

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 30th June 2021
Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration

Report Title

Housing & Homelessness Update

Summary

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an update with regards to Housing and Homelessness in Trafford.

This report provides the update for information only.

Recommendation(s)

To note the content of the report for information only.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Caroline Siddall – Housing Strategy & Growth Manager
Rob Miller – HOST Service Manager

Extension: x4776

Background Papers: *n/a*

Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing• Health and Wellbeing• Targeted Support
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	n/a
Finance	n/a
Legal	n/a
Equality/Diversity	n/a
Sustainability	n/a
Carbon Reduction	n/a
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management	n/a
Risk Management	n/a
Health and Safety	n/a

Introduction

The Housing Options Service Trafford (HOST) transferred from Salix Homes back to the Council on the 1st April 2021. HOST provide the following statutory services:

- To make inquiries into the cases of homelessness or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- To secure temporary accommodation in accordance with homelessness legislation – for those where there is reason to believe that a person is eligible, homeless and with a priority need.
- To create and review Personal Housing Plans.
- To prevent homelessness for 56 days and to inform the client in writing that they are owed the Prevention Duty.
- To relieve homelessness for 56 days and to inform the client in writing that they are owed the Relief Duty. Any accommodation secured to end the Relief Duty must be for at least six months.
- To investigate what 'Main Homelessness Duty is owed (eligibility, homeless, priority need, intentionality and local connection). To inform the client in writing what duty is owed and also the right to review any decision including any reasoning when the decision is a negative one.
- To inform clients when any duties are ceasing due to either a suitable offer of accommodation being made and accepted/refused or when a client deliberately refuses to co-operate.
- To secure ongoing accommodation for those in the Main Homelessness Duty – this must be for at least 12 months.
- To inform other authorities of any placements made by Trafford to that authority.
- To review homeless decisions and suitability of accommodation offers. This is a Council responsibility and currently not carried out by HOST.

