

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING	24 October 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 9999
TITLE:	HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING UPDATE	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1. THE ISSUE

- 1.1. The Council delivers support and assistance to people at risk of becoming homeless and people who are homeless by commissioning services, developing effective partnerships with the voluntary sector and having an effective Housing Options & Homelessness Team. This report provides an update on these services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

- 2.1. Note the contents of the report.

3. THE REPORT

Background

- 3.1. The Council delivers support and assistance to homeless people by providing services directly, working in partnership with the voluntary sector and the commissioning of specialist services. The term homelessness is wide and includes: households threatened with imminent homelessness; those living in non-settled accommodation, such as “sofa surfing”, bed & breakfast or other types of temporary accommodation; or people sleeping on the streets/tents/cars etc.

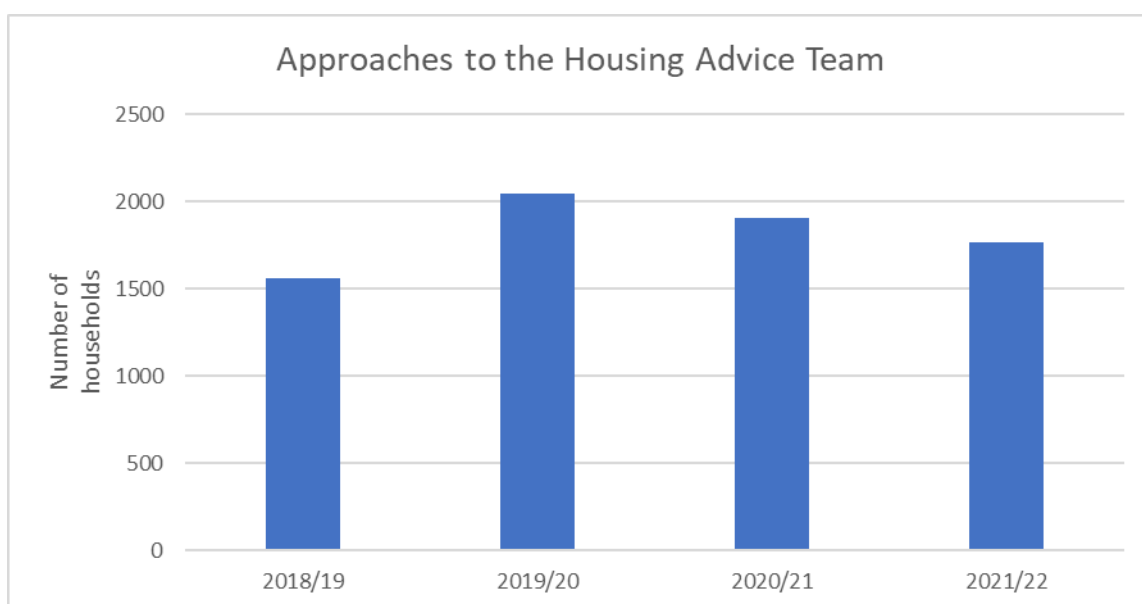
- 3.2. Temporary accommodation (TA) currently provided by Bath and North East Somerset Council includes:
- Hostel accommodation occupied on licence.
 - Flats occupied on an assured shorthold tenancy.
 - Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- 3.3. The Council commission hostel accommodation and dispersed flats to use as temporary accommodation from Curo Housing. The hostel, located at Dartmouth Avenue in Bath, provides high quality accommodation suitable for singles and small families of up to 3 people in 17 rooms with some shared communal facilities. The dispersed flats comprise 7 self-contained two-bedroom properties and one, self-contained one bedroom property. These are family units and are for people with more than two children. Additionally, the Council use other hostel accommodation at the YMCA in Bath which benefits from twenty-four-hour, onsite support staff.
- 3.4. The Council tries not to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation (B&B). However, where there is no alternative, or it is an emergency, it will be used. In these circumstances the Council will attempt to accommodate households in B&B within the district and for the shortest time possible. Securing local B&B accommodation can be a challenge and as such, out of district placements can also be used on occasion. The Housing Options Team can provide some support to these placements by regular contact with residents however there are no dedicated on-site support staff.
- 3.5. Placing homeless households out of the district in Bed and Breakfast accommodation may result in residents disconnecting with their existing support networks, family, and supporting professionals. Out of area placements can also create significant problems concerning getting to work for adults and for children attending schools. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is unlikely to have dedicated onsite support.
- 3.6. To improve the Council provision of temporary accommodation, Housing Services are currently developing new hostel type accommodation in Bath. Two Council owned buildings are being renovated and extended to deliver new supported housing to accommodate homeless households. The developments are, Theobald House in Dartmouth Avenue and Crescent Garden Lodge, on the edge of Charlotte Street carpark. The new accommodation will be directly managed by the Council. The accommodation can contain up to fourteen homeless households. Works to renovate the two properties have already begun, they will be complete in early/mid 2023.
- 3.7. This new accommodation will reduce the use of unsuitable and expensive bed and breakfast accommodation and provide an enhanced service for households experiencing homelessness, provided within their existing community.

