

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	5th March 2024
Subject:	Direct award of Contract for Housing Related Support service for homeless people-(HRS)
Lead Member:	Cllr Wright – Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities
Chief Officer:	Marc Gadsby
Contact Officer:	Vicky Tutty
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	No, except Appendices 3 and 4 which are exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 because they contain information relating to the financial and business affairs of 3rd parties and the Council
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	Appendix 1 EQIA Appendix 2 2023 Procurement detail Exempt Appendix 3 Evaluation details Exempt Appendix 4 Post- procurement funding negotiations

1. Summary and Recommendations

The report requests approval to make a direct award of an 18- month contract to Look Ahead for an accommodation-based housing related support service for homeless people with complex needs. The service will operate out of a purpose-built property which has been used for this purpose for 17 years. This will ensure that the Council is able to meet its duty to support residents who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness and with complex needs, and for whom the Council holds a housing duty.

1.2 Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1) Approve an 18-month direct contract award for an accommodation-based housing -related support service for homeless people from 31st October 2024 to 30th April 2026.

- 2) Approve funding for the direct contract award of £415,500 for the 18-month period (£277,000 p.a. pro rata)
- 3) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for People (Adults) in consultation with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport and the Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues to negotiate the final contract terms and to enter into the contract with LookAhead.

1.3 Reasons for recommendations

1.3.1 Direct award of the contract to Look Ahead will allow alignment with another contract of a similar type so that both contracts expire at the same time in 2026. This in turn will enable Commissioning to work with the Housing, Public Health and other statutory and voluntary sector partners to:

- Develop a place-based approach across health, social care, public health and housing towards preventing homelessness and rough sleeping and supporting homeless people with complex needs to become more independent.
- Develop a single homeless pathway for Slough residents
- Consider longer term housing solutions for homeless people
- Align commissioning intentions with the Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Drug and Alcohol Strategy (which are in development),

1.3.2 Direct award of the contract will enable continuity of service provision and retain the use of the purpose-built accommodation whilst the above collaborative commissioning work is undertaken and longer-term solutions explored.

Commissioner Review

No specific comments to add to the report.

Report

2. Introductory paragraph

2.1 The decisions requested within this report will support the following Council Priorities for 2023-26:

- **Outcome 2 : A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives.**
 - Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing.
 - Supporting residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults
 - Improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour – providing a safer town to grow up in.

- **Outcome 3: A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough**

- Affordable, safe and healthy homes – improving the quality of council housing stock and the private rented sector

2.2 In addition, it aligns with key priorities within the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2019-2024

- increase access to housing options for residents
- reducing numbers and length of stay in temporary accommodation
- Increase tenancy sustainment and prevent repeat homelessness

2.3 Options considered

Option	Pros	Cons
<p>Option 1 Do nothing</p> <p>Allow the contract to expire on 31 October 2024 and do not retender.</p> <p>Not recommended</p>	<p>There would be a reduction in the direct cost of this contract of £185,000 per annum.</p> <p>Removes the need to undertake a re-procurement and thereby reduces the pressure of undertaking additional (repeat) activity on busy Commissioning and Procurement teams.</p>	<p>Any savings from this contract would create an additional pressure to the Council's Housing budget through greater demand for more expensive temporary accommodation, estimated at a net cost of £220,950 per annum.</p> <p>Temporary Accommodation will not provide the specialist support required for this client group and procurement of floating support would require a tendering exercise.</p> <p>The service forms a central plank of homelessness provision within the borough and prevents take up of long-term services. Does not support the key priorities within the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2019-2024</p> <p>Does not accord with the Council's Corporate Plan, specifically Outcome 2: A town where residents can live healthier safer and more independent lives – supporting residents to be as independent as possible whilst providing quality services to the most vulnerable adults.</p>

		The incumbent provider has indicated that they will not allow their building to be used by other providers making the service vulnerable to referrals from out of the SBC area and increasing future demand on limited affordable housing.
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Return to the market with an increased financial envelope for a contract of 18 months</p> <p>Not recommended</p>	Re-tests the market.	<p>A very limited number of suitable suppliers would be able to offer both support and accommodation or offer support and access suitable accommodation to the necessary standard within the available timeframes.</p> <p>Shortness of contract likely to be unattractive.</p> <p>Time and resource implications for staff.</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Issue a direct award to the incumbent for an 18-month contract at the negotiated contract value.</p> <p>Recommended</p>	<p>Removes the need to undertake a re-procurement and thereby reduces the pressure of undertaking additional (repeat) activity on Commissioning and Procurement teams.</p> <p>Provides stability to Housing by retaining access to a purpose-built hostel whilst the wider Housing strategic review is developed supporting Outcome 3 of the Corporate plan</p> <p>Removes the risk of losing an important building asset in the medium to long term</p> <p>Prevents other local authorities from housing their vulnerable residents within the building and increasing demand on scarce Public Service resources.</p> <p>Offers continuity of the service</p>	Does not re-test the market.

