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## HOMELESS STRATEGY UPDATE

### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report updates the Committee on the Homeless Strategy 2016-2021, which identifies five priorities for tackling homelessness and produced an action plan focussed upon homelessness prevention. The key measure of success for the strategy is an increase in homelessness prevention.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council's Homelessness Strategy, as detailed in Appendix 1, sets out the Local Authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness, and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are, or will be, available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

Appendix 1: Homeless Strategy 2016-2021 - Delivering Early Intervention and Support

- 2.2 The strategic Homelessness priorities propose, through a number of improved housing options initiatives, that we reduce the number of homeless but, more critically, the number of families using bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The initiatives include the need for sufficient accommodation to meet the need, increased availability of information, early targeted intervention work and strengthening links with landlords and agents.

### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 National and local trends, as detailed in Appendix 2, will impact on the demand and work of the Housing Options service.

Appendix 2: Housing Options quarterly report – September 2016.

#### Homeless Prevention

- 3.2 In line with the Government's positive promotion of the 'prevention agenda', the Council's key strategy action has been to refocus its existing Homeless/Housing Advice/Allocations service and introduce a new way of working that focusses more strongly on homeless prevention. The outcome of a recent restructure programme has meant that this new approach will be effective from 7 November 2016. The measurement of prevention outcomes will evidence the change in approach.
- 3.3 There will no longer be a separation between Housing Allocations and Homelessness and, although officers will still have specialist skills, the Team will come together as one Housing Options Service. Two new Prevention Officer roles will be introduced, with the aim of lowering homeless acceptance rates and will take a proactive approach to early intervention and provide

in-depth case management, including support assessments, referrals and inter agency working.

- 3.4 In the meantime, homeless prevention work has continued within the existing structure and the number of homelessness applications taken each month is still of a low number compared with the number of housing advice approaches. New homeless prevention outcomes in advance of the new service model are now being recorded and are beginning to show an increase, as seen in the local trends table in Appendix 2.
- 3.5 Prevention work streams that are currently used by the service and are being improved on include:
- Early intervention through housing advice.
  - Rent in advance scheme
  - Rent deposit scheme
  - Discretionary housing payments
  - Tenancy sustainment incentives
  - Home visits
  - One to one mediation work with landlords/agents
  - Working with registered providers
  - Daily property checking for private rented properties
- 3.6 The key tool in preventing homelessness will be the accessing of alternative accommodation (currently the priority work area for the homelessness service), working with registered providers, private developers and landlords to make this happen. Partnership work is progressing with Rochford Housing Association who, having recently carried out a review of their supporting housing accommodation and taken into account the housing needs of the Authority, have made a business decision to use a low demand supported block for temporary accommodation. This project is ongoing and will provide much needed emergency accommodation for households with a local connection to the District.
- 3.7 Ongoing discussions are also being progressed with a local developer to look at how we can control the future use of an empty property to meet our homeless demand.
- 3.8 As detailed in Appendix 2, supply, affordability, rising demand and welfare reforms mean that the degree of progress made on prevention work often has to be balanced with the ongoing need to manage legal responsibilities to tackle the day to day homelessness issues. A recent Communities and Local Government Committee report, supporting the Homelessness Reduction Bill , acknowledges that councils cannot do this alone and a focus on addressing the causes of homelessness will need to be key, for example, the widening gap between incomes and rents, and supply of affordable homes.

**Link to business plan priorities**

- 3.9 Homelessness services support some of the most vulnerable residents and, therefore, 'Early Intervention' and 'Improving Health and Wellbeing' are the overarching priority for all ongoing and new prevention and intervention work.

**4 RISK IMPLICATIONS****Impact of Affordability and Supply**

- 4.1 A lack of supply and affordable accommodation is now having a critical and direct effect for Rochford District, having regard to the number of households in both temporary and emergency accommodation and their length of stay.
- 4.2 This is a growing problem not only for Rochford, but for all of Essex, with a reduction in the number of affordable rented homes being built and households on a low income being able to access a home in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). There are very few PRS properties available within Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels and as LHA rates are frozen until 2020 this problem is going to worsen significantly.
- 4.3 The impact is having the effect of creating a 'blocking up' of the whole system as the movement of households slows down.
- 4.4 For Rochford District the current Strategic Housing Market Assessment details that the Council needs to build 268 affordable homes a year: we are only likely to see approximately 50 to 70 new affordable rented homes built over the next year. The implications are severe at a time when national housing policies contained within the Housing and Planning Act 2016 will see a lot less affordable rented homes being achieved.

**5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Strategy continues to focus on early intervention through an increase in homelessness prevention work, which in the long term will help to reduce costs and homelessness, but this work is currently significantly dependent on the lack of supply and affordability.
- 5.2 In the short to medium term, as the movement of households slows down, the Council's ability to discharge homelessness responsibilities into the PRS reduces, resulting in significant increases in Emergency Accommodation placements, i.e. bed & breakfast, which has to be met from the Council's Homeless budget.
- 5.3 The financial impact has meant savings have had to be found in other budget areas to meet this need. This approach is not easy and can only be sustainable in the short term.

- 5.4 There is, therefore, an ongoing critical need to take back some control of the supply of new temporary accommodation and continue to innovate to enable more cost-effective interventions.

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires a Local Authority to review homelessness in its area and to produce a strategy. The strategy is reviewed and updated at least every 5 years. The Rochford Homelessness Strategy 2016-21 meets this statutory duty.
- 6.2 The Council holds a statutory duty under the Housing Act 1996 to secure accommodation for unintentionally homeless households who fall into a 'priority need' category. There is no duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to note the Homelessness Strategy work and the ongoing need to demand manage the service, as outlined in the report and Appendix 1.



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### **Background Papers:-**

None.

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# Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 – Delivering Early Intervention and Support



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## **Foreword**

The Rochford District Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 identifies the actions required by the Council over the next five years to tackle homelessness in the District.

The strategy has been developed at a challenging time both locally and nationally. The economic downturn has increased the financial pressures on both households living within our community and the District Council.

As a result, the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team will need to use its resources more effectively to meet the increase in housing enquiries and applications. The team will work closely and pro-actively with stakeholders, including its main housing partner Rochford Housing Association, to prevent homelessness, provide timely and appropriate advice and support to people in housing need and ensure that suitable temporary accommodation is available if required.

