

**Homelessness Reduction Act 2017****Report to Executive**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> February 2018</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	<b>Housing and the Environment</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	<b>Paul Gatrell</b>
<b>TEL NO</b>	<b>01282 477230</b>
<b>EMAIL</b>	<b>pgatrell@burnley.gov.uk</b>

**PURPOSE**

1. To consider the introduction of an extra officer in the Housing Needs Team to respond to the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA).

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. That Members approve the appointment of an additional Housing Needs Officer over the three years 2018/19 – 2020/21.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

3. To ensure that the Council dedicate sufficient resources to the Housing Needs Team to effectively implement and fulfil the new duties introduction by the HRA.

**SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS****Introduction**

4. The HRA received Royal Assent in April this year. It is the Government's intention to commence the Act in April 2018 and Local Housing Authorities (LHA) are currently preparing for the implementation of the Act.
5. The HRA makes significant amendments to the current homelessness legislation contained in the 1996 Housing Act. It places additional duties on LHA to intervene earlier and take steps to prevent homelessness. It requires LHA to provide some new homelessness services and expands the categories of people who LHA have to help to find accommodation.

**What are the significant changes brought about by the HRA 2017?**

6. If assessed as homeless or at risk of homelessness the LHA has to provide help to prevent or resolve their homelessness under a statutory duty, regardless of priority need or intentional homelessness.
7. The help has to be based on a "real" assessment of their needs and the authority is under a duty to provide help for at least 56 days per duty

8. There are now four stages to a homeless case

- Stage 1 – the application and an assessment as to whether the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- Stage 2 – The prevention stage – to take reasonable steps to help the applicant from losing accommodation within 56 days. If this fails then
- Stage 3 – The relief of homelessness stage – to take reasonable steps to help the applicant find somewhere else to live within 56 days. If this fails then
- Stage 4 – The final main housing duty is owed for those in priority need and not intentionally homeless

### **By how much are homeless applications likely to rise?**

9. Wales have had similar legislation for 2 years. Initial there was a 26% rise in applications but the key statistic is that in 2016/17 there were 28,000 “duty” decisions compared to 14,000 decisions under old act. It is being predicted that in England applications will double because,

1. there are higher housing pressures compared to Wales
2. there is a duty on specified public authorities to refer and most referrals will trigger a homeless application. There is no such duty in Wales.
3. the continuing impact of welfare reform, especially the ending of private sector tenancies and uncertainty over the impact of Universal Credit

10. Whilst Burnley does not experience demand for housing advice and homelessness services comparable to large cities and the Greater London area it is still considered that there will be a significant increase in the number of applications and the volume of workload.

### **The current context**

11. The table below details the current case load under existing legislation.

<b>Case description</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18 as at 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2017</b>	<b>Estimate Full year 2017/18</b>
Housing Advice	1,098	1,248	869	1,304
Homelessness Assessment	171	192	155	232
Full Duty owed	31	44	30	45
Prevented Homelessness	140	137	64	128

12. Council officers also work closely with housing providers to ensure that the Council can effectively discharge its housing duty to homeless households through access to decent housing that will allow residents to secure a sustainable housing solution for the future. Good examples of recent partnership working is the extension to the women’s refuge “Jane’s Place” that offers services for clients with complex needs and Calico’s flagship development “The Gateway Project” under construction on the site of the former Mitre Public House.

## **Proposed use of new burdens funding**

13. As set out above the new duties brought in by the HRA will result in a significant increase in workload therefore it is considered that the best use of the funding is to appoint a Housing Needs Officer to increase the staff resource from 3 to 4 front line officers.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION**

14. The cost of appointing a Housing Needs Officer for three years is £97,500.
15. The Government have provided £61 million nationally to local authorities to meet the “new burdens” cost of the Act. Burnley Council will receive £73,280.
16. There will be no additional burden placed on the Council's revenue budget as the new burdens funding will be utilised over the three year period together with existing revenue resources identified within the Housing Needs Revenue Budget.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

17. The Homelessness Reduction Act has significant implications for the procedures adopted to carry out the Council's statutory duty to households at risk of homelessness and these will need revising ahead of the implementation of the Act in April 2018. The Council will also need to revise its Prevention of Homelessness Strategy to reflect the legislative changes and this will be done by July 2018.

### **DETAILS OF CONSULTATION**

18. None

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

19. None

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

**PLEASE CONTACT: Paul Gatrell ext:7320**