	Contract monitoring will enable action to be taken should the service not perform as expected	
<p>Option 4</p> <p>Return to market with the revised financial envelope for a 10-year contract</p> <p>Not recommended</p>	<p>Allows for continuity of the service</p> <p>May encourage other providers to bid.</p> <p>Provides stability to both Housing and the provider. Encourages ongoing investment within the service by the provider to improved social value</p> <p>Break clauses can be introduced to allow a planned exit strategy if needed.</p> <p>Contract monitoring will enable action to be taken should the service not perform as expected</p>	<p>The previous procurement exercise demonstrated a lack of appropriate accommodation within Slough to host the service.</p> <p>Should another provider win the award, then SBC would lose access to the building, lose scarce homelessness beds and opens the service to other local authorities' homeless cohort. This will lead to</p> <p>Increased pressure on Council's housing budget should the current accommodation become available for out of area referrals</p>

2.4 Background

2.4.1 Accommodation-based housing- related support services in Slough work with people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and who have complex needs, to develop the skills required to support themselves and maintain their own accommodation. They provide support to people for up to two years to allow stability and the development of tenancy support skills, as well as linking in with other supporting agencies, such as substance misuse and mental health services.

2.4.2 These services form a central plank of the Council's homelessness provision and prevent the take up of more expensive temporary accommodation. The continuation of the service is essential to ensuring that our most vulnerable individuals with complex needs are accommodated, stabilised and supported to become less marginalised within their local community.

2.4.3 The service ensures that those with continued experience of homelessness and rough sleeping are accommodated safely and appropriately, supported away from life on the streets and the attendant anti-social behaviour that impacts the wellbeing of all. The financial implications of accommodating 18 people within alternative temporary accommodation is significant with an indicative cost of c£6,000 / £4250 per week. This figure does not include the wider impacts to the public purse through 'blue light' services, community safety, mental health provision and substance misuse services.

2.4.4 On the 17th of May 2022, Cabinet approved the procurement of accommodation-based Housing Related Support Services for:

- Medium / high (complex) needs to a value of £185,000 per annum for a two year + six months period, at a total contract value £462,500 (Lot 1).
- Low to medium needs to a value of £111,000 per annum for a two year + six months period, at a total contract value £277,500 (Lot 2).

2.4.5 Both contracts were due to expire on 31st October 2023 and a procurement exercise was undertaken between March and July 2023 to secure new services to run for two years and six months. The contract length provided for the co-termination of the contracts and would allow for necessary strategic development of a revised approach to supporting vulnerable groups with housing needs. Any support provider needed to be able to access or supply suitable accommodation from which services could operate. The services being retendered operated out of buildings which were owned by the current support provider.

2.4.6 The Lot 2 procurement was successful and the incumbent provider and building owner (YMCA) secured the contract within the available financial envelope. However, no suitable bids were received for Lot 1, and the incumbent service provider notified the Council that they were unable to safely deliver services at or within the advertised contract value. Further details concerning the procurement exercise and the evaluation process are contained at appendix 2 and exempt appendix 3.

2.4.7 As a result of this outcome, officers entered into negotiations with the incumbent service provider to agree a price for contract extension of £277,000 per annum, until 31 October 2024, an increase of £92,000 per annum, with the increase being funded equally between Housing and Adult Social care.

2.4.8 This was subsequently approved via delegated authority to the Executive Director for People (Adults) in consultation with the Lead Member for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

2.5 Housing Context

2.5.1 In the development of the re-procurement approach, a number of critical issues relating to Housing and homelessness accommodation sufficiency have been identified. The current, purpose- built accommodation of 18 units is owned and managed by the current service provider Look Ahead who has indicated that they will not allow their building to be used by other support providers who may win a future procurement exercise.

2.5.2 Should another provider manage to secure accommodation and be awarded the contract, the current provider will be able to use the building to accommodate single homeless people, including those with complex needs, from out of area. This would give significant potential to increase the cost to health and care services within Slough. The recent procurement demonstrated that no provider was able to offer both housing and support services to meet the necessary requirements.

2.5.3 Further discussion with Procurement colleagues has identified that the previous procurement exercise, although advertised at a lower contract value, highlighted the lack of suitable accommodation within Slough to present an alternative to the current service at this time, and the benefit of a second procurement exercise is limited, and does not remove the risk of the current building being used for out of area single homeless provision. A direct award would provide stability and reassurance within a time of huge uncertainty for housing and homelessness whilst development of a strategic housing with support approach is developed

2.5.4 Legal advice has indicated that a direct award to the incumbent, at the expiry of the current contract in October 2024 until mid-2026 to align with termination of the low to medium HRS contract can be justified on the basis there has been a failed procurement in 2023 and the Council needs to look at the procurement strategically with other contracts and align it to future strategies around housing and estates, and because the contract value would be below the financial threshold of £663,540 (inclusive of VAT) triggering a legal obligation to run a competitive procurement process under The Public Contract Regulations 2015.

