

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	17th November 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
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Summary of Homelessness and TA Service Improvement Plan Appendix 2 – Housing Demand and TA Policies and Strategy List

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 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:

Cabinet is recommended to approve:

- The Summary Homeless and TA Service Improvement Plan – Oct25 at Appendix 1.

Cabinet is recommended to note:

- The Council's significant challenges in relation to delivery of its statutory homeless duties.

- The significant financial pressure this is placing on the Council's budget for 2025/26 and over the medium-term financial period.
- That six monthly updates will be formally reported to Cabinet, including presenting a more detailed plan and dataset in future updates.

Reason:

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 long term, 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 of the financial problem is the 1300 plus clients in temporary accommodation for whom only a part of the cost can be reclaimed from Government and the fact that the number of new acceptances exceeds the rate at which people are discharged from temporary accommodation.

Reducing cost of accommodation used for those currently in temporary accommodation will reduce the gap but not by the scale required.

It also has to be borne in mind that even if that number of clients was reduced to 600 there would still be a budget gap of more than £8m even if placement costs were reduced as well. Reducing the rate of acceptance is important though is currently less than 10% which is on a par with similar boroughs, but this will not reduce the overspend caused by existing accepted cases.

Though key actions have to be 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.”

2. Report

Introduction

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.

Some of these tasks are harder than others particularly preventing evictions and securing long term accommodation which people on benefit can afford.

Slough has however historically failed to be really effective in all these areas.

- 2.1. 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.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. The most significant problem that emerged was that 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.
- 2.6. 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.
- 2.7. 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.
- 2.8. Sloughs 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.

- 2.9. The opportunity to use modular off-site construction to rapidly deliver temporary accommodation units on vacant sites with a rental closer to LHA cost than renting in the private sector needs to be explored, though properties need to be designed to be genuinely temporary in occupancy. We have identified 12 potential sites where we could accommodate, subject to planning permission, 50 pods.
- 2.10. 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
- 2.11. This has led to:
- Forecast TA spend of £34.8m p.a.
 - Shortfall in housing benefit claimed - £22m p.a.
- 2.12. 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 312 clients for whom a benefit claim has not been made.
- 2.13. 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.
- 2.14. 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.
- 2.15. The potential of AI to help process housing applications is still in its infancy with experiments in London Boroughs not being entirely successful but there is real potential in this area to speed up processing of applications and benefit claims though this will require significant investment.
- 2.16. 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.

2.17. 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.

2.18. 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.

2.19. The borough has a particular market challenge that with Crossrail even East London boroughs like Redbridge are within the statutory 1 hours travelling distance.

2.20. The following immediate actions were taken from October 2024 to deal with budget pressures and service issues:

- Manually gathering compliance documents e.g. Gas & Electric Safety certificates
- Re-negotiating nightly spot rates with providers
- Reconciling the four systems Jigsaw (Homeless Case Management), NEC (tenancy, rents, and property), Agresso (Finance) and Academy (Benefits)
- Creating and uploading 'missing' 500 accounts so benefit could be claimed
- Recruiting interim staff to deal with the backlog of cases
- Identifying and dealing with fraud which was an issue both in respect of landlords and staff
- Working with the Council's Risk Management Team to raise risk profile of TA
- 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

2.21. Following on from the emergency actions the team then looked at the next steps to tackle the longer-term problems:

- Setting up a focussed project team dealing with homeless assessment backlog,
- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- Gathering of additional compliance certification from TA providers and decanting households from unsafe homes.
- 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.

- Specifying the IT system requirements that will form a business case to seek investment in improved information technology solutions.
- Working with the housing operational group which meets monthly to carry out strategic planning around housing supply and management
- Expanded reporting.

Table 1 Summaries delivery:

Table 1

Channel	Frequency	Method
Cabinet Member	- Weekly meetings between Member & Director of Housing - Formal briefing fortnightly	- In-Person meetings - Power Point Slides
CLT	- Weekly CLT meetings	- Verbal updates to S151 and Exec Director
Scrutiny	- Weekly CLT meetings	- Verbal updates from Exec Director and Director of Housing
Leadership	- Weekly 'TA Exec Review Meetings'	- In-Person meetings
A&G	- Quarterly update of Risk Register - Quarterly update of Risk Log - Attend A&G Board as requested - TA Audit and response - November to 2024/January 2025	- Meetings with Audit to update Power Point Slides - Corporate Risk Dashboard - Housing Risk Register - Formal interviews, recommendations and response paper November 2024 to January 2025
Operational Teams	- Weekly data reconciliation meetings - Daily stand-ups and huddles - Performance management	- Whole service Team meetings - Teams huddles - In person 1 to 1's
Council Wide	- October 2024 project room - August 2025 Housing Away Day	- In person project room - In person away day at the Curve
MHCLG (Central Government)	- Monthly meetings	- In person and Teams meetings

2.22.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 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
- 2.23. 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.
- 2.24. 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.
- 2.25. 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.
- 2.26. A function closely linked to but not directly part of the housing needs service is the allocations process for the Councils own housing stock.
- 2.27. 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.
- 2.28. Fraud has also come to light in this area in part enabled by the historic system failure and staff recruitment challenges.
- 2.29. 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 and 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.