**Councillor Mrs June Lumley**  
Portfolio for Community

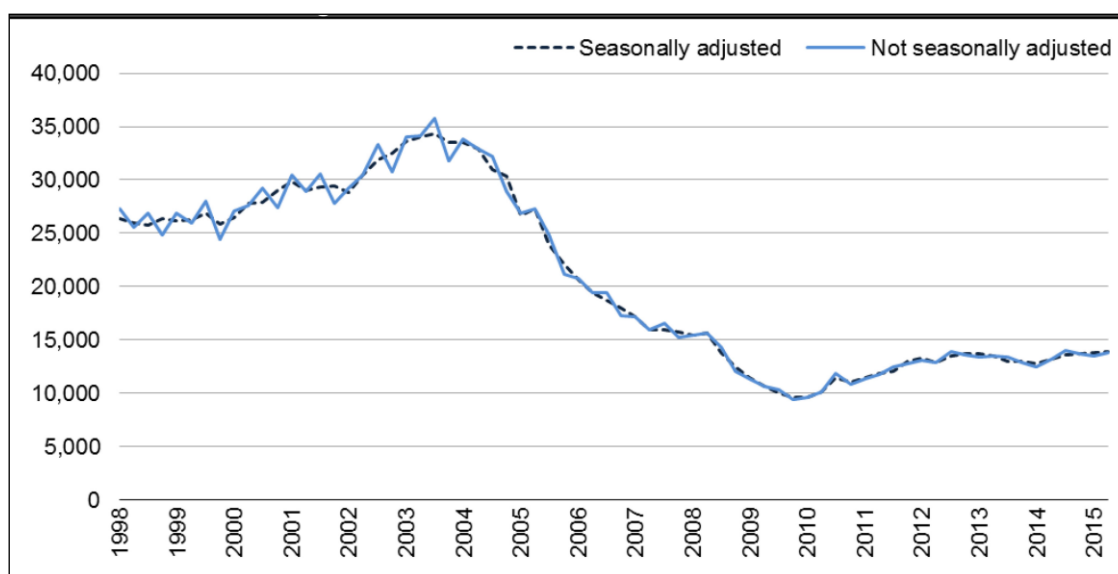


## **1 Introduction**

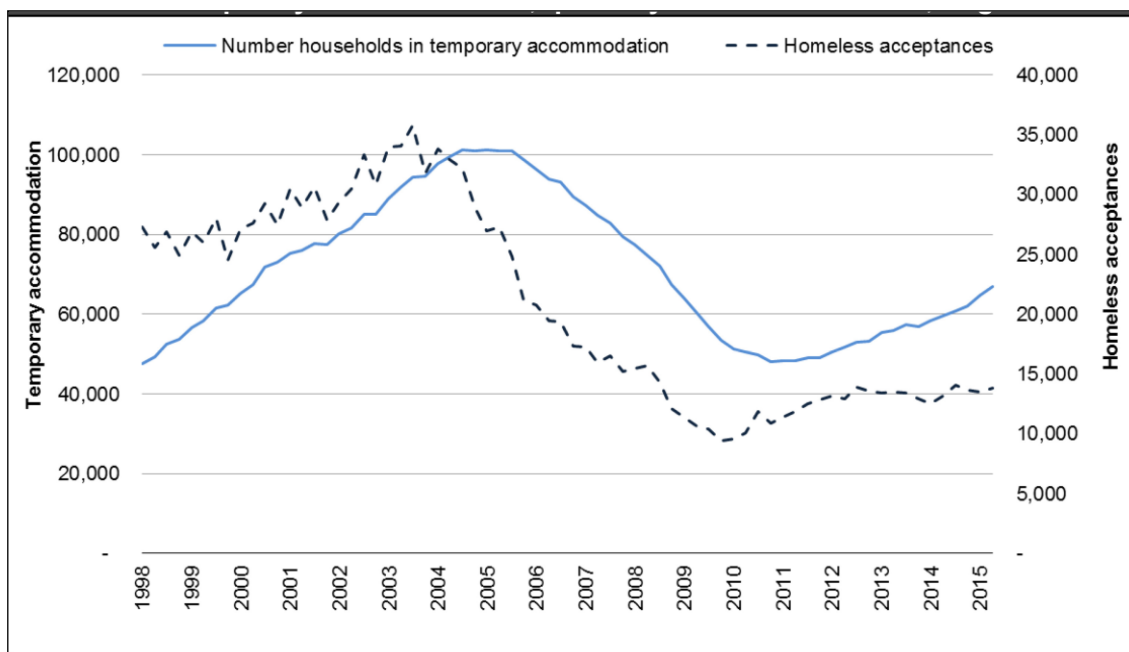
- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 required all Councils to formulate a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. Councils are required to carry out a homelessness review of their area and produce a strategy to:
- Address the causes of homelessness in the area;
  - Introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible;
  - Provide sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
  - Ensure that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.
- 1.2 The Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003 with the most recent being the Homelessness Strategy 2010-2014. A review of the Strategic Housing service took place in 2015.
- 1.3 This new strategy has been developed in response to that review and sets out a plan of action to enable the Council to deliver a robust response to its responsibilities to homeless households in the District and defines the strategic approach to homelessness in the District for the next five years.

## **2 The National Picture**

- 2.1 The chart below shows the number of acceptances in England since 1998. The annual number of acceptances peaked in 2003-04 at 135,420 before falling to a low of 40,020 in 2009-10. In 2014-15 the annual number of acceptances at 54,430 was 60 per cent below the 2003-04 peak, and 36 per cent higher than the 2009-10 low.



- 2.2 Nationally the most frequently occurring reason for the loss of the last settled home was the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) with a private landlord. Throughout England, the proportion of all acceptances due to the ending of an AST was 30 per cent (4,130 households), and in London this proportion was 38 per cent (1,690 households). The end of an AST has been an increasingly frequent cause of loss of last home over the last six years. The context for this is that number of households living in the private rented sector has doubled in the last ten years to reach 4.4 million households in 2013/14.
- 2.3 The number of acceptances where homelessness resulted from parents or other relatives and friends being no longer able or willing to provide accommodation has also increased nationally.
- 2.4 The chart below shows that the number of households in temporary accommodation follows a similar pattern with a delay. The number of households in temporary accommodation peaked at the end of September 2004 before declining to a low of 48,000 at the end of 2010.



- 2.5 The Government in response to concerns about increasing homelessness introduced a number of measures over the last few years to tackle homelessness including:
- **No second night out** – which includes funding to prevent rough sleeping and encourage reporting.
  - **The Localism Act 2011** – introduced the ability for local authorities to discharge the homelessness duty in the private rented sector.
  - **Making every contact count** – outlining a series of commitments from across Government departments to prevent homelessness.

