in the process of developing a fully funded resource plan that will enable the delivery of these strategic goals. This will be brought to a future briefings and scrutiny meetings

1.55. In terms of National context In April 2025, the National Audit office highlighted that between 2015-16 and 2023-24, there had been an 84% increase in households in temporary accommodation. In September 2025 it was widely reported that nationally, spend on TA was increasing by 25% annually and was now at £2.8bn p.a. For the Council, the impact of the M4, M25, Elizabeth Line and Heathrow, combined with our proximity to large West London Boroughs means Slough is a 'geographical hotspot' for homelessness and TA. MHCLG data shows that per 1,000 households in the Borough, Slough has the highest number of households in temporary accommodation.

Local Authority	Total No. in TA	Total No. Initial Assessments	No. of H'holds in LA (000's)	Positive Prev'n in Period	Positive Relief In Period	Assesments Per H'holds (000's)	No. in TA per 000 H'holds	Positive Outcomes Per 000	Total Evictions	Evictions/1000 households
Slough	1,019	263	56	18	15	4.7	18.2	0.6	94.0	1.7
Luton	1,078	546	77	102	117	7.0	13.9	2.8	142.0	1.8
Hastings	561	291	44	55	32	6.6	12.8	2.0	78.0	1.8
Manchester	2,813	1,406	220	91	168	6.4	12.8	1.2	345.0	1.6
Brighton & Hove	1,600	428	128	101	48	3.3	12.5	1.2	108.0	0.8
Birmingham	4,824	1,915	433	514	295	4.4	11.1	1.9	247.0	0.6
Crawley	481	225	46	56	13	4.8	10.4	1.5	53.0	1.1
Milton Keynes	985	603	110	36	66	5.5	9.0	0.9	117.0	1.1

2. Options Considered

3. **Do nothing** – the Council must meet its statutory duties; however, the current model is creating significant financial pressure and is not a sustainable way forward.
4. A different model based on ensuring all new cases are processed within statutory timescale but with a high bar on acceptance

5.

Prioritising moving clients out of TA into private sector tenancies

Acquiring properties to discharge clients into long term but where the rent level is close to local housing allowance levels in and outside the borough

Working with clients to help them move into employment and pay at least some of their rent

This will require investment in staff, processes and property acquisition but is key to bringing the financial pressures under control

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.1.1. The estimated implications of proposals outlined in the Improvement Plan are set out in the table below. An estimated £2.150m GF revenue and £5m HRA capital funding will be required to support the proposals identified. The current HRA 30year Business Plan already includes provision for £5m for new affordable housing so only the additional £5m is required.

Proposals	Description	Indicative costs	Additional	Additional
			GF Revenue	HRA Capital
		£m	£m	£m
1 Additional core capacity (invest-to-save)	New permanent staff - Officers x10, Manager x1	0.600	0.600	0.000
2 Dedicated PRS incentives	Deposits, rent in advance, Finder's Fees and capped rent uplifts etc	0.800	0.800	0.000
3 Digital enablement	Additional support	0.300	0.300	0.000
4 Duty discharge function	New permanent staff Officers x5	0.450	0.450	0.000
Total Revenue		2.150	2.150	
5 Acquisition of new Affordable homes	100 over 5 years	10.00	0.00	5.00
Total Capital		10.00	0.00	5.00

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. NA

5.3. Equalities Implications

5.3.1. The Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations across protected groups. Homelessness and TA is likely to comprise all equality groups and some groups will be over-represented such as women, some ethnic groups, people with disabilities, young people and care leavers. The improvement will positively impact all equality groups, but will particularly impact those more likely to find themselves homeless. Locally, the proposed plan particularly supports residents with disproportionate needs, including disabled people, women (especially those affected by domestic abuse or pregnancy), young people and care leavers, ethnic minorities, migrants with insecure status, rough sleepers, older people, and those facing language, literacy, or digital barriers.