Statutory homelessness applications and use of temporary accommodation

During lockdown between 2020-2022 there was reduction of presentations to the Housing Options Team of homeless households, dropping below 500 per quarter. Presentations include homeless households as well as others threatened with homelessness within fifty-six days. In these cases, the Council has a statutory duty to take a homelessness application and provide prevention and relief to applicants.

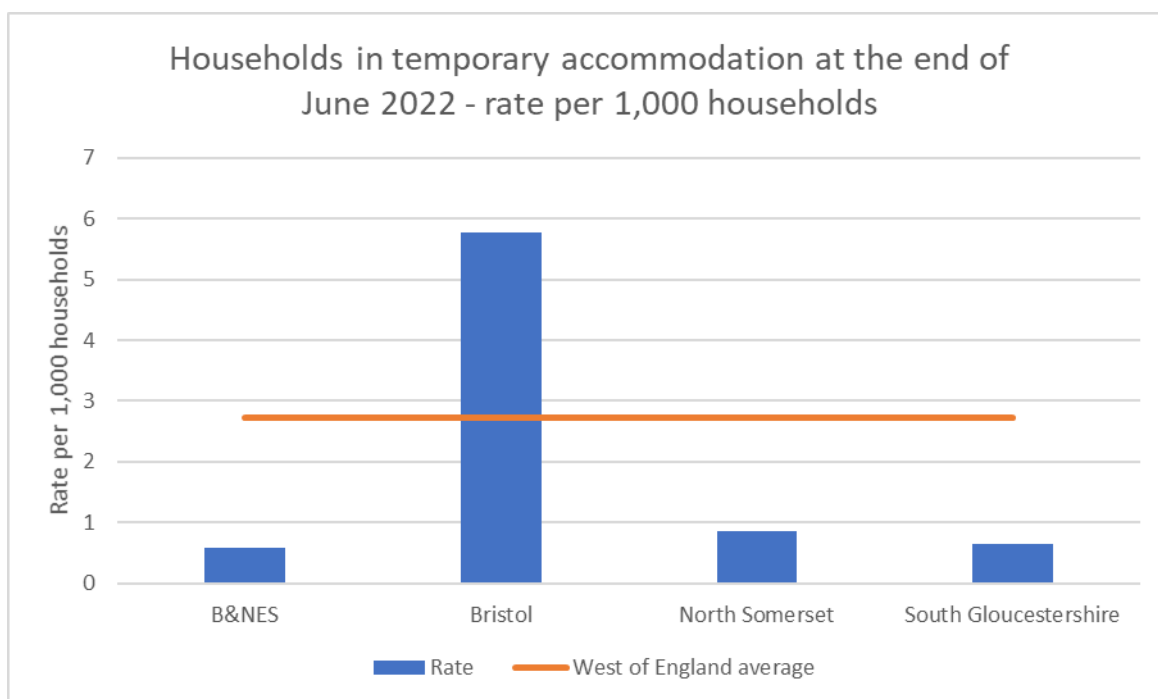
The reduction in homeless presentations was understood to be in part due to households at risk of homelessness under lockdown tending to stay where they were and maintain difficult housing arrangements, often with extended family or under threat of eviction. Additionally, many Council services, including Housing Advice were no longer available in person, at Council offices, being reduced to telephone only services. Although homeless presentations reduced during this period, those that did approach the Council increasingly included complex adults. These cases require significantly more time to address issues that prevent those households moving on to independent secure accommodation. Early figures for 2022-2023 are now showing a return to pre-pandemic presentations.