- 2.6 However, alongside this framework the Government is also implementing widespread and significant Welfare Reforms, including the roll out of Universal Credit that will impact on people's ability to pay their rent.
- 2.7 With an emphasis in the draft Housing and Planning Bill on home ownership and the building of Starter Homes on new developments along with a Right to Buy for housing association tenants there is a significant challenge ahead to ensure there is provision for those who are struggling to pay high rent in the private sector and who are not able to afford to get on the homeownership ladder.

### **3 Local Context**

- 3.1 The Council's vision is to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here. The Council aims to create an environment that is vibrant, inclusive, safe, sustainable and modern while retaining its historic character.
- 3.2 The Council's four priorities are highlighted in the Rochford District Council Business Plan 2016-2020:
- Becoming financially self-sufficient.
  - Early intervention.
  - Maximise our assets.
  - Enable communities.

These priorities are designed to complement each other for example early intervention in housing will have a positive impact on becoming financially self-sufficient as well as enabling communities. The Council recognises within the Business Plan that in order to deliver these priorities a change in culture is required to ensure that it is: focussed on real outcomes, proactive, flexible and able to make decisions promptly and with empathy.

- 3.3 By tackling homelessness in the District, this strategy aims to improve the quality of life for its most vulnerable residents thus meeting the Council's aims and objectives.
- 3.4 Links to other Strategies/Partnerships:
- Rochford Business Plan 2016-2020.
  - Thames Gateway South Essex Housing Strategy 2012-2015.
  - Rochford Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
  - Local Strategic Partnership.
  - Community Development Partnership.

## **4 Homelessness in Rochford – Key Facts**

### **Housing Advice**

- 4.1 The number of people approaching the Council for housing advice has varied over the last six years but has increased significantly in 2014/15 and 2015/16. These figures do not include those making a homeless application.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Housing Advice Enquiries</b>
2010/2011	549
2011/2012	703
2012/2013	684
2013/2014	658
2014/2015	742
Q1-Q3 2015/2016	619

### **Homeless Prevention**

- 4.2 The Council tries where possible to prevent homelessness. The 2015/2016 Rent Deposit Scheme Budget was set at £15,000.00 for the year. Spend so far is £11,170, with £3,830 remaining.
- 4.3 The homeless prevention initiatives that have been successful in the first half of this year include assisting nine families into a six or 12 month tenancy in the private sector.
- Seven payments for rent deposit and/or rent in advance working with the landlords and housing benefit to synchronise the process.
  - Two payments to clear rent arrears after negotiating with the landlord to pay the outstanding monies, to enable client and family to remain in the accommodation.
  - One incentive payment of £1,000 plus rent in advance to a private landlord to take a household who would otherwise have gone into a refuge.
  - Fourteen cases were prevented by liaising with the housing register team to offer accommodation to clients through Part 6 nominations from the housing register.
  - Two cases were helped to apply for direct housing benefit payments to the landlord in order to enable the client to remain in the accommodation. This reassured the landlord the rent payments would be received and allowed them to remain.
- 4.4 While these have been successful, there are many more cases where it is too late to successfully intervene and prevent homelessness.

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### Homeless Applications

- 4.5 The table below shows the number of applications and decisions over the last six years. Column 2 shows those where a full homeless duty has been accepted. The number has been steadily increasing over the years putting pressure on resources.

Year	Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	Eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless	Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	Eligible but not homeless	Ineligible households	Total
2010/2011	48	5	4	23	0	80
2011/2012	55	10	10	22	0	97
2012/2013	58	8	4	21	0	91
2013/2014	69	11	19	37	0	136
2014/2015	72	9	10	22	1	115
Q1-Q3 2015/2016	54	7	12	22	2	97

### Priority Need Categories of Accepted Cases

- 4.6 The table below shows the types of household that the Council is accepting a duty to. The majority of households are in priority need due to having dependant children, indicating the difficulty of finding and securing alternative housing in either the private rented sector or through home ownership.

Year	Dependant Children	Pregnant	16/17	Vulnerable due to physical disability	Vulnerable due to mental illness/disability	Other	DV	Total
2010/2011	32	10	0	2	2	1	1	48
2011/2012	37	6	1	0	7	4	0	55
2012/2013	35	2	3	2	8	4	2	56
2013/2014	35	7	3	2	16	7	0	70
2014/2015	57	5	3	0	6	3	0	72
Q1-3 15/16	28	3	3	0	11	8	1	54

### Causes of Homelessness

- 4.7 The causes of homelessness have historically been parental eviction, eviction from friends or other relatives and loss of private rented accommodation. In recent years the trend has been that loss of privately rented home has been the main cause with parental eviction second but also households fleeing violent relationships have increased significantly in the last two years.

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Year	Parental eviction	Relatives/ friends eviction	Non-violent relationship breakdown	Violence/ harassment threats of intimidation	Mortgage rent arrears	Loss of rented/ tied home	Other	Total
2010/2011	15	4	1	4	1	21	1	47
2011/2012	16	4	5	4	6	11	9	55
2012/2013	11	6	8	7	5	15	6	58
2013/2014	20	5	6	6	5	15	13	70
2014/2015	17	6	3	12	3	22	9	72
Q1-3 15/16	12	1	5	7	2	19	8	54

### Numbers in Temporary Accommodation

- 4.8 The following table shows the number of households at the end of each year. As can be seen, the numbers have remained relatively stable over the years despite increasing numbers of homeless acceptances.

Year End Snapshot	B&B	Other TA	Total in TA
31/03/2012	21	26	47
31/03/2013	27	25	52
31/03/2014	6	36	42
31/03/2015	13	37	50
31/12/2015 (Q3)	14	36	50

### Numbers on the Council's Housing Register

- 4.9 The numbers on the Housing Register are shown below. The number dropped between 2013 and 2014 due to a change in the Allocations Policy that removed households in Band D and E who were not deemed to have a housing need.

Year	Housing Register	No of Nominations (previous 12 months)
April 2011	1040	120
April 2012	1228	114
April 2013	1431	189
April 2014	621	199
April 2015	704	249

### **Single Homeless/Rough Sleepers**

- 4.10 The Council carried out a rough sleeper count in November 2015. There were no people sleeping rough in Rochford on the night surveyed. This therefore demonstrates that rough sleeping is not a major issue for Rochford.

## **5 The Findings of the Housing Service Review 2015**

- 5.1 The East of England Local Government Association was asked to undertake a Review of the Housing service in June 2015. Associates visited the Council, met with a number of staff, carried out a desktop review of strategic documents and provided a summary report for the Council.