2.6 Housing strategy and demand info

2.6.1 In the development of the approach to secure future provision, it is important to recognise the national experience and impact of homelessness nationally, as well as the factors that are individual to Slough.

The following housing circumstances are included to illustrate the breadth of the legal definition of homelessness as a household that has no home in the UK, or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy:

- Rooflessness – without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough
- Houselessness – with a place to sleep, but temporary, in institutions, or a shelter
- Living in insecure housing – threatened with severe exclusion, due to insecure, tenancies, eviction, domestic violence, or staying with family and friends, known as ‘sofa surfing’
- Living in inadequate housing – in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding

2.7 The National Picture

2.7.1 The number of people affected by homelessness and rough sleeping is difficult to quantify.

Official homelessness statistics do not present the complete picture and often reflect only those households that seek assistance from their local housing authority. This underestimates the level of homelessness for more hidden populations, such as young people aged 16 to 24. Rough sleeping figures only reflect the number of people identified as sleeping rough on the night of the national count.

2.7.2 National data that is available does indicate that there was a substantial increase in all forms of homelessness in the decade, leading up to the pandemic, peaking in 2019 (Public Health, England, 2019). Crisis (2023) explains that households in the most extreme form of homelessness (rough sleeping, living in unconventional, buildings, sofa, surfing, and unsuitable, temporary accommodation) will continue to increase due to the impact of the cost of living in crisis.

2.7.3 Health Inequalities

People experiencing homelessness experience significant health inequalities and poor health outcomes in the general population. The longer the person experiences homelessness, particularly from young adulthood, the more likely the health and well-being will be at risk.

Mortality

Mortality among people experiencing homelessness is around 10 times higher than the rest of the population and life expectancy is around 30 years less. In 2021, the average age at death amongst homeless people in England and Wales was 45.4 years for men and 43.2 years for women (Office for National Statistics, 2022)

Ill-health and Morbidity

Chronic homelessness has a higher risk of tri-morbidity (a combination of physical ill-health, mental ill-health, and drug and/or alcohol misuse). This is often associated with advanced illness at presentation (Pathway 2018) and leads to people facing early onset of frailty, and in health, compared to the general population, (Pathway 2020).

2.7.4 More detailed information on the health of the homeless can be found in Homeless Links homeless health needs audit -

<https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/unhealthy-state-of-homelessness-2022-findings-from-the-homeless-health-needs-audit/>

2.8 Local Health Inequality Data

2.8.1 Data based on 331 adults identifying as homeless - within the legal definition of homelessness - and registered with a GP practice based in Slough can be summarised through the prevalence of recorded health conditions for the local known homeless population, compared to Slough registered population, aged 18 and over:

Recorded health conditions and comorbidities

84% of people experiencing homelessness had at least one recorded health condition, compared to 50% of registered population. The level of comorbidities in the homeless population was also significantly higher with 70% of the homeless population, having two or more recorded health conditions, compared to 31% of the registered population

Mental health: 52% of people who were experiencing homelessness had diagnosed Depression and 17% had a diagnosed serious mental illness. These were over five times and 17 times higher than the registered population of Slough respectively.

Respiratory health: 10% of people who were experiencing homelessness had a diagnosed asthma condition and 5% had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). These were two times and five times higher than the registered population of Slough respectively.

Smoking status: 63% of people who were experiencing homelessness were recorded as being current smokers, compare to 15% of the Slough registered population

2.8.2 This information can also be used to develop a population profile of those that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. By comparing this to the registered adult population, it is possible to identify groups that have higher levels of homelessness locally.

Sex and age:

69% of people recorded as homeless were male, and 31% were female.

Men aged 35 to 64, made up over 50% of all people recorded as homeless in Slough. This is an overrepresentation as this group only made up 25% of the registered adult population.

Men aged 18 to 24 had lower proportions of people recorded as homeless than would be expected compared to the registered adult population, those aged 25 to 34 and 65 and over were similar to the registered adult population.

Women aged 35 to 44, made up the largest proportion of females who were recorded as homeless at 12%. All female age groups were underrepresented in the number of people recorded as homeless.

This is at odds with data for England which has 73% of assessments for statutory homelessness aged 18 to 44 in 22/23 and the smaller age groups within this age band were also all overrepresented in the proportion of statutory homelessness applications, compared to what would be expected from the 2021 census population profile. People aged 16 to 17 and 45 and over were underrepresented.

Ethnicity

People from White British ethnic groups made up a higher proportion of those recorded as homeless, when compared to the registered adult population profile (36% of homeless; 16% of registered population). People from any other ethnic group, mixed/multiple and Black/Black British ethnic groups were also overrepresented in the proportion of people who are homeless.

