

**INTERNAL AUDIT BRIEF**  
**HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING ALLOCATIONS 2018-19**

<b>Client: Dover District Council</b>	<b>APACE Job No:</b>
<b>Objectives and Scope of the Review:</b>	
<p>To provide assurance that the Council deals fairly and efficiently with all homelessness applications whilst:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising the length of stay in temporary accommodation;</li> <li>• Minimising the cost to the Council of temporary accommodation; and</li> <li>• Maximising income from all available sources to cover the costs incurred.</li> </ul> <p>The audit will examine / evaluate: -</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;"><u>Homelessness:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Follow-up the recommendations from the last audit.</li> <li>b) Review the income and expenditure, caseload, trends, comparative PIs etc related to homelessness to establish the areas of the service that require review.</li> <li>c) Do managers have sufficient comprehensive and complete data and information to understand and manage the trends, patterns, expenditure and income in homelessness and the associated costs and their recovery.</li> <li>d) Do performance trends indicate a clear direction of travel? How do they compare with other authorities?</li> <li>e) Are all those who are homeless properly assessed and accepted where we have a duty to house?</li> <li>f) Are all those not homeless properly assessed and not accepted?</li> <li>g) Is the length of stay for all those in temporary accommodation minimised?</li> <li>h) Are appropriate steps taken to maximise the amount of permanent accommodation available from private and public stock in order to move households out of temporary accommodation?</li> <li>i) Are all steps taken to maximise the income and benefits available to households?</li> <li>j) Are all steps taken to maximise the recovery of costs and rents (HRA) from households while they remain in temporary accommodation? Is there a trend of increasing expenditure recovery?</li> <li>k) Are the costs of temporary accommodation to the council minimised, and the least expensive TA given priority?</li> <li>l) Are the processes operated by the team sufficient (both in design and compliance) to optimise the operation?</li> <li>m) Is the structure and work allocation of the team optimal? Would dedicated specialists in specific areas, such as income recovery and admin improve performance?</li> </ol>	

If you have any queries during the review please contact the Auditor by email or on the following relevant extension number: Dover – 2145, Shepway – 3499 and Thanet - 7189.

- n) Are HRA stock vacancies used appropriately to move households out of temporary accommodation?
- o) Are the council's homelessness policies and processes appropriate to the service requirements?
- p) Are the council's homelessness policies and processes complied with?
- q) Ascertain whether the Council's financial liabilities are being minimised through the effective use of housing benefits to recover the costs of emergency accommodation.
- r) Ascertain whether appropriate controls are in place within the rent deposit scheme to ensure that the recovery of deposits is maximised.

The basis of the review will be determination of procedures through discussion with key officers and the performance of test checks / walk through checks to confirm that procedures are adhered to and appropriate.

**Corporate Objective and or Corporate Risk Register Links:**

There has been a continued steady increase in homelessness at district level and homelessness is likely to be circa £750k overspent against the original 2017/18 budget and is the largest single source of financial pressure on the council; therefore managing the service appropriately and with the greatest financial efficiency is critical.

Although there is a general increase in homelessness, the available statistics appear to indicate that the experiences and responses vary significantly from district to district and therefore, given the importance of this issue, it is essential that the way in which the council responds to this pressure is optimised.

Homelessness - As part of the consultation on this brief, please advise us of any changes in the systems, personnel or governing legislation since the time of the last review; which concluded Substantial Assurance and was finalised on 01-08-2017.

Housing Allocations - As part of the consultation on this brief, please advise us of any changes in the systems, personnel or governing legislation since the time of the last review; which concluded Substantial Assurance and was finalised on 05-02-2016, and the subsequent follow up which was then finalised on 28-06-2016 and also concluded Substantial Assurance.

**Timescale, Contact and Resources:**

The proposed start date for the review is circa March/April 2018 and the review has been allocated 20 days. The auditor for this review will be Lee Jones.

<b>Agreed With:</b> Mike Davis.	<b>Title:</b> Director of Finance, Housing & Community.
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<b>Auditor:</b> Lee Jones	<b>Brief date:</b> 16-02-2018 v1 : 20-02-2018 v2 : 21-02-2018 v3	<b>Prepared By:</b> Simon Webb
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