### **Key Areas**

- 5.2 The key areas identified by the Review as they relate to homelessness were:
- The Homelessness Strategy was out of date and needed updating.
  - Duplication of Housing Register activity with people having to apply to both Rochford DC and Rochford Housing Association as Registers are held by both.
  - Little information/advice available for people at an early stage, including leaflets and signposting. Information leaflets for the public had previously been available but were out of date and no longer produced.
  - While initiatives are in place to prevent homelessness, there are few policies and procedures in place to provide structure, guidance and consistency of approach for staff.
  - Relationships with external partners i.e. Rochford Housing Association and Essex County Council could be improved to deliver the prevention agenda
  - Relationships with private landlords were inconsistent with a focus on enforcement from one team while another sought to develop a more positive relationship with regard to accessing private rented housing.
  - Arrangements for applicants requests for a 'Review' of negative homelessness decisions were inconsistent and without procedures.
  - Numbers in Temporary accommodation are consistently around 50 but the use of bed and breakfast is increasing. Increasingly placements are made out of area including in Southend.
  - The need to review the availability of tenancy support in the District and the number of households being supported.
  - Consideration could be given to adopting a 'spend to save' approach to prevention.

## **Key Recommendations**

### **5.3 Key recommendations of the Review were to:**

- Ensure support is available for local people through closer partnership working including reviewing the floating support service arrangements.
- Establish a Homelessness Forum to review the homelessness service and contribute to a new Homelessness Strategy.
- Consider better use of IT systems in relation to the Housing Register and for performance management and monitoring.
- Consider the staffing structure and roles, consider combining the housing register and housing options teams and refocus staff onto advice and the prevention of homelessness.
- Develop the relationship with private sector landlords in the District and consider establishing a Landlord Forum.
- Carry out a comprehensive review of options for new temporary accommodation including the need for interim shared (licensed) accommodation for pre-acceptance cases.
- Review of the Homelessness Review (appeal) process and consideration of training for Members if they wish to continue with this role.
- Develop robust policies and procedures with guidance for staff on all processes
- Develop local performance indicators around homeless prevention

## **6 The Objectives for the Strategy**

6.1 This strategy has taken into account the National context, the over-arching Local Business Plan priorities and the findings and recommendations of the 2015 Service Review. A Steering Group was established and agreed these draft objectives. Wider consultation with partners will take place during 2016 following adoption of the draft Homelessness Strategy by the Council.

6.2 The Council's Homelessness Strategy Objectives are as follows:

**Objective 1** – Ensure that information and advice on housing and homelessness prevention is widely available.

**Objective 2** – Prevent homelessness wherever possible and develop new initiatives to help people remain in their existing homes

**Objective 3** – Homeless applications are decided in a timely manner with sound and robust decisions being made, and with an effective review procedure in place.



**Objective 4** – Reduce the number of households in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation, and ensure sufficient accommodation is available in the Rochford District to meet the need.

**Objective 5** – Strengthen links with private landlords and lettings agents within the District.

- 6.3 These objectives are especially relevant in the current climate. The provision of pro-active services to help households avoid homelessness altogether or minimise the detrimental effects should homelessness be unavoidable, remain at the heart of what the Council aims to achieve for the residents of the District.
- 6.4 The challenge going forward will be to continue the successful homeless prevention measures in harsher economic climate, especially for household's dependant on welfare benefits who are unable to afford private rents or home ownership. There is a need to adapt existing homelessness prevention measures and create new responses to meet the increased need.
- 6.5 The Council recognises the significant social hardship that homelessness has on the households affected. It also recognises that there is a significant monetary cost to households as well as to the Council via its statutory duties towards the homeless.
- 6.6 Many of the services and initiatives provided by the Council can offer better value for money in terms of preventing homelessness compared to dealing with the aftermath of actual homelessness. The Council recognises the importance of achieving positive outcomes for households threatened with homelessness. Adopting this 'spend to save' approach will hopefully benefit all concerned and achieve better outcomes overall.

## **7 Resources**

- 7.1 At the current time the cost of the service is approaching a net cost of £150k for temporary accommodation, being paid from the Council's General Fund.
- 7.2 A Homelessness Grant of £49,000 is received from the Government each year. This strategy will be resourced by using this Grant in a more pro-active 'spend to save' approach to deliver the initiatives proposed.

## **8 Action Plan**

- 8.1 The Action Plan developed to deliver this Homelessness Strategy is attached at Appendix 1. The actions for the first two years are included. It is expected that during year three (2018/19) a review of progress on these actions will be undertaken and fresh actions added in line with the over arching Objectives of the Strategy.

## **9 Monitoring and Review**

- 9.1 This strategy will be delivered by Rochford District Council in partnership with Rochford Housing Association and other partners i.e. Citizens Advice Rochford & Rayleigh, Essex County Council.
- 9.2 Monitoring will take place quarterly by Senior Officers in collaboration with Members and progress reported at least annually to Members.

## Appendix 1 – Rochford Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2016/17-2017/18

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target Date
To ensure that information and advice on housing and homelessness prevention is widely available.	<p>Develop and increase access to a range of information for clients and stakeholders.</p> <p>Information to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General advice on what the Council can do to help</li> <li>• How to go about privately renting</li> <li>• Your rights as a private tenant</li> <li>• Renting a room in your home</li> <li>• Housing Register/Allocations</li> <li>• Homelessness duties</li> <li>• Homelessness Reviews</li> </ul> <p>Provide a range of options for residents to access information.</p>	<p>Managing clients expectations better with written and on line information available to all clients.</p> <p>Increased number of residents accessing on line website advice.</p> <p>Increased telephone and face to face access to housing offices during working week.</p> <p>Communication 'drop in's' with Citizens Advice Rochford &amp; Rayleigh.</p> <p>Home visits carried out for all clients threatened with homelessness (initially for those being evicted from the parental home or from other friends or relatives).</p>	<p>Q1-4 2016</p> <p>Q3 2016/17</p> <p>Q1-4 2016/17</p>
To work in partnership to develop joint early intervention initiatives that will enable a proactive approach to assist households at risk of homelessness.	Review best practice with other local authorities and consider the current Council staffing structure of the Homelessness & Housing Advisory service.	<p>New staffing structure in place, with the introduction of new prevention and accommodation roles.</p> <p>Staff training needs reviewed to ensure that the service can provide a responsive frontline service whilst retaining specialist knowledge within the new structure.</p> <p>New performance measures for prevention in place to monitor delivery on homeless prevention.</p>	Q1 2016

## Rochford District Council – Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 – Delivering Early Intervention and Support