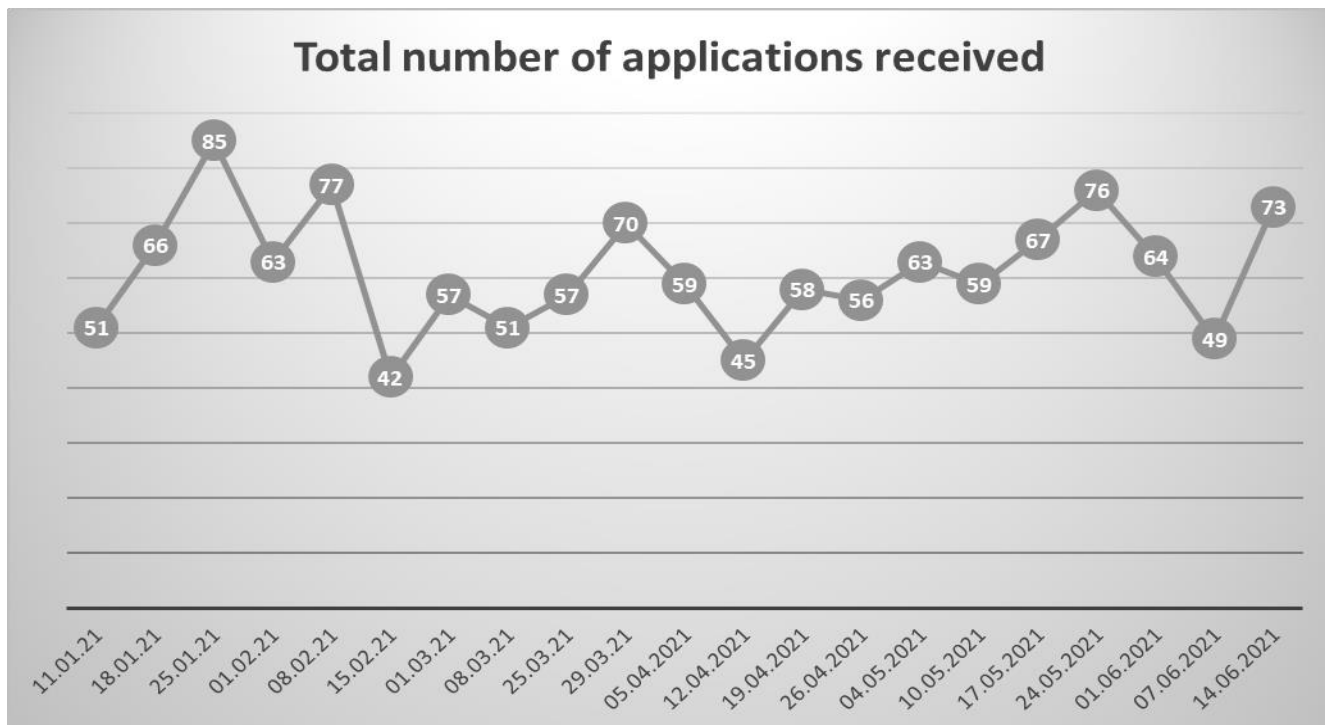
HOST Service Update

HOST closed the reception at Sale Waterside at the end of March 2020 following lockdown advice from Government and the service became wholly remote via email and telephone. The reception has since opened on an appointment only basis for those residents that may require additional support and are unable to undertake the full homelessness assessment via the telephone or for those that are required to supply additional information to support their application.

HOST Performance

HOST performance is being monitored on a weekly basis since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. The graphs below show some of the key performance indicators:

The total number of applications has seen a fluctuation since January 2021, with the highest number being the end of January with 85.



The number of homeless residents in Trafford is detailed below in terms of which Homeless Duty they have been awarded (as at 17th June 2021):

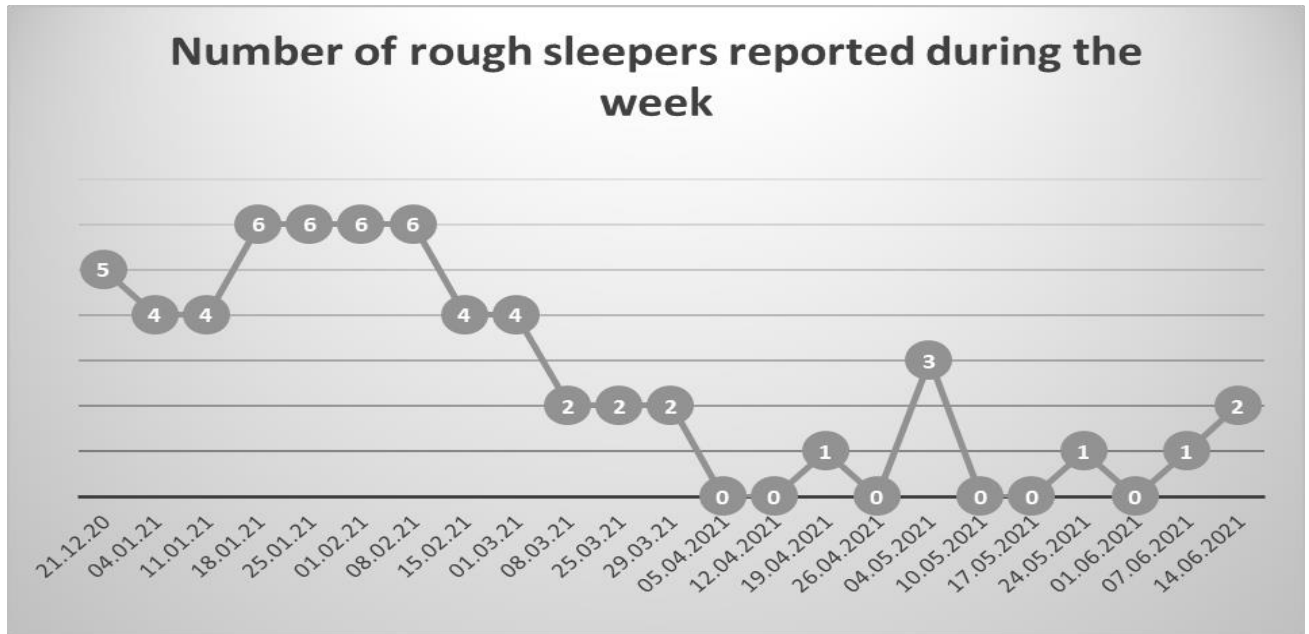
Homelessness Duty	Number of households
Prevention Duty	65
Relief Duty	104
Main Duty	154
Awaiting decision on main duty	9
Households Accommodated (included in Relief & Main)	134
Total Number of Homeless Cases	332

The number of households seeking advice has also seen some fluctuations with one week in February only having 13 to the highest in March being 57.



