

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 9 MARCH 2023

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

LORD LISTER UPDATE (SCHEME FOR SINGLE HOMELESS PEOPLE)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR SEAN PRENDERGAST, EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the accommodation and support scheme for single homeless people located at the former Lord Lister hotel in Hitchin.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 This update was included in the Committee's work programme agreed at its meeting on 24 January 2023.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The cross government rough sleeping strategy (September 2022) aims to help people off the street into their own independent housing via supported accommodation settings (the Council has similar aims in its Housing Strategy). The Covid-19 pandemic revealed the single homeless cohort to be much larger than previously understood and highlighted the urgent need for accommodation and support for this group as significant numbers approached the Council for assistance following the government's 'Everyone In' directive. 'Everyone In' effectively extended councils' emergency accommodation duties to include single homeless people and the Council accommodated almost 200 people during the course of the pandemic in line with this directive (in addition to its usual accommodation duties to households in priority need), mainly in hotels.
- 3.2 The scheme at the former Lord Lister hotel (called PAIRS, Provision for Assessment, Intervention and Resettlement Support) provides accommodation and round-the-clock on-site support for local people on the single homeless pathway and particularly those with multiple support needs. PAIRS is provided by Keystage Housing and has been operational since December 2021. A detailed account of the scheme and its operation to date was included in the Call to Account report presented to the Committee on [28 September 2022](#).
- 3.3 In mid-2022, Keystage agreed to limit occupancy to ten rooms (out of a possible 21) due to local concerns around anti-social behaviour arising from the scheme. This cap on occupancy was to be in place until the outcome of the planning application for change of use for the site was decided, originally due to be considered in June 2022. Planning approval for the PAIRS scheme was eventually obtained on [20 September 2022](#). Since then, Keystage's immediate focus has been on progressing the works required to meet the planning conditions, whilst also continuing to support their existing residents and assessing referrals for future suitability to the scheme (note all referrals are through the Council).

- 3.4 Five clients have been re-settled since September 2022, with five new placements, keeping the scheme occupancy at ten rooms. Moving the scheme to full capacity will go some way to meeting the significant ongoing demand for accommodation and support from this cohort. In total, 80 Council referrals to PAIRS have been made since 2021 and at the time of writing, there are 23 individuals in hotel placements because there is no other suitable accommodation available.
- 3.5 Keystage now plan a staged increase in the occupancy of PAIRS, as below:
- From 6 March 2023: potential occupancy raised to 12 rooms
 - From 13 March: potential occupancy raised to 14 rooms
 - 20 March – end April 2023: The remaining 7 rooms will be made available based on suitability, matching and agreement from all agencies involved in the partnership, taking the occupancy up to its capacity of 21.
- 3.6 All individuals accepted into PAIRS undergo suitability assessments in line with the comprehensive referral process, to ensure that they are matched as suitable to the services provided at PAIRS. The impact of the increasing occupancy will be kept under regular review, with a Keystage offer made to neighbours to attend a weekly meeting, drop in or raise questions and regular briefings for councillors.
- 3.7 The majority of the planning conditions have been met and Keystage have confirmed that Planning do not have any concerns about the increase in occupancy and that no safety/security protocols will be compromised.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Council officers will continue to work closely with Keystage to monitor any impacts of the increased occupancy, particularly with regard the local community.
- 4.2 Council officers are working similarly with Haven First (soon to complete a merger with OneYMCA) on ensuring their clients and wider services in Hitchin and Baldock are well supported by specialist agencies whilst also seeking to increase accommodation and support capacity for this client group by bringing forward other options with registered providers.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 None.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 6.1 Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager, martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474250

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Strategy [Rough sleepers helped to rebuild their lives with new strategy backed by £2bn government support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 7.2 The Council's Housing Strategy 2019-2024 [Housing and tenancy strategies | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)