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target Date
	Work with social housing providers and other relevant agencies, to eradicate a silo approach to homelessness prevention and to reduce the risk of homelessness from social housing.	Quarterly local action forum in place. A solution based forum, focusing on high risk cases where tenancies are at risk.	Q1-4 2016-18
	To work pro-actively with customer services teams to enable a more robust initial assessment approach to clients approaching the Council for housing advice.	Initial assessment process reviewed and training given to front line staff.  Immediate communications with clients improved. Better record keeping processes in place.	Q3-4 2016/17
	Work pro-actively with housing benefit and social housing providers to manage the introduction of Universal Credit and Welfare Reform changes.	100% homelessness officers updated on relevant benefit changes and their impact.  Local Citizens Advice performance outcomes in place for supporting clients with monetary advice.  Local Action Forum in place to reduce the impact on high risk tenants.	Q1 2016/17  Q1 2016/17  Q1-4 2016-18
	Joint working with private housing to ensure that landlords carry out their responsibilities to provide safe and secure conditions in order to prevent homelessness	Reduction in number of homeless approaches and priority bandings due to unsafe/secure conditions	Q1-4 2016-18
	Work with Essex CC, Community Safety Partnership and external agencies to promote the housing sanctuary scheme as an alternative to moving home across all tenures and increase awareness of services available to support clients with a variety of support needs.	Increased awareness of how the Sanctuary Scheme works amongst agencies and clients.  Appropriate support is provided to clients in 95% of cases – evidenced through survey following episodes of involvement with the homeless service.	Q1-4 2016-18  Q3-4 2016/17
	Review the working protocol with Basildon Women's Aid.	All homelessness officers have access to and regularly refer to the working protocol	Q1-2 2016/17

## Rochford District Council – Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 – Delivering Early Intervention and Support

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target Date
	In partnership with neighbouring councils and Essex CC carry out a review of the commissioned housing support services.	To be an active member of the County Housing Forum. To ensure the continued provision of housing floating support services to sustain tenancies and support move on plans.	Q1-4 2016/17
	Homelessness steering group to continue to drive forward the action plan with identified leads for specific areas – leading on actions with regular updates.	Quarterly meetings in place for sharing information, training and ongoing monitoring of outcomes.	Q1-4 2016-18
Homeless applications are decided in a timely manner with robust decisions being made.	Review the current generic working arrangements of staff to enable an improved approach to both proactive (prevention) and reactive (processing). Consider a role to be solely responsible for the reactive processing of homeless applications.	New staffing structure in place separating prevention and homeless into specialist roles with clear objectives.	Q3 2016/17
	Review the current arrangements for carrying out Homelessness Reviews and current Member involvement.	New policy and procedures in place. Information available on line.	Q3-4 2016/17
	Increase the knowledge of members around homelessness and prevention work and the advice they can provide to constituents.	All members offered a training session at least once every two years.	Q1 2017-18
	Continual professional development of homelessness staff in the areas of homelessness decision making and avoiding formal complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.	100% homelessness officers to evidence attendance at minimum one development event each year and to present learning to team.	Q1-4 2016-18

## Rochford District Council – Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 – Delivering Early Intervention and Support

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target Date
Reduce the number of households in bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation and ensure sufficient accommodation is available in Rochford.	Review/develop the Council's charging policies for households living in bed and breakfast and nightly let accommodation, removals and storage and ensure they are fair and reasonable.	New charging process and procedures in place.	Q4-Q1 2016/18
	Review the current arrangements in relation to households in temporary accommodation falling into rent arrears, ensure it is dealt with at an early stage to enable a move on, to more settled social housing.	Zero temporary accommodation tenants in rent arrears. Improved approach to tenancy sustainment through new prevention roles.	Q1-4 2016/17
	Review the Allocations Policy provisions in relation to homeless households and consider prioritising those without a local connection after a reasonable period in order to free up temporary accommodation.	Allocation policy revised and agreed.	Q3-Q1 2016/18
	Eliminate the use of B&B for all clients except in an emergency and then for a minimal period	No 16 and 17 years are placed in B&B accommodation or families for more than six weeks.  Sufficient temporary accommodation is available within the District to meet needs as required.  Use of Rochford Housing Association properties and/or schemes for small scale shared as well as self contained units.  Reduction in the percentage of people waiting for one and two bedroom properties on the Housing Register.	Q1-4 2017/18  Q1-4 2017/18  Q1-4 2016-18  Q1-4 2017/18

## Rochford District Council – Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 – Delivering Early Intervention and Support

Objective	Action	Outcome	Target Date
Increase the supply of good quality private rented housing in Rochford – Improve working relationships with private landlords and agents.	Strengthen work with Eastern Landlords Association and local landlord forum networks	To present at a local Landlord forum twice a year.	Q1-4 2017/18
	Develop incentives for landlords to take homeless applicants as a discharge of duty or prevention.	Officers are using a variety of incentives to entice landlords to work with the Council.	Q1-4 2016/18
	Review existing Rent Deposit Scheme and develop a policy and procedure for the scheme	20% increase in the number of landlords offering properties to the Council year on year	Q1-4 2017/18
Value for money	Carry out a full review of the Council's Housing Register functions in partnership with RHA.	A joint/shared/common housing register in place.  Allocation policy guidance in place which meets needs instigated by new homeless demands.  Information available on line.	Q3-Q1 2016/18
	Increase the efficiencies of the Homelessness and housing advice service by completing the 10 challenges set by National Practitioners Support Service (NPSS) – Gold Standard award.	Continual sharing of best practice and information at sub regional and Essex homeless forums.  Agree with a neighbouring authority and commence Peer Review of existing services against the NPSS award standard.	Q1-4 2016-18  Q3-4 2017/18





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# **Housing Options**

## **Quarterly Report**

**September 2016**

*House Prices, Affordability & Market Indicators*

# Housing Option Trends Quarterly Report

## Introduction

This report monitors the latest trends in house prices, rent and other market indicators based on Hometrack's online Housing Intelligence System ([www.hometrack.co.uk](http://www.hometrack.co.uk)).

We look at national and local trends and how this impacts on our local Housing Options service, with a particular focus on our statutory duty to consider those homeless households with a priority housing need in our area.