People from Asian/Asian British ethnic groups made up lower proportions of people recorded as homeless, compared to what would be expected from the registered adult population profile

Source: Frimley system insights (20th October 23)

2.8.3 Again, this was at odds with England data, where people from Black/Black British ethnic groups and 'any other ethnic groups' have a higher proportion of homelessness assessments than would be expected compared to the 2021 census.

Source for England, National data Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities' (2023); statutory homelessness in England: financial year, 2022–23

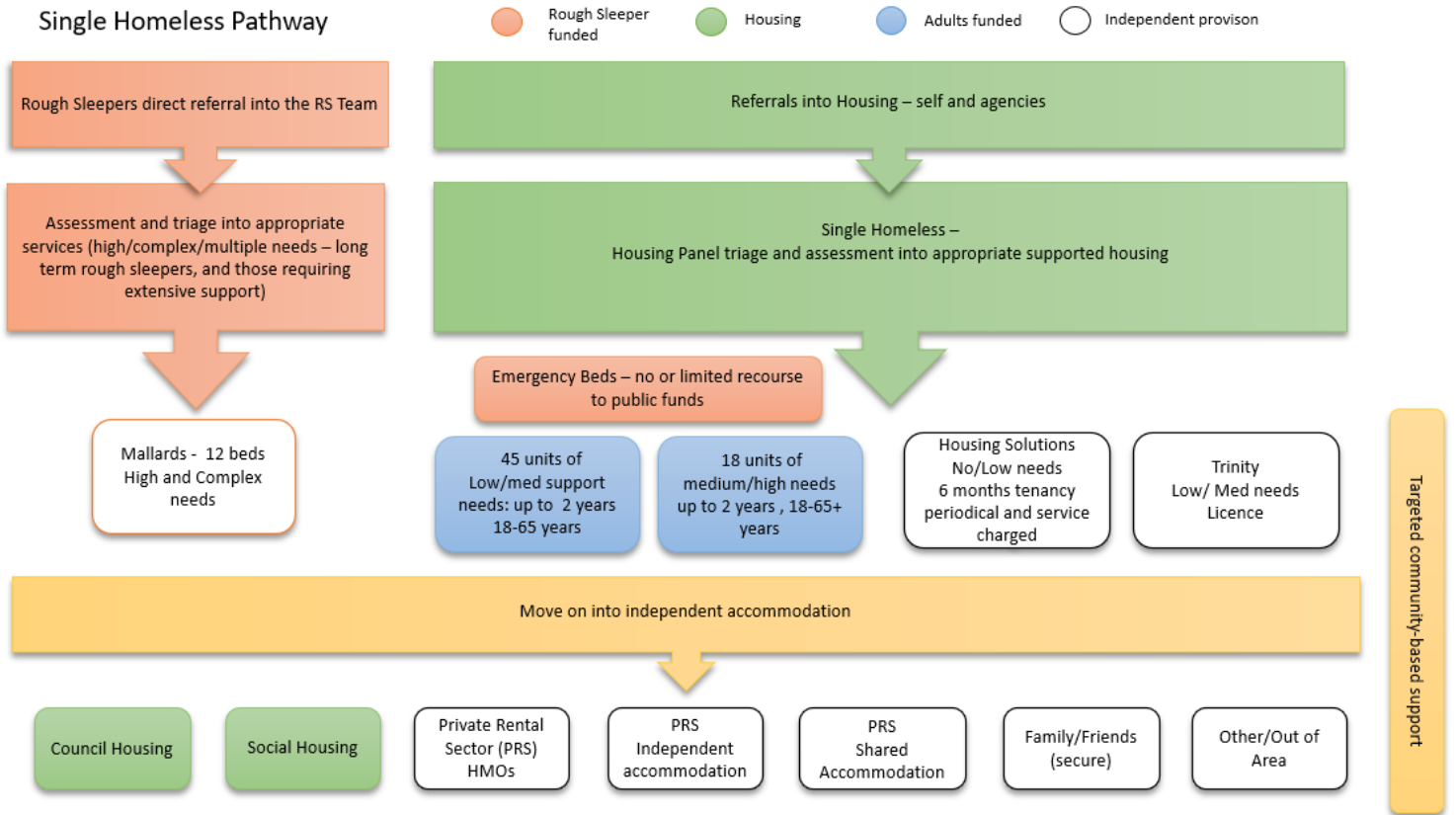
2.9 Demand in Slough

2.9.1 In Qtr. 4 2022/23, 211 households in Slough were assessed as being owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act. 139 of these households were assessed as homeless and a further 71 were threatened with homelessness (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2023).