Rough Sleepers

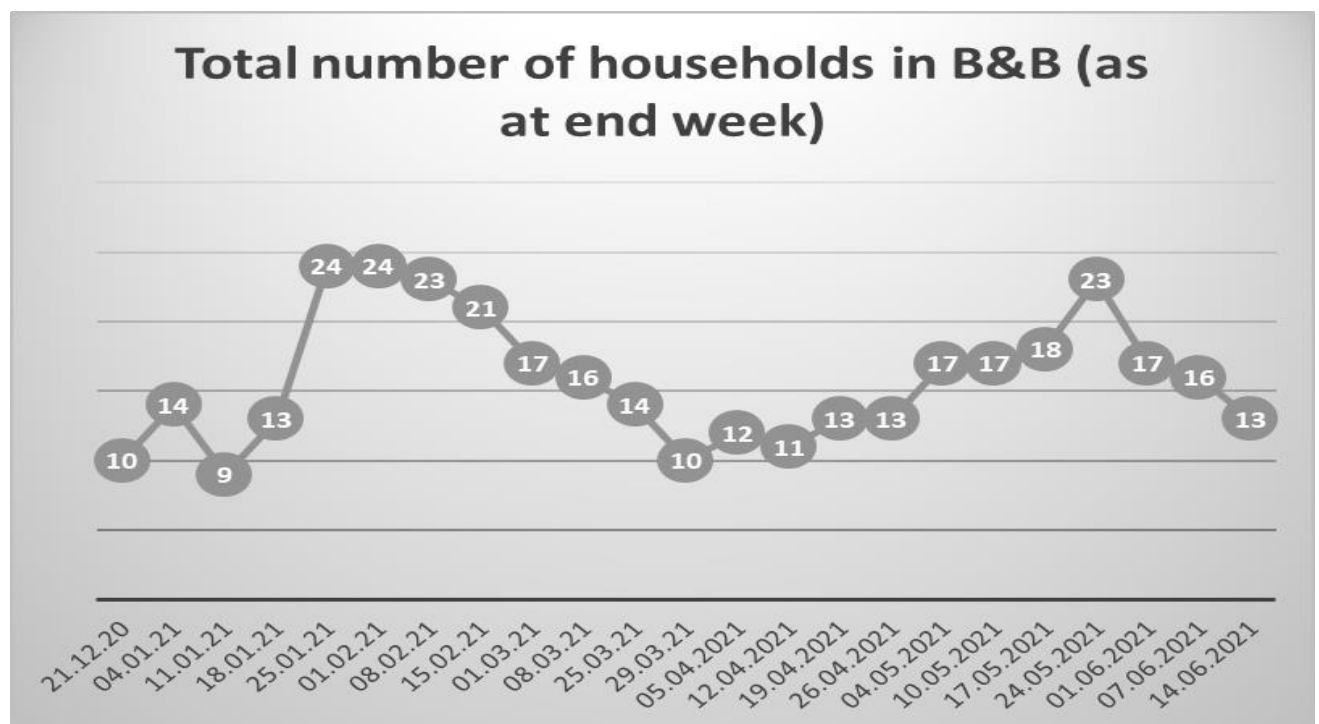
The number of rough sleepers reported has seen a decrease from January when there were 4 to June where we have 2. There was a rise of 6 in January/February. Trafford has a Rough Sleeper Outreach Worker who is funded through Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding) who attends reports of rough sleepers and engages with them to source accommodation. Reports of rough sleepers are attended to within 24 hours and placements will be made to Trafford's A Bed Every Night (ABEN) provision funded by GMCA.



The number of households in Temporary Accommodation has fluctuated since the start of the year, starting with 135, going down to 120 in April and back up to 128 in June.



The number of households in B&B accommodation has also seen an increase and then a decrease. The year started with 14 in B&B which increased to 23 but has then decreased again to 13.