## Key trends

### National Trends

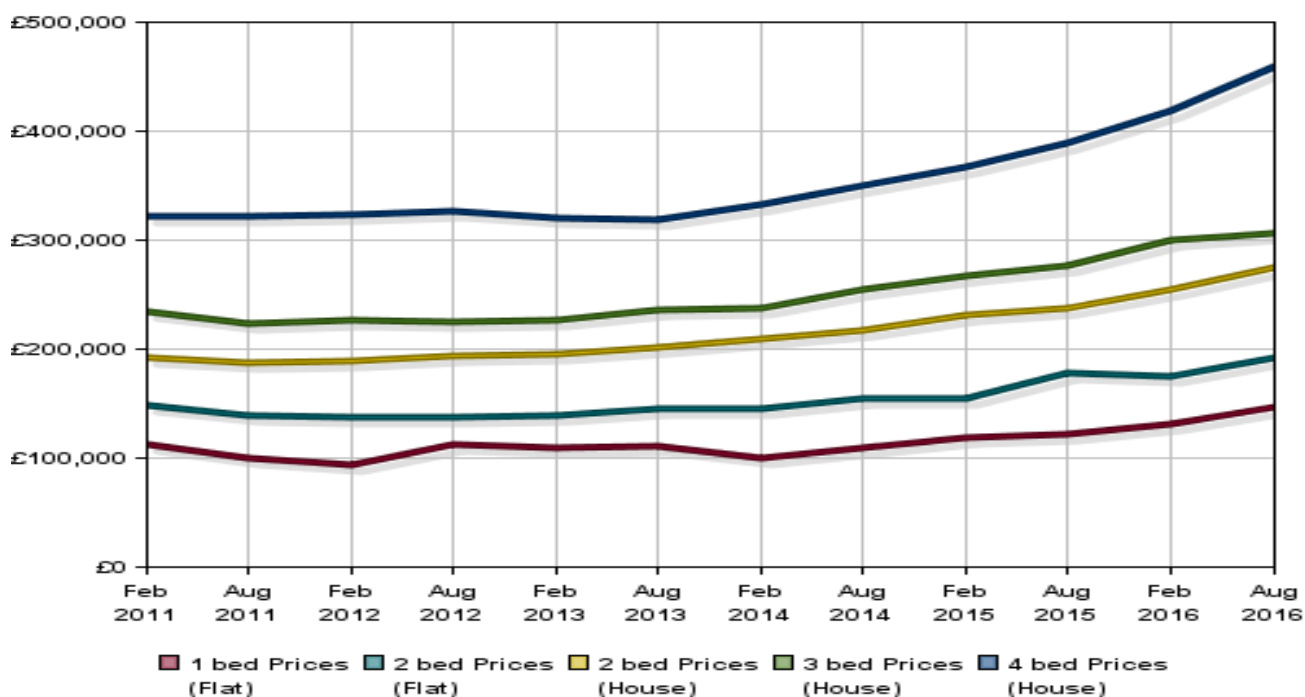
- Annual house price growth up to September was 5.8%.
- The quarter change was -0.1% and the average price was £214,024.
- Annual house price growth fell from 10% in March to 5.8% in September
- Evidence suggests that the underlying pace of housing growth may be easing.

### Local House Prices

- The annual house price growth in October for TGSE was 8.87%.
- **The highest overall Lower Quartile (LQ) house price was in Rochford at £255k**, followed by Castle Point £215k, Basildon £215k, Thurrock £200k, and Southend £175k.
- Compared with pre-recession prices in 2007/8 when they peaked, prices are now consistently higher for the ninth successive quarter; **in Rochford by £60k**, Basildon £57k, Castle Point £40k, Thurrock £50k, and Southend £30k.

### Price by bed count and type in Rochford

#### Price by bed count and type



#### Note

This chart shows the average price of property by bed count. The data for this analysis is based on data from Hometrack's Automated Valuation Model.

## **Affordability (General)**

- Four wards in Rochford have a ratio between house prices and household disposable income in excess of 14:1, compared to 10:1 for the East of England.

For example, in Rochford 57% of first time buyers cannot afford a flat or maisonette based on a mortgage at 3.0 times their income. This rises to 81% for those wishing to purchase a terraced property and 94% for a detached property. See Table A.

Table A

### **3 times income**

	<b>Rochford (DIS)</b>
	Percent of households priced out of market
<b>FTB households - Flats</b>	57.10%
<b>FTB households - Terraced houses</b>	81.12%
<b>FTB households - Semi-detached houses</b>	86.55%
<b>FTB households - Detached houses</b>	94.40%
<b>Owner occupier - Flats</b>	50.07%
<b>Owner occupier - Terraced houses</b>	73.63%
<b>Owner occupier - Semi-detached houses</b>	81.12%
<b>Owner occupier - Detached houses</b>	90.34%

#### **Note**

This table shows the percentage of households priced out of the market in the area. The analysis differentiates between house types and whether or not the purchasers are first time buyers. This is a modelled figure which is derived from the house price and income assumptions in the 'graph' section of this analysis. The figures displayed are simply derived from incomes and house prices and do not account for the existing tenures of local residents. The house price data is based on data from the Hometrack Automated Valuation Model and the incomes data is supplied by CACI. Further details on these sources are available in the Help and Information section.

## **Affordability (RENTAL ACCOMMODATION)**

- Table B shows the average weekly cost of rental accommodation in Rochford, against a comparison of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA).
- It should be noted that Central Government have frozen the Local Housing allowance rate for 4yrs, up to 2020.

Table B

RENTAL TYPE	1 bedroom (£ weekly cost)	2 bedroom (£ weekly cost)	3 bedroom (£ weekly cost)	4 bed (£ weekly cost)
Housing Association	68.2	79.10	90.60	N/A
Private median	137	207	276	323
<b>LHA (housing benefit)</b>	<b>116.52</b>	<b>151.50</b>	<b>186.47</b>	<b>240.60</b>
	<b>Shared room weekly rate*</b>			
Private median	100.00			
<b>LHA (housing benefit)</b>	<b>66.76</b>			

\* Single households under 35 years of age would only be entitled to the shared room rate for LHA

**Appendix 1:** gives a further breakdown of rent values in Wards.

## Supply

- Table C shows a gradual decrease in the number of affordable rent vacancies with previous years

Table C

Year (2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter)	1 bed property	2 bed property	3 bed property	4 bed property	Total
2011/12	17	7	6	1	31
2012/13	17	15	10	4	46
2013/14	25	14	3	0	42
2014/15	33	23	6	0	62
2015/16	17	6	3	0	26
2016/17	18	6	2	0	26



## Impact of Affordability and Supply

- Table B & C, evidence a lack of supply and affordable accommodation, which is now having a critical and direct effect for Rochford, having regard to the number of households in both temporary and emergency accommodation and their length of stay.
- This is a growing problem for not only Rochford, but for all of Essex, with a reduction in the number of affordable rented homes being built and households on a low income being able to access a home in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). There are very few PRS properties available within Local Housing Allowance levels and as LHA rates are frozen until 2020 this problem is going to significantly worsen.
- The impact is having the effect of creating a 'blocking up' of the whole system as the movement of households slows down.
- This is restricting Rochford and all Council's ability to discharge our homelessness responsibilities into the PRS, and reducing a household's ability to meet their own housing needs in the PRS. This is resulting in significant increases in Emergency Accommodation placements i.e. bed & breakfast, which has to be met from the public purse. The impact on Rochford's financial strategy is now severe and there is a critical need for medium to long term business plans, to take back some control of the supply of new temporary accommodation.
- For Rochford, the current strategic housing market (SHMA) details that we need to build 268 affordable homes a year and looking forward we are only likely to see approximately between 50 and 70 new affordable rented homes built over the next year. The implications are severe at a time when national housing policies contained within the Housing and Planning Act 2016, will see a lot less affordable rented homes being achieved.