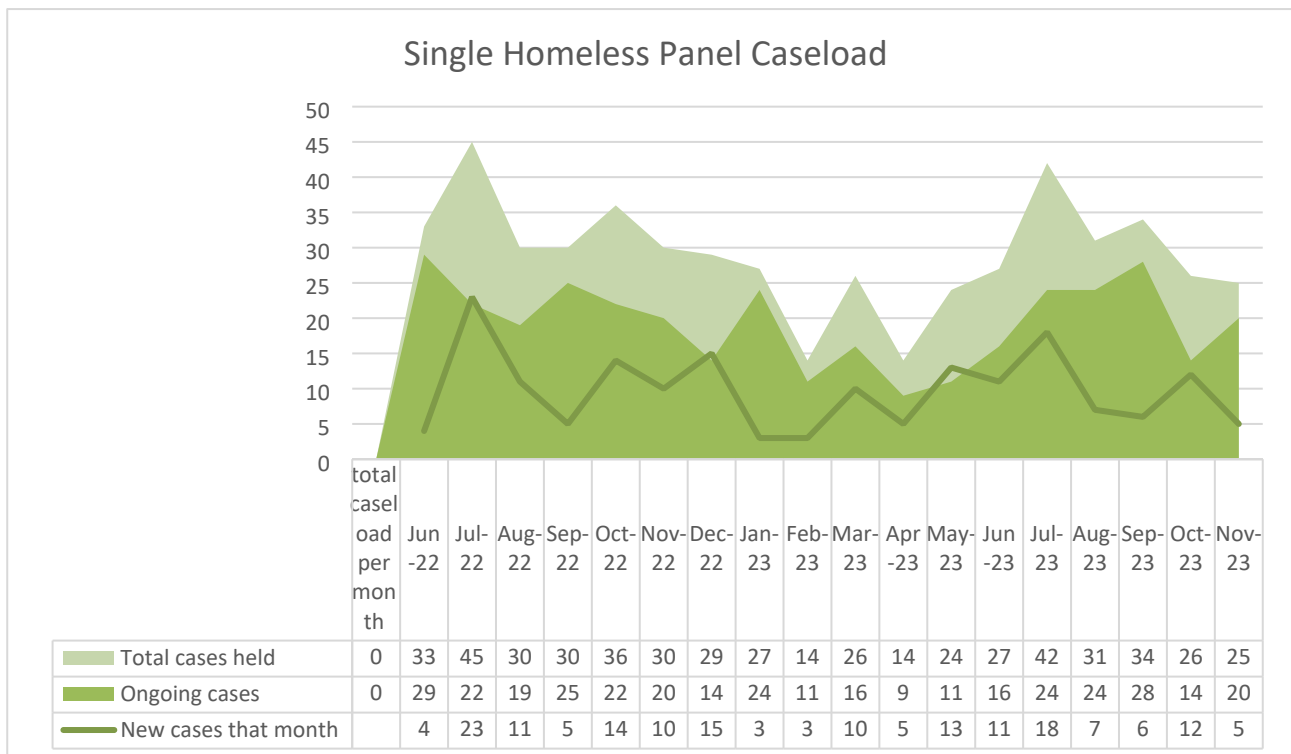
The rate of households assessed as homeless (owed a relief duty) in Slough was significantly higher than the national picture in 2022/23, whilst those threatened with homelessness (owed prevention duty) was like the national rates.

2.9.2 Households in temporary accommodation are those living in accommodation secured by the Local Housing Authority and the Homeless Reduction Act statutory duties. On 31st of March 2023, there were 378 households in temporary accommodation in Slough at the rate of 6.8 per 1000 households. This was significantly higher the national and regional rates. 213 (56%) of Slough temporary households included children. As of December 23, that figure stands at 500.

2.9.3 Single people are a subset of this wider cohort and those with support needs are assessed for vulnerability, and those requiring an element of supported accommodation (not care) are referred into the Single Homelessness Panel. This allows referrals to be made to range of supported housing as set out below:



2.9.4 There are currently 100 units of supported accommodation, 61 of which take referrals only via the Single Homeless Panel. The table below shows the demand for accommodation and the caseloads currently being managed by housing teams:



2.9.5 Slough Council has a dedicated Rough Sleepers units project funded by central government

which includes specific accommodation and support for 12 people and is able to access up to 4 emergency beds held for that use within the ASC funded provision. However, it should be noted that 89% of the current occupants of the High Need Housing Related Support service are formerly street homeless, some having multiple experiences of rough sleeping.

Former rough sleepers leaving services face issues in finding appropriate supported, or independent accommodation. The lack of sufficiency of stepdown beds, social housing and affordable, private rental sector accommodation impacts significantly on the ability of residents to move on in a planned way, leaving many reapplying to services and re-entering services.

2.9.6 Currently the data illustrating the pathway into and out of supported is not recorded challenging the understanding of the effectiveness of the service's ability to support people to sustain their own tenancies in the longer term. This would generally be after a period of stability, linking in with appropriate health services, and working on tenancy skills development.