Out of Borough Placements

When Local Authorities place homeless households out of borough a Section 208 notice to the hosting LA is required, HOST have now started to receive these notices from Manchester City Council, with 32 notifications received since 1st April 2021, so we are more aware of the number of households that they place into Trafford. These customers are directed back to their own Local authority for advice should they contact HOST. HOST have not received any other Section 208 notices from other LA's, which indicates that the Amblehurst or any other B&B's in Trafford are not being used by any other LA, apart from Manchester.

Housing & Homelessness Challenges –Recovery Period

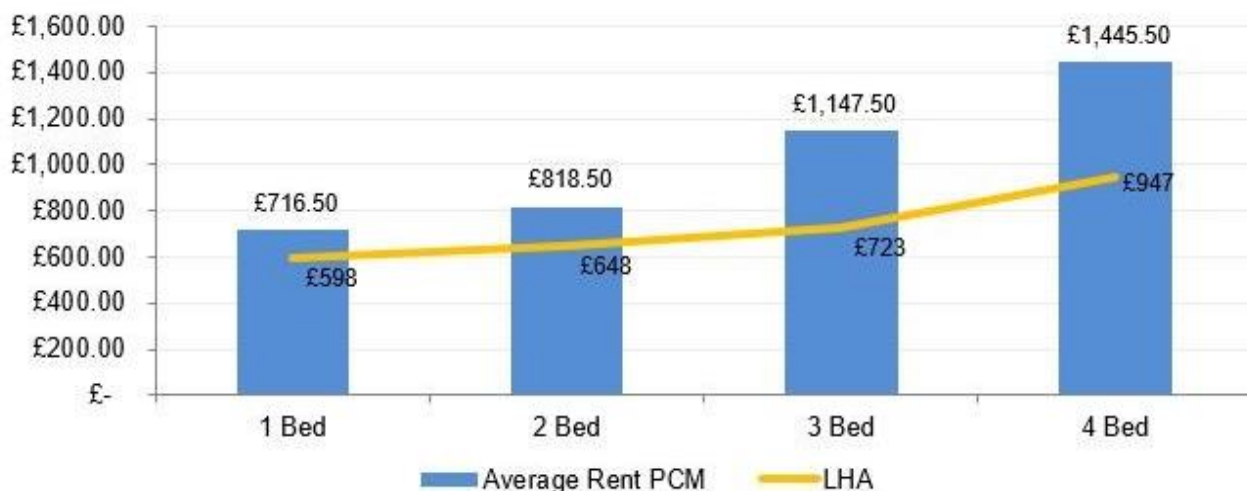
There are a number of challenges that Trafford must seek to overcome including:

- The increase in Private Rented Sector (PRS) evictions in light of the halt on evictions coming to an end on the 31st May 2021. To address this potential increase HOST will continue to monitor the PRS evictions on a weekly basis. We are looking at potential funding to increase the capacity and resources to engage new landlords in accepting homeless clients and also negotiating with current landlords regarding any rent arrears that may have accrued due to financial difficulties associated with Covid-19.
- The lack of social and affordable properties in Trafford across all wards - the Housing Register for Trafford works alongside the Allocations Policy 2018 to ensure that available housing stock is allocated to those with the greatest need. The Strategic Housing Partnership meets on a quarterly basis where such issues are discussed with the Registered Providers.