Housing Options have now returned to in-person services, where homeless applicants can now attend appointments with advisers at the Councils one stop Shops. These in-person interviews have improved the ability of the service to intervene and prevent and relieve homelessness. There are now two housing advisers at the Bath One Stop shop each day, and services are also available at Midsomer Norton. Additionally, drop-in services have restarted at the other one stop shops to give advice on Homesearch applications as well as specialist advice for young people.



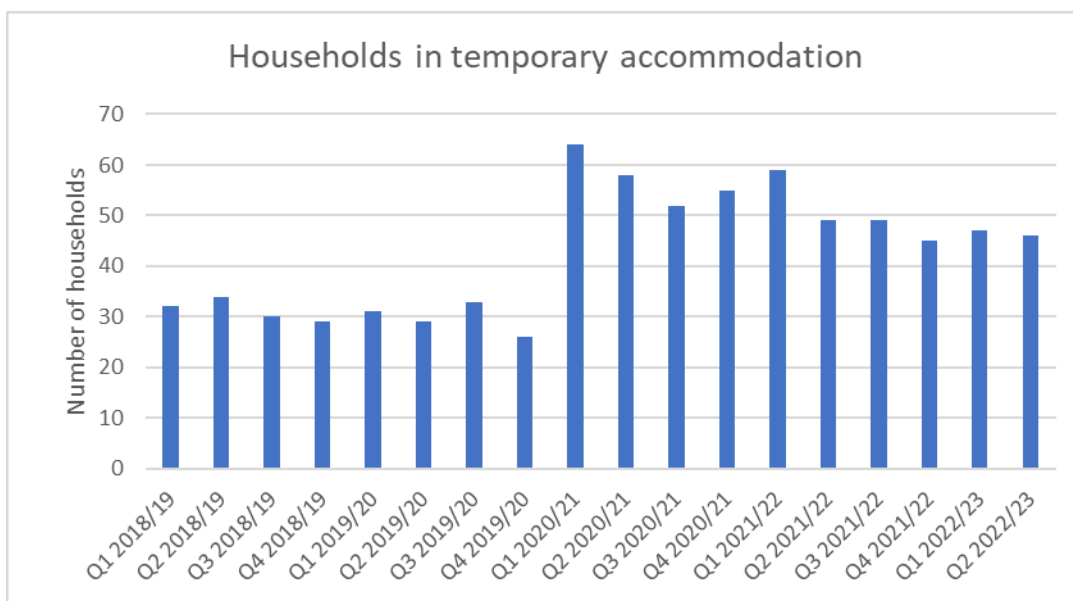
Use of temporary accommodation

- 3.8. Currently the Council are accommodating 48* households in temporary accommodation under a statutory duty. The table below compares this figure with three other West of England authorities. The graph shows the rate of households per 1,000 in Temporary Accommodation, and that Banes are significantly lower than other West of England authorities.



Since the first quarter of 2020-21 the Council accommodated a significant number of rough sleepers, raising the figure accommodated to over sixty households. Gradually those rough sleepers were accommodated through new accommodation initiatives. The total figure of households in Temporary Accommodation has reduced, but not to pre-pandemic levels. Until 2019/20 commonly the authority accommodated in the region of thirty households, the weekly figure now can exceed fifty*, this is a significant increase in accommodated homeless households.

(*Since April 2022 this figure has included some households who are classed as **Homeless at Home**, where they have remained in properties after notices have expired or temporarily in extended family accommodation while waiting for temporary accommodation).



Moving households on from temporary accommodation requires increased resource from Housing Services. There is a significant issue concerning moving larger family's requiring 3 or 4-bedroom properties. Although the number of social housing units available has picked up since the pandemic low, very few larger properties have become available for families to move on to. There is also an increased problem of moving complex single people on who require supported housing and are unable to live in less supported environments. Supported housing is often full, with little movement of residents.

