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| REPORT TO:              | Community Scrutiny Committee                                       | AGENDA ITEM: 11       |
| DATE OF MEETING:        | March 26 <sup>th</sup> 2007  | CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED |
| REPORT FROM:            | Mark Alflat – Director of Community Services                       | OPEN                  |
| MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: | Karen Talbot – Housing Operations Manager                          | DOC:                  |
| SUBJECT:                | Progress report about arrangements to improve homelessness service | REF:                  |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED:       | All  | TERMS OF REFERENCE:   |

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## 1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That Scrutiny Committee members accept the information provided in response for their request about progress in service improvement to develop the Council's homelessness service provision to work towards top quartile performance in respect of BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 BVPI 183a measures the length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

2.2 BVPI 183b measures the average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households that are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

2.3 The targets set for out turn at the end of 2005/06 were as follows;

BVPI 183a 4 weeks  
BVPI 183b 0 weeks

2.4 However, actual outturn data had been;

BVPI 183a 5 weeks  
BVPI 183b 0 weeks.

2.5 In October 2006 the Chair of Community Scrutiny presented a report to Housing and Community Services Committee to advise that discussion with officers had taken place to clarify any issues with meeting this target.

2.6 The Chair also presented the Committee's recommendation that Housing and Community Services Committee investigate how other similar local authorities approach homelessness issues and how they achieve top quartile performance.

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Recent Government guidance has shifted the focus around homelessness provision away from a merely 'statutory duty' function to a Housing Options approach focusing on prevention rather than reaction.
- 3.2 As such we have remodelled our service from April 2006 with the help of a service development bid and DCLG funding to provide a Housing Options Advisor as first point of contact for all those who come into our service in need of housing advice or who believe they are threatened with homelessness. The first step is always to try to resolve their current situation wherever appropriate and practical to do so, thereby avoiding any 'crisis' period.
- 3.3 As well as providing a more holistic service for clients, this approach also contributes to a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation.
- 3.4 In addition we have recently reviewed our internal procedures and documentation. The Housing Options team are currently remodelling our internal forms, based upon good practice obtained from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to ensure that our procedures contain automatic steps to identify any resolvable issues.
- 3.5 The Housing Options Team are also reviewing all literature that we provide to the public to ensure they are better informed of their rights to remain, thereby reducing unnecessary homelessness.
- 3.6 As soon as these measures are completed and in progress we also intend to advertise our Housing Options Service in 'The News' and 'The Advertiser' to ensure that we target more clients earlier on in their housing need, thereby again increasing our chances of assisting clients to prevent homelessness.
- 3.7 Both BVPI's measure those unintentionally homeless and in priority need. In many cases this can mean women fleeing violence. These can be the most urgent cases we handle as victims need to leave in an emergency situation. Historically these cases can result in the use of temporary accommodation where Women's refuge spaces are unavailable.
- 3.8 To increase the housing options of this client group we have been working with the Community Safety Partnership and South Derbyshire Domestic Abuse Action Team to instigate a Sanctuary Scheme in South Derbyshire. Basically the Sanctuary Scheme ensures that each victim referred to Next Step for counselling and befriending is offered the option of increased security measures at their home to enable them to stay at home rather than flee, if they choose to. This again will reduce the need to use temporary accommodation

### **4.0 Performance for 2006/2007**

- 4.1 BVPI 183a – average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation has been measured as follows throughout this financial year;

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Quarter One   | 3 weeks    |
| Quarter Two   | 3.3 weeks  |
| Quarter Three | 0.33 weeks |

Average for first three quarters equals 2.2 weeks. We do not anticipate a significant increase in the fourth quarter and expect to meet our target of four weeks at the end of the financial year.

4.2 BVPI 183b – average length of stay in hostel accommodation remains at nil usage throughout the year.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

5.1 The Housing Options Team are scheduled to meet targets for BVPI 183a and BVPI 183b in 2006/07.