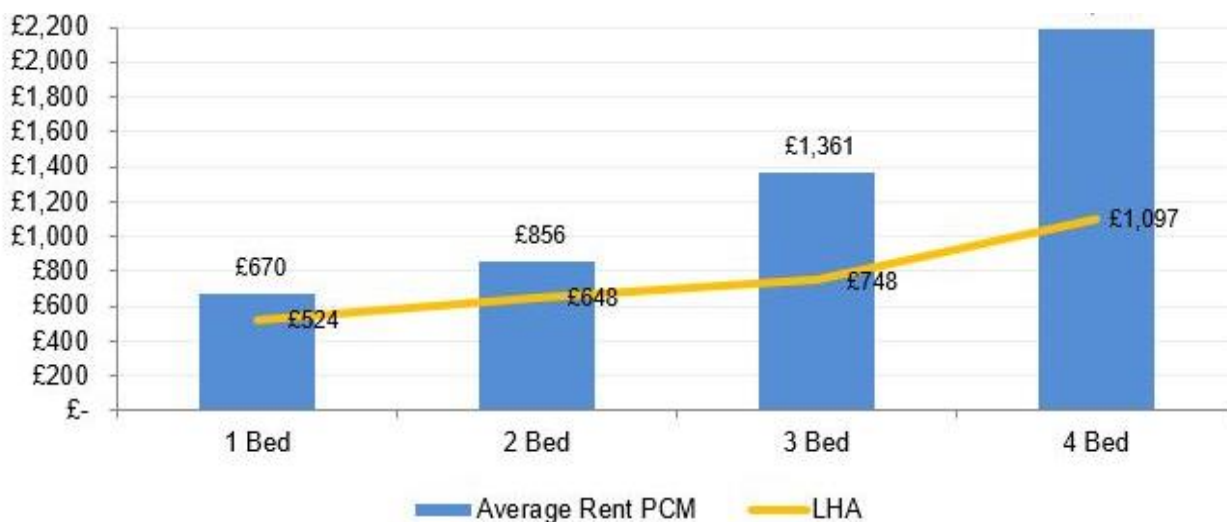
- The higher than average rental charges in the private sector. The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is shown in the diagram below:

	North Trafford	South Trafford
1 Bedroom	£455	£456
2 Bedroom	£536	£572
3 Bedroom	£595	£677
4 Bedroom	£808	£893

The graphs below show the average rental as at quarter 4 of 2020/21.



Local Housing Allowance - Valuation Office Agency, April 2021
Average Rents April 2021 - Home.co.uk



Local Housing Allowance - Valuation Office Agency, April 2021
Average Rents April 2021 - Home.co.uk

Trafford make full use of the New Burdens Fund, Discretionary Housing payments and RSI monies to assist clients with shortfalls in rent. The Rental Bond Scheme also assists those clients who would otherwise be able to afford deposits. HOST staff are often able to negotiate lower rental charges with landlords with promise of direct rent payments where applicable.

- Trafford have relatively low numbers of rough sleepers compared to the other boroughs of GM and therefore can be prevented from submitting bids for

funding streams. Trafford access funding streams through any GMCA joint bids.

- There are two entrenched rough sleepers in the borough who refuse to engage despite repeated offers of support and accommodation. The RSI funding stream for 21/22 includes a shared dual diagnosis worker and a shared navigator both of whom can work more intensively with the two entrenched rough sleepers. Trafford will continue to provide ABEN and will operate cold and severe weather provision when necessary. It is hoped that by maintaining regular contact with the individuals they may at some point engage.
- Covid 19 has thus far prevented any task and finish groups being formed to look at the health aspects of the prevention strategy as the focus for these professionals have been directed to the pandemic. The task and finish group remains a priority and invites will be sent out to relevant persons as Covid priorities begin to decline.
- Covid 19 has presented additional challenges for Housing and Homelessness which the Trafford Housing and Homeless Covid-19 Recovery Plan has identified:
 - An increase in evictions and repossessions when the government ban on such actions ends
 - An increase in homeless applications due affordability issues following loss of employment.
 - An increase in the number of rough sleepers.
 - An increase in the number of B&B placements and the number of households in temporary accommodation.
 - An increase in Housing Advice cases due to Covid 19
 - An increase in application on the Housing Register.
 - Social housing availability not keeping up with demand.
 - Delays with housing development and growth due to site delays.
- Trafford has identified a series of actions to address the potential issues:
 - Monitor the performance and case load for HOST on a weekly basis.
 - Work with RPs and partners such as DWP, Welfare Rights to ensure maximum assistance is available to residents.
 - Ensure the Council's website and all social media platforms are up to date with details of how to access assistance as well as regular social media posts to promote services.
 - Continue to operate ABEN in Trafford and look to increase the provision to keep up with demand.
 - Utilise all RSI workers to work with new and entrenched rough sleepers.
 - Increase the provision of temporary accommodation units to reduce the B&B placements. Welfare checks will continue be conducted for all clients placed in emergency accommodation.

Consultation

The report is an update on the current performance of Housing Options Service Trafford (HOST) and therefore consultation is not applicable.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The recommendation is to note the content of the report for information only.