2.9.7 There is very limited stock of social housing within Slough - currently numbering 5,700 units. There was a total of 1,638 households on the housing waiting list, equating to 29.7 per 1,000 households in Slough on 31 March for the year 2021/22. The average for Slough CIPFA nearest neighbours was 7,010, equating to 65.1 per 1,000 households.

Figures for 2022/23 are not available.

*Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Dwelling stock (including vacants), **Data updated:** 23 May 2023*

*Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Live tables on affordable housing supply, **Data updated:** 30 Nov 2023*

2.9.8 Most people leaving supported housing will need to access private rental housing which is also experiencing strong demand. Difficulties in accessing private rental sector accommodation is increased for those in receipt of benefits, where there is a significant gap between the rent charged, and the housing allowance rates as set by central government. The mean (average) gross monthly for one-bedroom properties on the private rental market in Slough for the period 2022/23 is £868 (**Source:** Office for National Statistics). The current local housing allowance for a one-bedroom flat is £798. For those under 25, the single room LHA rate is £449.

2.9.9 The impact of the recently announced increase of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024, is yet to be fully understood but is still expected to leave a significant gap between market rates.

2.9.10 For those with histories of rough sleeping, the ability to gain and maintain employment is challenging, requiring longer term interventions, thereby limiting this as an option to afford the current rent levels. This is exacerbated if there is no tenancy history, or if there have been negative incidents within the past.

2.9.11 Homelessness accommodation sufficiency therefore is a critical issue to Slough. Stability is essential to enable the additional support services to have a lasting positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Sloughs homeless population. This requires a collaborative approach to future provision, enabled by a strategic partnership of Housing, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Healthcare services, Community Safety, the Voluntary Sector and importantly, the people who rely on these services to provide a successful outcome.

2.9.12 The new Homelessness Prevention Strategy is under review and the work necessary to

support the revised single homeless and rough sleeping reduction plan will be time lined within that development work.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial Implications

- 3.1.1 The increased funding requirement for this service as detailed in Exempt Appendix 3 is £92,000 per annum, with the revised annual contract value of £277,000. The current Adult Social Care budget is £185,000 with a pressure reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to increase the budget to meet the budget requirement. The in-year pressure is being met from one-off funds within Adult Social Care and Housing for 2023/24.
- 3.1.2 Whilst there are no direct cost savings, there was a recognition that the overall cost to the Council would be greater if the service closed and the building is lost to Council referrals. The estimate market rate for similar provision would be in the region of £361,000 an additional cost of £84,000 per annum.
- 3.1.3 If access to the Hostel was no longer an option to Slough Borough and became available to out of area referrals, the additional cost pressure of introducing 18 vulnerable people into the Council area would be challenging to predict. The cost would be dependent upon individual circumstances but is likely to see individuals approaching Housing for support, including temporary accommodation.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 The total contract value for the proposed direct award of £415,500 is below the current UK procurement threshold for Light Touch Regime Services of £663,540 (inclusive of VAT) above which The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 apply and require a competitive tendering process to be conducted. The contract will be prepared by HB Public Law.
- 3.2.2 The current contract for the provision of the housing related support service for homeless people with medium to high (complex) needs expires on the 31 October 2024. The proposed approach to issue a waiver for a direct award of 18 months is compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules under **section 15.9 b) 'Demonstrable best interest:** justified on the basis there has been a failed procurement in 2023 and the Council needs to look at the procurement strategically with other contracts and align it to future strategies around housing and estates.
- 3.2.3 The principal statutory provisions relating to homelessness are set out in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996) and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 Overall, the risks associated with the recommended can be themed as follows:

Risk	Assessment of Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
risk of challenge from other providers who would see this as a lack of transparency and equity in our procurement approach	medium	<p>The total contract value for the proposed direct award of £415,500 is below the current UK procurement threshold for Light Touch Regime Services of £663,540 (inclusive of VAT) above which The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 apply and require a competitive tendering process to be conducted.</p> <p>A waiver under the CPRs would be required and could be justified on the basis there has been a failed procurement in 2023 and the Council needs to look at the procurement strategically with other contracts and align it to future strategies around housing and estates.</p>	Low
The Council rejects proposals for enhanced housing fund for exempt accommodation (supported accommodation) which is a dependency for all potential providers	Low/medium	HB have indicated that this is unlikely as long as the service still meets the criteria of exempt accommodation	Low
Strategic housing development timelines are not aligned	Medium	ASC Commissioning will work collaboratively with Housing colleagues to support the development of a single person's homeless pathway,	Low

		including prevention and tenancy sustainment	
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3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 There are no environmental impacts

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 **Please see Appendix 1 for full Quality Impact Assessment**

3.5.2 Whilst homelessness can affect all groups within society, evidence shows that particular groups are at greater risk of becoming serially homeless, as well as fairing less well in sustaining independent accommodation without significant support. Men are more likely to be street homeless than women, and those experiencing poor mental health are at greater risk.