2.30. Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation strategic goals

- 2.31. To get to a state where the benefit gap / subsidy loss is minimised the following has to be done:
- 2.32. 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.

- 2.33. 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.
- 2.34. 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.
- 2.35. It is 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 accepts that this must 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).
- 2.36. The establishment of a clear move on action plan and a move on team that is able to support tenants into taking control of their own housing choices, provide support to claim benefits and accessing employment and training.
- 2.37. 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. The team would add value and initiate savings in terms of moving families on from temporary accommodation, by providing support including resettlement, would also prevent repeat homelessness. In addition, the team would also include Employment Specialists who will work closely with the Economic Development Team to partner with local employers to increase access to jobs. They will also work with Slough Job Centre Plus to bolster work and training opportunities that will help to break the cycle of repeat homelessness and worklessness and a return to living in temporary accommodation.
- 2.38. Reducing the use of temporary homes from 1,300 to 900 over a 2-5 year period and maintaining new claimants during that period will require the development of a clear acquisition and funding strategy which links to the overall Housing Strategy and the HRA Business Plan.
- 2.39. The current financial position of Slough has meant new developments have been slow coming forward. The real positive for Slough, now, is its location on the edge of London and its border with Heathrow. This has made Slough a focus for international business and Slough as one of the main providers, at over 56% of employment in Heathrow.
- 2.40. The completion of the Elizabeth Line has significantly increased Slough’s connectivity, making Slough an easy place to travel to and from, and an attractive place to live and work. Its location has helped create a £8 billion economy with around 7,500 businesses, the highest concentration of UK

headquarters of global companies outside of London, and the second largest concentration of data centres in the world,

- 2.41. The improved economic outlook has opened opportunities for investors and developers to help Slough with increasing its housing stock. One good example of this is illustrated by Berkeley Homes' Horlicks Quarter development and its recent purchase of the town centre shopping centres plus Homes England's proposals for the northwest quadrant site which collectively amount to over 4,500 homes. The Spatial Strategy indicates scope for a further 4,000 plus homes. The Council needs to take full advantage of the opportunities, negotiating section 106 agreements for social and affordable homes to create mixed and balanced communities. This should create a pipeline of around 1,000 social and affordable homes over the next 5 years for Slough residents.
- 2.42. To support and accelerate this growth the approved HRA Business Plan 2025/26 and the 5-year HRA Capital Programme made budget provision of £5m per annum for the acquisition of vacant residential properties in the Borough to deliver additional homes. The aim will be to purchase approximately 10 homes per annum and c50 homes over the next 5 years to add to the social housing stock.
- 2.43. The HRA Business Plan and Capital Programme also made provision for new build homes. We will use our own HRA land holdings on small sites to build social homes for the HRA, Garrick House is an example, which will deliver 10 to 15 homes per annum from 2026/27 financial year. This will produce 50 to 75 homes over the 5-year period.
- 2.44. It is important that some of the Council owned and HRA land is retained to allow future building projects. We will need to work with developers and Registered Providers in partnership to maximise new build social homes. The Tower and Ashbourne site is a good example of a stalled scheme where some existing planning permission has been approved, which would deliver some 200 plus homes, within a 5-year timeline.
- 2.45. We are also working on the use of surplus garage sites to create the delivery of system built, off site, pods to be used for temporary accommodation. We have identified 12 potential sites where we could accommodate, subject to planning permission, 50 pods. If the first 6 sites were agreed, we could implement quickly and have them installed within a 3-month period.
- 2.46. We are discussing long term leasing deals, 10 years plus, with property owners, usually office conversions with permitted development approval. These would typically provide 60 plus homes per scheme, within a 12-month conversion programme. We would propose that we target two schemes per annum to create a pipeline of 100+ homes per year over a 5-year programme. We are in discussions with the potential purchaser of SMP (Slough Market Place) a Council owned building, to agree the homes configuration and long-term lease, to provide around 50 homes.
- 2.47. The long-term reduction in the use of temporary accommodation will require the Council to enable greater private sector housing delivery at scale. This will help absorb demand, stabilise prices and directly deliver affordable housing through the planning system. This requiring the Council to be an

effective facilitator of development but also effective at S106 negotiations and in taking up nomination rights. To date it has been good at S106 negotiation but less good at working to maximise take up of nominations.