- The rental market in Rochford is relatively small (8.4% private and 7.6% Social rented).

Housing Options officers continue to have good relationships with the local registered providers with stock in Rochford, and a flexible approach is taken, regarding nomination of properties.

There is also an ongoing dialogue with private landlords, as part of the homeless prevention work, but the outcome of this work is limited. It is often difficult to negotiate with PRS landlords to keep their rents down, as they feel that they are being financially disadvantaged by recent tax changes for Buy to Let landlords and if they can increase their rents to market levels, they are arguing that they have no choice but to do so.

As well as landlords, alternative providers of local emergency accommodation e.g. local hotels, continue to be explored, but the cost and availability is often prohibitive.

- Table D shows the numbers of households and the average time spent in emergency accommodation, which the Council has to subsidise, compared to the number in Housing Association temporary accommodation which the Council does not subsidise.

Table D

	<b>Emergency Accommodation</b>	
<b>2016</b>	<b>Number of households</b>	<b>Average Length of stay (weeks)</b>
<b>September</b>	29	60
<b>August</b>	31	118
<b>July</b>	33	55
<b>June</b>	33	11
<b>May</b>	31	28
<b>April</b>	30	33



## Local Homelessness Trends

2016/17	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept
Number of new approaches made to the team	106	84	106	100	85	104
Number of cases where housing advice given during the month	94	64	95	78	60	62
Total no. of cases where homelessness is prevented/relieved	4	0	0	12	12	30
Homeless Prevention cost savings (weekly)	£700	0	0	0	£3,850	£8,144
Total no of homeless applications taken	12	20	11	10	13	12
Total no. of homeless decisions made	8	16	17	11	11	15
Total No of households living in temporary accommodation	66	71	70	69	70	73
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No of households in B&amp;B (direct cost to council)</b></li> </ul>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of households with registered providers (no direct cost to council)</li> </ul>	35	39	36	35	38	43
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of households in private rented TA</li> </ul>	1	1	1	1	1	1
Length of stay (weeks) in temp accommodation (all discharge of duty cases at end of month) B & B /nightly paid/HMO	33	28	11	55	118	111
Numbers on housing register	605	635	709	740	747	745
Band A	37	48	65	71	73	78
Band B	110	116	138	150	148	146
Band C	414	421	438	447	446	453
Transfer list	44	50	68	72	72	68
Number of households rehoused from the housing register	6	16	6	7	8	8
Number of nominations to registered providers	17	7	5	13	7	24

## Homeless Prevention – key issues

- The Homeless/Housing Advice/Allocations service is currently part of a wider Community & Housing restructure, where it is proposed that the new structure not only has overall operational responsibilities, but will also provide a more a strategic proactive approach, to the priority of homeless prevention.
- 
- There will no longer be a separation between Housing Allocations and Homelessness. Rather there will be a team of officers working together to provide a holistic housing solutions approach. Officers will still have specialist skills, but the Team will come together as one Housing Options Service.
- 
- New Prevention Officer roles will be introduced with the aim of lowering homeless acceptance rates. These officers will take a proactive approach to early intervention and provide in-depth case management including support assessments, referrals and inter agency working.

- The current change of focus for the businesses is currently progressing as a restructure process with a proposed start date 7th November 2016. In the meantime, what the service is working to deliver is detailed in the Homelessness Action Plan 2016-17.
- Prevention work streams that are currently used by the service and are being improved on and include:
  - Early intervention through housing advice.
  - Rent in advance scheme\*
  - Rent deposit scheme\*
  - Discretionary housing payments
  - Tenancy sustainment incentives
  - Home visits
  - Liaising with landlords/agents
  - Working with registered providers
  - Daily checking for private rented properties

\* Both schemes are managed on a loan basis and therefore repayable back to the Council.

- Private rented accommodation is becoming very difficult to access due to the high rents. Many Landlords or agents require a working guarantor earning £30,000 and in addition require rent in advance / deposit and admin fees. The local authority can only support with the rent schemes and where possible will always negotiate with both landlord and agents to see where there can be a more flexible approach.
- The number of homelessness applications taken each month is still of a low number compared with the amount of approaches, and the homeless prevention outcomes are beginning to increase, as seen in the local trends table. Early intervention is the key to homeless prevention and new procedures and working practices are part of the new restructure. Measuring prevention outcomes are currently being set up to evidence the change in approach.
- The next quarterly report will continue to focus on the market trends, but will update on the progress being made on embedding prevention into the new Housing Options service.