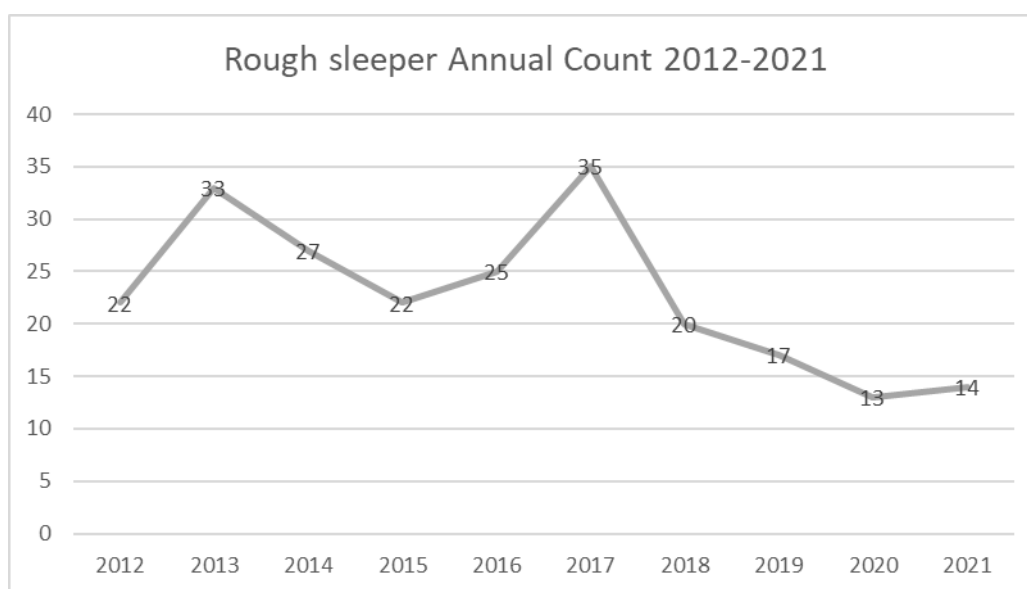
It is increasingly difficult to find affordable private rented housing for homeless households to move to. The Council offers financial assistance with this, but availability is largely limited to the Somer valley area. To improve the move-on of homeless households into more secure accommodation, Housing appointed a dedicated officer to work with households who were not ready to move, this has proved a success.

Councils are set a legal limit of only placing families in bed and breakfast type accommodation for six weeks. Housing have not exceeded this limit for over ten years. There is increasing concern about the ability to maintain this target. Recently households have been accommodated in bed and breakfast for in excess of five weeks before they could move to commissioned accommodation within the authority.

Housing is improving services by developing and managing new accommodation within Baner, this will reduce the use of spot-purchased bed and breakfast hotel rooms. Greater access to in-person advice services as well as the new dedicated move-on officer should prevent and address homelessness early as well as provide better support for households who have already lost their homes.

Rough sleepers

- 3.9. Whilst rough sleeping is only a relatively small part of the wider homelessness agenda it is the most visible element and the most challenging. We are taking a range of approaches to reducing the numbers of people resorting to rough sleeping.
- 3.10. The chart below details the official rough sleeper count for Bath & North East Somerset, which is undertaken each year, usually in November. The latest figure we can report is for November 2021. Counts provide a snapshot of the levels of rough sleeping in an area. We are in close weekly contact with the multi-agency Outreach team and have good information on all individuals and their needs. Each person has a plan in place that aims to end their homelessness and enable a move towards recovery.



- 3.11.
- 3.12. In March 2020, in response to the government's Everyone In Covid-19 lockdown directive, Housing Services worked with local partners to provide accommodation and support to 80 individuals. A range of accommodation options were secured for immediate use and outreach and other support teams reassigned to staff the temporary provision. By the time the lockdown periods had ended, 75 people had been supported to secure longer term accommodation options. In December 2021, with the emergence of the Omicron variant, DLUHC awarded grant Protect & Vaccinate funding to enable a second Everyone In-style offer, with additional resources to incentivise people sleeping rough and in other homeless settings to receive their first, second or booster Covid vaccine. A call went out via social media to request that private landlords make contact to discuss renting empty properties to be shared by anyone rough sleeping. Two properties were secured and used until the end of March, when the funding ceased. In total, 7 people were accommodated in these properties and hotel rooms. One property was secured until March 2023

as an on-going shared option for rough sleepers. The vaccination element of the provision was used to set up an incentivisation scheme for anyone in a homeless setting. Typical items paid for were utility bills, mobile phones and top-ups, grocery vouchers, electrical items and stock of The Big Issue to sell in Bath. Uptake of this has been low at just 9 people, but when viewed as part of the larger picture, there is optimism about the Covid-resilience of homeless people as we head into Winter. At the end of July 2022, 189 out of 306 people living in homelessness settings (hostels, Housing First or rough sleeping) had received a first, second or booster vaccination.