- 2.48. 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.
- 2.49. 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
- 2.50. The Council will achieve its strategic goals by
- Implementing the 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
- 2.51. Table 2 illustrates the financial benefits the Council could achieve over the next 5 years but without additional investment we will not reach this stretch target.

Table 2

Avg monthly costs	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.7
	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
Description	Revised Budget	Rebased Forecast	Planned Budget	Planned Budget	Planned Budget	Planned Budget	Planned Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Estimated TA Household	1.300	1.300	1.250	1.200	1.100	1.000	0.900
TA Accommodation costs	£31.200	£34.841	£33.501	£30.240	£26.400	£21.600	£17.820
TA Rental Income charged	£30.420	£34.061	£32.751	£29.563	£25.620	£20.820	£17.039
Variance	£0.780	£0.780	£0.750	£0.677	£0.780	£0.780	£0.781
Net TA pressure/savings		£3.641	-£1.340	-£3.261	-£3.840	-£4.800	-£3.780
Total HB TA Expenditure	£9.899	£32.698	£31.441	£28.380	£24.595	£19.987	£16.358
Total HB TA Subsidy Recoverable	£3.365	£11.117	£10.690	£9.649	£8.362	£6.796	£5.562
Total HB Subsidy loss (£)	£6.534	£21.581	£20.751	£18.731	£16.233	£13.192	£10.796
Total HB Subsidy loss (%)	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%	66%
Net HB pressure/(savings)		£15.046	-£0.830	-£2.020	-£2.498	-£3.041	-£2.395

- 2.52. If investment is made, we believe we can mitigate the significant risk and reduce the use of TA from around 1,300 units to 900 units but there will still be a subsidy loss of around £11m.
- 2.53. A separate report is being drafted to clearly set out the structure changes and additional investment we need to reduce the number of people in TA and achieve our strategic goals as set out in 2.50 above and will be shared by the

end of Q3. This will include additional operational staff, investment in IT homes, acquisitions, and funding for incentives.

2.54. To deal with the known backlog and predicted demand and to start 2027/28 with 1,200 homeless households we will need to **prevent approximately 2,320 new approaches and discharge duty on around 400 during the remainder of 25/26 and 26/27.**

2.55. Move-On Plan with Timeline, Risks & Mitigation 2025/26 to 2029/30

Allocations Policy: Prioritising direct lets to homeless households.

Provider Engagement: Securing move-on options via trusted social mobility partners.

Support Services: Pre-tenancy preparation, floating support, and tenancy sustainment and access to employment.

Monitoring & Governance: Regular reviews to track progress and unblock delivery issues.

2.56. Key Timeline Milestones

Q4 2025/26: Finalise strategy, secure funding, provider agreements signed

Q1 2026/27: Launch Year 1 delivery and monitoring framework

Q2 2027/28: Mid-point review and adjust targets or partnerships as needed

Q3 2028/29: Scale-up successful pathways and prepare final year delivery

Q4 2029/30: Full evaluation, impact report, future policy recommendations

2.57. From 2027- 2030 the Prevention team will need to prevent approximately **2,500 approaches per year.** However, demand will still be around 200 per year as we have a legal duty to accept homeless people. This means that the TA team will have to **move on at least 300** per year to hit our target of 900 in 2030 as set out in Table 2a below.

Table 2a

Year	Milestone	Delivery Route	Target	Risks	Mitigation Strategy
25/26	Strategy launch & mobilisation	Planning & engagement with providers	—	Delays in mobilisation	Early engagement; formal agreements; internal governance setup
Table 2a Year	Milestone	Delivery Route	Target	Risks	Mitigation Strategy
26/27	Year 1 delivery	Evictions Direct Lets: Assured	300	Limited social housing;	Ring-fence lets; quarterly provider reviews; floating

		Shorthold Tenancies (acquisitions) Homefinder: R8locate: Bridge Hsg: Lizzie B:		provider readiness	support mobilisation
27/28	Year 2 delivery & review	Same as above	300	Tenancy sustainment; funding pressures	Strengthen support services; secure multi-year funding
28/29	Year 3 delivery & scale-up	Same as above	300	Provider capacity; household refusals	Diversify providers; improve offer matching; financial top-ups
29/30	Final year delivery & evaluation	Same as above	300	Policy changes; affordability issues	Flexible delivery model; review affordability criteria; policy engagement

2.58. 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.