3.5.3 Groups including adults who have lived through adverse childhood conditions resulting in long term trauma, people experiencing severe and enduring mental health issues, people living with undiagnosed neurodiversity such as ADHA, people who are dependent on substances including alcohol, and those with a history of offending are also at a higher risk. Many have co-occurring conditions that contribute to complex needs alongside behaviours that can challenge.

3.5.4 Services are developed to provide Trauma Informed Practice and Psychologically Informed Environments approaches that are evidenced based and proven to be more effective when working with people with complex needs.

3.6 *Procurement implications*

3.6.1 We have received procurement guidance which is supportive of pursuing a direct award on the basis that the Council needs to look at the procurement strategically with other contracts and align it to future strategies around housing and estates. A waiver under section **15.9 b) 'Demonstrable best interest'** of the CPRs would be required justified on the basis there has been a failed procurement in 2023 and subject to Cabinet approval.

4. **Background Papers**

None

**Appendix 1
Equality Impact Assessment**

Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: People (Adults)	
Service: People, Strategy and Commissioning	
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Diana Balsom Interim Commissioning Manager Prevention	
Date of Assessment: 27 09 23	
Name of service/function or policy being assessed:	
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>We are seeking to re-procure accommodation-based housing related support services for people with complex needs. Services work with people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to develop the skills required to support themselves and maintain their own accommodation. They provide support to people for up to two years (often for a much shorter period than this) to develop stability and tenancy support skills, as well as linking in with other supporting agencies. Services prepare them for their final stage of independence by empowering them to learn the skills required to maintain their accommodation and seek support when required. These services form a central plank of the Boroughs homelessness provision and prevent the take up of more expensive Temporary Accommodation.</p>
2.	<p>Who implements or delivers the policy, service, or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.</p> <p>The service is commissioned by Adult Social Care in collaboration with Housing via competitive tendering. We would with a wide group of stakeholders to develop service specifications that outline the service we require to meet the needs of those at risk of homelessness.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example, who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all of the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p> <p>Homelessness can affect everyone but there are particular groups who are former rough sleeper and/or at risk of homelessness that this service seeks to support, who will have additional and often complex support needs:</p> <p>Age: x</p> <p>Disability: x</p> <p>Gender Reassignment: x</p> <p>Marriage and Civil Partnership: x</p> <p>Pregnancy and maternity: x</p> <p>Race: x</p> <p>Religion and Belief: x</p> <p>Sex: x.</p> <p>Sexual orientation: x.</p> <p>Other: Care leavers, People experiencing social deprivation/isolation, Veterans, People at risk of Offending</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example, who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p> <p>Homelessness can affect everyone but there are particular groups who are former rough sleeper and/or at risk of homelessness that this service seeks to support, who will have additional and often complex support needs:</p> <p>Age: the service accepts Adults and Young People aged 18+ with additional support needs and will link in with relevant services dependent upon identified need – for example leaving care teams, education/training services, health services</p>

Disability: The service routinely accepts and works with People with mental health and addiction issues, hidden and undiagnosed neurodiversity conditions, Learning Disabilities, Dyslexia, people with long term health conditions, people living with HIV and HCV (Hepatitis C). The service can accept people with mobility issues but is not suitable for wheelchair users. However, this group are less likely to find themselves serially homeless and are likely to receive support within their own accommodation or within a care home. The service generally works with people with substance misuse issues and has 'in-reach' from substance misuse services, as well as those with enduring mental health issues.

Gender Reassignment: The service does not exclude people who have, or in the process of transitioning and will support access to services and support groups.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: The service does not exclude people based on their relationship status. However, bedrooms are for single occupancy only, so a couple entering together would each have their own room. The decision would be based on risk, looking at issues of domestic abuse.

Pregnancy and maternity: Whilst the service would not exclude someone due to pregnancy, the complex and sometimes challenging behaviour of some residents is likely to pose a risk and it is this risk that would support the final decision. Parents are not excluded but the service is not suitable for children. The service would support the resident to (re) establish contact with family including children where possible, and where no risk is identified – liaising with Childrens service were relevant.

Race: The service is accessible to all regardless of race and actively supports people whose first language if not English to access language training and interpreters

Religion and Belief: The service is accessible to all regardless of religion and belief. The service is not affiliated with any religious group and will support residents in meeting their faith needs.

Sex: The service is open to all people (men, women, non-binary). However, Hostel type services traditionally have a higher male percentage than other homelessness support. The service takes referrals from SBC Housing and access for underrepresented groups forms part of the Homeless Prevention strategy. The service itself will support residents to access specialist healthcare where necessary.

Sexual orientation: The service is accessible regardless of sexual- orientation. The service will support people to access appropriate support services and groups.