- 3.13. Working with partners and providers in Summer 2021, we have completed a Needs Assessment and developed an Ending Rough Sleeping Plan. The plan is split under 3 headings, Prevention, Intervention and Recovery. The key actions identified developing an Eviction Protocol that the supported housing sector can sign up to, making sure we have some flexible accommodation options available, ensuring mental health support is available to reduce evictions from supported housing and reviewing the Local Connection Policy for access to services. This Plan formed the basis of our bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding for 2022/23 – 2024/25. See 3.13 below.
- 3.14. A bid for funding from DLUHC at the end of 2021 resulted in a multi-year allocation totalling £1.3m. Using the 3 categories in our Ending Rough Sleeping Plan plus an additional workstream around Systems Change, we have been able to commit to several established services (included in the list at 3.14 below) and develop these new approaches:
- A new role of Criminal Justice Navigator to work with people about to leave prison without any accommodation to return to.
 - Improvements to how we work with people with a mental health issue, including one to one support from a psychotherapist for individuals and the same for support workers. This will improve understanding of the impact of trauma and mental health and how support and accommodation settings can be part of a recovery pattern.
- 3.15. High levels of specialist support are required to provide lasting, positive outcomes. Working with local partners, including health, welfare, housing, and employment the following services are in place to help rough sleepers make a transition into safer and healthier lives. Some are directly commissioned by Housing Services and others are run under sub-contract via HCRG's prime provider contract.
- Provision of 20 units of accommodation with on-site medical provision and 9 move-on units.
 - 20 self-contained move-on flats with support.

- A 4-bedroom shared house owned by the Council.
- A 2-bedroom shared house rented from a private landlord.
- Assertive outreach provided in partnership by Julian House, DHI and AWP – supports individual rough sleepers into accommodation and other services by working with them on the street.
- A Reconnection Service. Some rough sleepers arrive from other parts of the country, having left accommodation and support networks behind. Wherever possible, contact will be made to ascertain that accommodation is still available and that appropriate support can continue. Where this is the case, travel costs are covered, and the person offered the opportunity to return home. If there is any suggestion of violence or any other threat, this is not implemented.
- ‘Flexible Surge’ provision and SWEP. To ensure that we are able to meet fluctuating needs across the year, we have an agreed protocol for bringing individuals indoors. Working with outreach and other partners, we are able to create capacity within the pathway so that someone needing respite from rough sleeping (for example, because their health is temporarily poor) can take shelter. Action taken to create the space needed includes speeding up an imminent move to permanent accommodation or moving people within supported housing provision. If this is not appropriate or possible, a specific, limited budget is available for hotel bookings. To ensure anyone rough sleeping is not exposed to extreme weather conditions, we closely monitor the weather and take the same approach to creating capacity. This means that during particularly cold or wet weather and heatwave conditions, we can offer anyone sleeping rough shelter from the elements. During heatwave conditions, day-time services are adjusted to make sure shade, water and sunscreen are offered. In all scenarios, support to continue being indoors and moving away from rough sleeping is provided.
- Range of specialist support workers: mental health outreach worker; dual-diagnosis (mental health and substance misuse) worker; female outreach worker; criminal justice worker; Housing Advisor within the Council’s team focused on rough sleepers.
- Homeless hospital discharge service based at the RUH.
- Housing First Project, providing 22 units of accommodation and supporting a further 5 people not currently accommodated, with a target of 29 by March 2023.
- Supported Housing Gateway – web-based single access point for supported housing schemes for anyone at risk of homelessness. Acting on feedback from providers during the Pathway Review, this is being reviewed and updated to improve access to support and housing.

- Priority on Homesearch Scheme for people in supported housing, and in some cases rough sleepers. This helps release bed-spaces that can then be allocated to rough sleepers.
- A Task & Targeting multi-agency group that shares information on and identifies solutions for named, entrenched rough sleepers.