2.59. 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.

2.60. Though a lot of progress has been made in this area the service needs to a establish a clearer pathway for care leavers to help meet our longer-term Corporate Parenting role.

2.61. 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.

- 2.62. 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.
- 2.63. 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.
- 2.64. 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.
- 2.65. 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.
- 2.66. 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 cause problems.
- 2.67. 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.

2.68. 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 Cabinet meeting.

2.69. 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.

2.70. Table 3 MHCLG data shows that per 1,000 households in the Borough, Slough has the highest number of households in temporary accommodation.

Table 3

Local Authority	Total No in TA	Total No.Initial Assessments	Total of H'holds in LA (000's)	Postive Prev'n in Period	Postive Relief in Period	Assessments Per H'holds (000s)	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	1.7
Luton	1,078	546	77	102	117	7.0	13.9	2.8	142	1.8
Hastings	561	291	44	55	32	6.6	12.8	2.0	78	1.8
Manchester	2,813	1,406	220	91	168	6.4	12.8	1.2	345	1.6
Brighton & Hove	1,600	428	128	101	48	3.3	12.5	1.2	108	0.8
Birmingham	4,824	1,915	433	514	295	4.4	11.1	1.9	247	0.6
Crawley	481	225	46	56	13	4.8	10.4	1.5	53	1.1
Milton Keynes	985	603	110	36	66	5.5	9.0	0.9	117	1.1

3 Financial Implications

3.1 The current Homelessness/TA service budgets (including RSI & HPG grant & expenditure) is a net £1.016m against an end year forecast of £1.417m resulting in an estimated budget pressure of £0.402m before mitigations. In addition, there is an estimated £15.5m Housing Benefit subsidy loss, before mitigations, resulting from temporary accommodation expenditure. Proposals reflected in the report are noted and will require detailed costings to establish pay-back, value for money and other implications for current and future years' budgets. Table 4 shows the current budget forecast is set out in the table below.

Table 4

Service Description	Revised Budget	Current Forecast	Variance
	£m	£m	£m
TA Accommodation costs	31.200	34.841	3.641
TA Rental Income	-30.420	-34.061	-3.641
TA/Allocations	0.339	0.686	0.347
Housing Demand & RSI	-0.103	-0.049	0.055
Housing GF Total	1.016	1.417	0.402

Table 2 in the report illustrates a potential reduction in subsidy loss £10.8m / 50% over the period to 2030/31. This is based on reducing the number of households from 1,300 to 900 and a similar percentage reduction in the overnight cost of TA. This is included to show the potential scale of savings achievable, however additional work will be necessary to establish a robust figure and accompanying programme plan to include in the 2026/27 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This will be reported to Cabinet in future reports on the 2026/27 budget.

4. Legal implications

4.1 The Council has a variety of statutory duties and powers in relation to prevention of and support for those who find themselves as homeless. This includes the following:

- A duty to carry out a homelessness review and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review at least every five years. There is a duty to consult prior to adoption of a new strategy and to have regard to its allocations scheme and tenancy strategy. There are specific duties in relation to assessments and strategies for those experiencing or surviving domestic abuse and to care experienced young people.
- A duty to ensure the availability of advice and information about homelessness and prevention to anybody in its area.
- Duty to make inquiries and accept an application where there is reason to believe a person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days.
- A duty to prevent homelessness and a relief duty requiring reasonable steps to help applicants secure suitable accommodation for a least 6 months.
- An interim and main duty to accommodate those applicants who are eligible.
- A duty to protect the belongings of those who are homeless in prescribed circumstances.
- A duty of cooperation and power to ask for assistance from other local authorities and housing associations. This includes a need for departments within local authorities to cooperate, including social care departments

5. *Risk management implications*

5.1 Risks and mitigations are described 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 compliancy 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 (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.

Ref	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
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.
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

Ref	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
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

6. Environmental implications

6.1 There are no environmental implications.

7. Equality implications

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

8. Corporate Parenting implications

8.1 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.

8.2 Recommendations in this paper would support our corporate parenting role and the corporate parenting 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.

9. Procurement implications

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

10 Workplace implications

10.1 successfully deliver the proposed improvements, the directorate will need support to deliver the restructure to recruit and retain over 30 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.

11. Property implications

11.1 successfully deliver the proposed improvements, the Council is intending to acquire some properties and enter into leasing arrangements. Support from corporate teams will be required directorate to help identify, procure and re-purpose where necessary, c. 200-400 new empty affordable homes.

12. Background Papers

None.