Other: The service works with many people impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (abuse, addiction, domestic abuse) which often leaves people with trauma that can be triggered in adulthood and sometimes lead to challenging behaviours that makes people serially excluded.

This often results in undiagnosed and untreated mental health issues that some individual's self-medicate with substances.

	<p>Over time this produces co-occurring issues of mental ill health and addictions issues. Treatment for this 'dual diagnosis' is very limited, with Mental Health teams unable to treat an individual with substance issues and Substance Misuse agencies unable to treat the symptoms of mental health distress that can accompany a reduction in substance misuse. This can lead to a continuous cycle of chaotic behaviour that services struggle to support and lead people into long term homelessness.</p> <p>The service uses 'trauma-informed practice' an evidenced-based approach for working with people with complex needs, as well as a holistic approach– working with the whole person, rather than the individual symptoms.</p>
5.	<p>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so, then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?</p> <p>We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from being supported within the service, but demographic and outcomes monitoring is used to understand whether there are different outcomes for different groups with protected characteristics.</p>
6.	<p>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g., survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <p>As noted above – this will form part of quarterly monitoring to ensure there is equity across groups with protected characteristics.</p>
7.	<p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results, e.g., have the staff forums/unions/ community groups been involved?</p> <p>Currently we are guided by national findings that indicate that some groups do not access the services- for example women. As the service takes referrals from the Housing team, this is a wider consideration than the service itself and will form part of ongoing development work with housing colleagues for future longer-term commissioning of the service.</p>
8.	<p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>The service itself supports a number of formerly homeless people with complex needs to stabilise. In doing this the service users are supported away from the street and the attendant anti-social behaviour that this can entail. This supports wider community safety. We are not aware of local issues with the siting of the accommodation itself. The accommodation has been in situ since 2006.</p> <p>We are introducing updates on comments, complaints and compliments into the monitoring process, and this can include comments from all stakeholders, not just service residents.</p>

9.	<p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts? For example, what plans, if any, will be put in place to reduce the impact?</p> <p>Quarterly monitoring with the service provider alongside housing colleagues will provide insight and overview of the impact of the service on residents and whether patterns emerge regarding worse outcomes for identified groups. Regular service user feedback will support the process too, giving insight to support any necessary changes.</p>
10.	<p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented). Please see action plan below.</p> <p>This will form part of ongoing contract monitoring.</p>

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	✓
Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	x
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments would remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	x
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

**Action
Plan and**

Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date
Establish groups that are not represented within the service and compare with homelessness data, local trends, and national trends. Where gaps do not align with local data, develop further understanding of causes through engagement and develop approaches to support those underrepresented	All groups in first instance to identify patterns in groups being referred, identifying those group not represented	Housing demand team and service contract officer and commissioner	Understand which groups need support but are not accessing the service. Understanding why they are not accessing the service. Identified strategies for supporting those groups. Greater take up of support from identified groups	Via qtly contract monitoring meetings	The meetings will be set up at the start of the service and collated to demonstrate any patterns emerging	

groups – either within this service or via others						
Quarterly monitoring of service outcomes for the service in relation to identified protected groups.	All groups	service contract officer and commissioner	Ability to match outcomes against protected characteristics. Groups with protected characteristics do not experience worse outcomes than other groups			

Name:
Signed: ...Diana Balsom.....(Person completing the EIA)

Name:
Signed:(Policy Lead if not same as above)

Date:

Appendix 2

2023 Procurement process

1. On the 17th of May 2022, Cabinet approved the procurement of the Housing Related Support Services for medium / high (complex) needs the Slough Hostel (Lot 1) to a value of £185,000 per annum for a 2.5-year contract, a total contract value £462,500.
2. The contract timeframe allowed both lots 1 and 2 to co-terminate, supporting the future strategic development of the services and ensuring a uniform approach to outcome measurement that would enable meaningful comparison for future service development. This would also allow the necessary time for evidenced-based models such as Housing First, or Housing-led models to be explored with wider stakeholders.
3. The proposal was in line with advice received from legal and procurement colleagues to test the market prior to the award of any future contract for these services. The table below shows the procurement timeline followed.
4. The procurement for the new services was conducted in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the council's Contract Procedure Rules with assistance from Procurement and HB Public Law.

Action	Actual or Current Projected Date
Market engagement events	28 03 23 – 12 04 23
*Find a tender and Contracts Finder Notice Published	10 05 23
Issue Invitation to Tender (ITT)	10 05 23
Deadline for receipt of written questions (by 12:00 hours)	22 05 23
Issue answers to clarification questions	24 05 23
Closing date for receipt of Tenders (by 12:00 noon)	12 06 23
Tender Evaluation Report Submitted for Approval	20 07 23
Notification of award	21 07 23
Alcatel period commences / Standstill	N/A
Alcatel period ends / Standstill	N/A
Commencement of New Contract	01 11 23
Contract Award Notice Published	02 08 23