Ongoing Developments

3.16. With a successful bid to DLUHC earlier this year, an allocation of £1.3m secures service delivery into 2025. This means we can continue to deliver the services outlined above, albeit with an expectation that the pathway for rough sleepers will adjust and develop as numbers of people resorting to rough sleeping reduce as a result of improved, targeted ways of working. The expectation is that by March 2025 we will have an operational figure of 5 people rough sleeping. This is obviously challenging, especially when anticipating an increase in homelessness due to the cost of living crisis. However, we are confident that we have strong relationships in place with effective and flexible providers, which will be a significant advantage as issues emerge.

3.17. Homelessness Pathway Review

Between September and December 2021, a review of the pathway taken by people experiencing homelessness was undertaken by Red Quadrant consultancy. Whilst the findings of the review were positive in terms of statutory rehousing processes and outcomes, the pathway for non-statutory, single homeless people was less clear. Recommendations were made for improvement, including:

- An increase focus on prevention
- Improving use of data to inform commissioning decisions
- Develop a 'rapid rehousing' approach for people in temporary or supported housing

Discussions have begun within the Homelessness Partnership to take these recommendations forward. The Executive Summary of the report is attached. The full report can be provided on request.

3.18. Rough Sleeper Drug Treatment Grant from Adi Day

The Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG) is a national grant to improve drug and alcohol treatment support and outcomes for people experiencing, or at risk of, rough sleeping who have drug and alcohol dependence needs in Bath and North East Somerset. Through collaborative working with drug and alcohol treatment services and housing colleagues, B&NES public health team successfully applied for the grant and was awarded £585,472 for 2022/23 and £786,759 for 2023/24.

The RSDATG model has been designed to complement wider drug and alcohol treatment and provide specialist provision that takes into consideration the complexity and range of needs for this cohort. Therefore, the purpose of the funding is to:

- a) Support people experiencing, or at risk of, rough sleeping to access and engage in drug and alcohol treatment.
- b) Ensure that the engagement that people have had with drug and alcohol treatment services whilst rough sleeping or in emergency or temporary accommodation is maintained as they move into longer term accommodation.
- c) Build resilience and capacity in local drug and alcohol treatment systems to continue to meet the needs of this population in future years.

During 22/23 and 23/24 B&NES RSDATG model aims to deliver a range of new posts that will work in innovative ways to improve access and engagement with treatment, including Housing In-reach workers, Intensive Treatment Workers, Housing Peer co-ordination and a Clinical Psychologist Recruitment for these posts has begun and will fulfil the principles of the grant to build flexible, creative and person-centred approaches to drug and alcohol treatment starting with the needs of the client in settings that take advantages of access and engagement opportunities for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping.

3.19. The procurement of housing management and support services for the 20-flat project at Grosvenor Place in Bath went live in October and a contract is expected to be in place in April 2023. As an interim arrangement, Julian House continue to support residents and manage the building.

3.20. The first step on resettlement for many single homeless people in Bath & North East Somerset is Manvers Street Hostel, operated by Julian House since 1990 in a basement building leased from Manvers Street Baptist Church. The lease expires in 2026 and Julian House are now looking at options for the future. Based on national and local strategy, Housing Services will work with Julian House to scope out what the new provision needs to include. Key questions for consideration are:

- What will the level of need be? How many people need to be provided for?
- What is the broader aim of any new facility beyond shelter and sustenance? What else would or could a new building accommodate?
- What will the funding model look like?

Work has already begun by Julian House on consulting former and current service users, the housing and homelessness sector and other stakeholders on these and other issues. They intend to widen the conversation to all stakeholders to ensure the new provision reflects local need and aspiration.

4. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. The, Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, all place significant statutory duties on local housing authorities (the Council) to ensure that advice, assistance and other housing duties are available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 4.2. The delivery of services for homeless people has implications for corporate statutory considerations such as equalities, crime and disorder, safeguarding and public health and inequalities.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

THIS REPORT IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY, AND AS SUCH, THERE ARE NO DIRECT FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM THIS REPORT.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1. None. Report is for information only.

7. EQUALITIES

- 7.1. None. Report is for information only.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE.

- 8.1. The re-development of 23 Grosvenor Place included measures that will see emissions drop by nearly 40%. Having staff on-site will also reduce the need to travel within Bath city. All other new supported housing schemes will be designed to ensure the most practical energy efficiency measures are met. In addition, ensuring our clients are accommodated within district will considerably reduce the need for unnecessary travel.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	Red Quadrant report – Review of the B&NES Homelessness Pathway
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	