5.3.2. The plan is expected to have a positive equality impact. Early Intervention staffing will improve access and reduce crisis placements. Targeted financial tools and tailored pathways for rough sleepers will help reduce health and safeguarding inequalities. Digital and assisted-digital options, alongside staff training and quality assurance, aim to reduce unequal outcomes. In addition, the protected characteristics of care leavers and care experienced will be addressed in this plan as it will have implications around how housing is offered to young people e.g. they are exempt from intentionally homeless status

5.3.3. Some risks remain, such as private sector incentives favouring easier-to-let cases, digital exclusion, and inconsistent NRPF decisions. These are addressed through ring-fenced support, inclusive service design, legal oversight, and equality-led placement protocols. Monitoring includes live Equality Impact Assessments, monthly data by characteristic, and outcome reviews. Governance is maintained through quarterly equality reviews and escalation to Scrutiny if gaps persist.

5.3.4. Overall, the plan is assessed to have a positive impact on equality, with earlier support, safer pathways, and reduced harm, provided mitigations are applied effectively

5.3.5. The implementation of the service improvement plan will positively impact on residents with protected characteristics by offering safer, more stable temporary

accommodation as well as pathways into permanent accommodation that is fit for purpose and aligned to their needs.

5.4. Corporate Parenting Implications

5.4.1. The recommendations align with the Council's obligations under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Council must, in carrying out functions in relation to children in care and care experienced young people, have regard to the statutory corporate parenting principles - these are listed in s.1 of the Act. Recommendations in this paper would support our corporate parenting role and the corporate parting principles for those children and young people to be safe, have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work. The specific needs of care leavers and care experienced young people will be addressed in this plan as this will have implications around how housing is offered to young people.

5.5. Risk Management Implications

5.5.1. These are set out in the table below:

Ref	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
A	Surge in demand (e.g. economic shock, policy change, major landlord exit)	Delays at triage/assessment; higher use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) including nightly-paid; additional General Fund pressure; poorer resident outcomes.	Business continuity surge plan; cross-cover and agency pool; overtime clinics; protected triage/duty lanes; early-warning dashboard (presentations, eviction notices); rapid re-prioritisation of caseload.
B	Recruitment & retention of skilled officers	Reduced prevention throughput; growth in backlog; inconsistent decisions; greater reliance on agency; risk to statutory timescales (HRA 2017). No reduction in costs, lack of compliance information, on-going data reconciliation issues.	Extend successful fixed-term posts subject to performance and funding. All posts to be advertised as with Temp to perm opportunity
C	Limited access to the private rented sector (PRS)	Fewer preventions/ increased need for TA placements	Targeted incentives funded by HPG (deposit, rent in advance, capped uplift up to 18%); dedicated Landlord Liaison and forum; quick payments where criteria met; PRS portal/comms packs. Support from NRLA

Ref	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
			(National Residential Landlords Association)
D	Grant volatility (HPG / RSAP)	Loss of funding for prevention posts and landlord incentives; reversal of progress; TA spend rises; programme slippage.	Exit strategy for grant-funded roles; evidence cost-avoidance to support base-budget bids; monthly finance reviews and early escalation to Members/Section 151 as needed.
E	Systems & data delays (case management, reporting)	Manual workarounds; slower decisions; risk benefits realisation deferred.	Interim fixes (standard templates, trackers); backlog data cleanse; named project initial version of portal/uploads while full system is delivered.
F	Rough sleeping winter pressures & institutional discharge (hospital/prison)	RS surge; SWEP pressure; safeguarding and public health risks; emergency spend; reputational risk.	Pre-agreed SWEP rota/capacity; No Second Night Out (NSNO) buffer beds; hospital discharge and probation pre-release protocols
G	Un-successful acquisition of affordable TA.	Cost (spend) of TA remains high at £34m with subsidy loss at £22m	Current BAU and backlog teams working through re-negotiation of current placements and step-down (transfer) project.
H	Un-successful acquisition of permanent move on accommodation	Cost (spend) of TA remains high at £34m with subsidy loss at £22m	Investment in Acquisition team. Identify spend to save funding to acquire minimum 100 empty affordable homes. Improve relationships with local registered providers to discharge duty to.
I	Actions by other Local Authorities	Available TA homes in Slough are occupied by TA households from other Local Authorities.	Early engagement with TA providers and commitment to leasing arrangements that protect the commercial position of both parties.

Ref	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
J	Subsidy fixed at 90% 2011 LHA Rates for private sector tenancies used as temporary accommodation	Subsidy loss continues to increase from current £22m.	Commitment to reduce cost of TA units i.e. target the actual LHA rate
K	Income collection does not equal rent charges from provider	Current budget pressure forecast of £780k increases because income collected does not meet costs charged.	Dedicated backlog and BAU teams to ensure tenancy and rent accounts are created for all new cases and that Housing Benefit is claimed accordingly.
L	Failure to implement up to date, compliant policy, strategy and plans.	If the council does not have up to date statutory plans it increases legal risks on any challenge.	The issue is on the TA and Housing Demand improvement plan and the Landlord Services service improvement plan. The Director of housing will procure external support to consult on and draft an integrated suite of policy and strategy

5.5.2. Environmental Implications

5.6. There are no known environmental implications arising from this report

5.7. Partnership Implications

5.7.1. The Service Improvement Plan recommends widening both formal and informal partnering. The 'one Council' approach currently adopted should continue and strengthen. Additional partnerships with the commercial and voluntary sectors are welcomed, in particular those with education, training, health and well being providers as well as providers of TA and permanent accommodation.

5.8. Appendices

5.8.1. **Appendix 1** – Summary of the Homeless and TA Service Improvement Plan

5.8.2. **Appendix 2** - Slough Borough Council Housing Strategies and Policies Library linked to Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

3.3 *Risk management implications*

3.3.1 ...Risks and mitigations are described in the table below:

3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 There are no environmental implications.

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 The Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations across protected groups. Homelessness and TA are likely to comprise all equality groups and some groups will be over-represented such as women, some ethnic groups, people with disabilities, young people and care leavers. The improvement will positively impact all equality groups but will particularly impact those more likely to find themselves homeless. Locally, the proposed plan particularly supports residents with disproportionate needs, including disabled people, women (especially those affected by domestic abuse or pregnancy), young people and care leavers, ethnic minorities, migrants with insecure status, rough sleepers, older people, and those facing language, literacy, or digital barriers.

The plan is expected to have a positive equality impact. Early Intervention staffing will improve access and reduce crisis placements. Targeted financial tools and tailored pathways for rough sleepers will help reduce health and safeguarding inequalities. Digital and assisted-digital options, alongside staff training and quality assurance, aim to reduce unequal outcomes. In addition, the protected characteristics of care leavers and care experienced will be addressed in this plan as it will have implications around how housing is offered to young people e.g. they are exempt from intentionally homeless status

Some risks remain, such as private sector incentives favouring easier-to-let cases, digital exclusion, and inconsistent NRPF decisions. These are addressed through ring-fenced support, inclusive service design, legal oversight, and equality-led placement protocols. Monitoring includes live Equality Impact Assessments, monthly data by characteristic, and outcome reviews. Governance is maintained through quarterly equality reviews and escalation to Scrutiny if gaps persist.

Overall, the plan is assessed to have a positive impact on equality, with earlier support, safer pathways, and reduced harm, provided mitigations are applied effectively.

3.6 *Corporate Parenting Implications*

3.6.1 The recommendations align with the Council's obligations under the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Council must, in carrying out functions in relation to children in care and care experienced young people, have regard to the statutory corporate parenting principles - these are listed in s.1 of the Act. Recommendations in this paper would support our corporate parenting role and the corporate parting principles for those children and young people to be safe, have stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work. The specific needs of care leavers and care experienced young people will be addressed in this plan as this will have implications around how housing is offered to young people.

3.7 *Procurement implications*

3.7.1 In general, the acquisition of property is exempt from procurement law as part of the Procurement act 2023, this exemption applies to the transfer of land and buildings or leases. However, if the acquisition includes the procurement of works, goods and services then the Council will need to consider the requirements of the Procurement Act. Procurement routes will be identified as part of the Phase 3 improvement planning and implementation process.

To successfully deliver the proposed improvements, the Council will be required to procure DDaT solutions.

3.8 *Workforce implications*

3.8.1 To successfully deliver the proposed improvements, the directorate will need support to recruit and retain approximately 25 new permanent members of staff and to retain interim staff until the new business as usual service is established. Where interim staff have been with the directorate for a significant period, it is advisable to review hourly rates.

3.9 *Property implications*

3.9.1 To successfully deliver the proposed improvements, the Council is intending to acquire properties and enter into leasing arrangements. Support from corporate teams will be required directorate to help identify, procure and re-purpose where necessary, affordable homes.

4. *Background Papers*

None