**For further information, please contact:**

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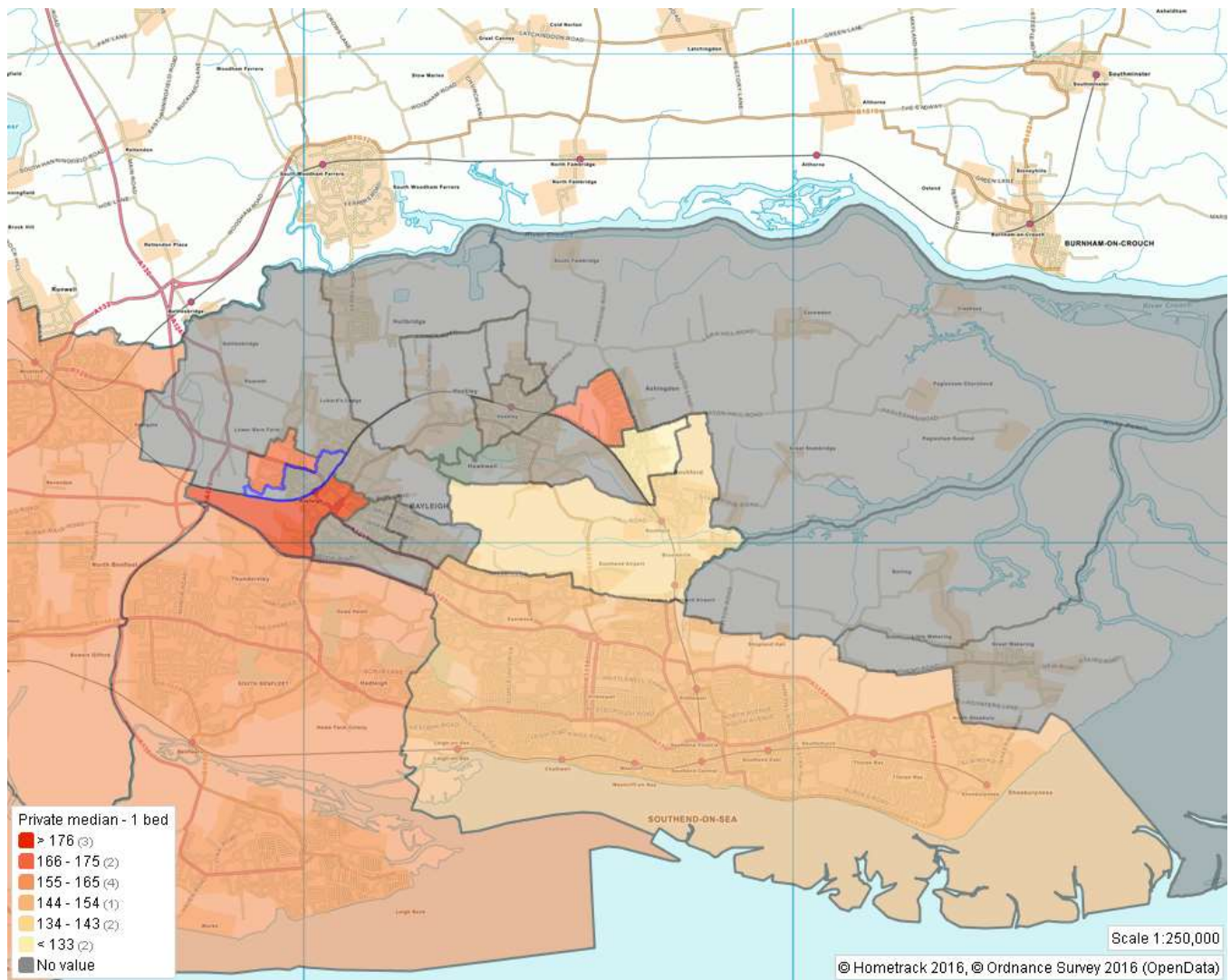
Jeanette Hurrell Homelessness/Housing Advice

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## APPENDIX 1

### Private rented 1 BEDROOM

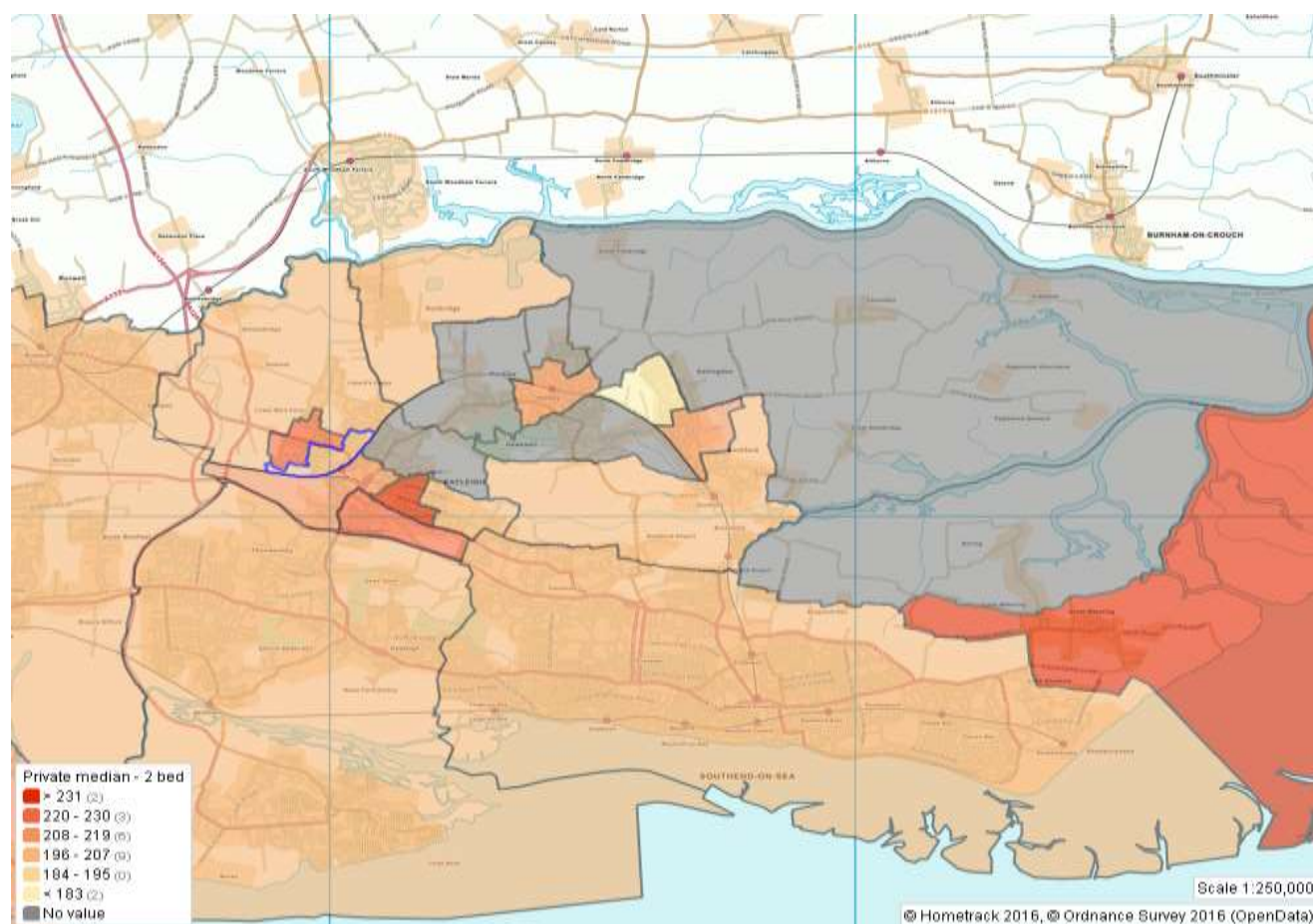


AREA	AVERAGE PRIVATE RENT
Sweyne Park	£167
Wheatley	£178
Hawkwell North	£167
Rochford	£137

NB NO DATA FOR OTHER AREAS DUE TO INSUFFICIENT NUMBERS

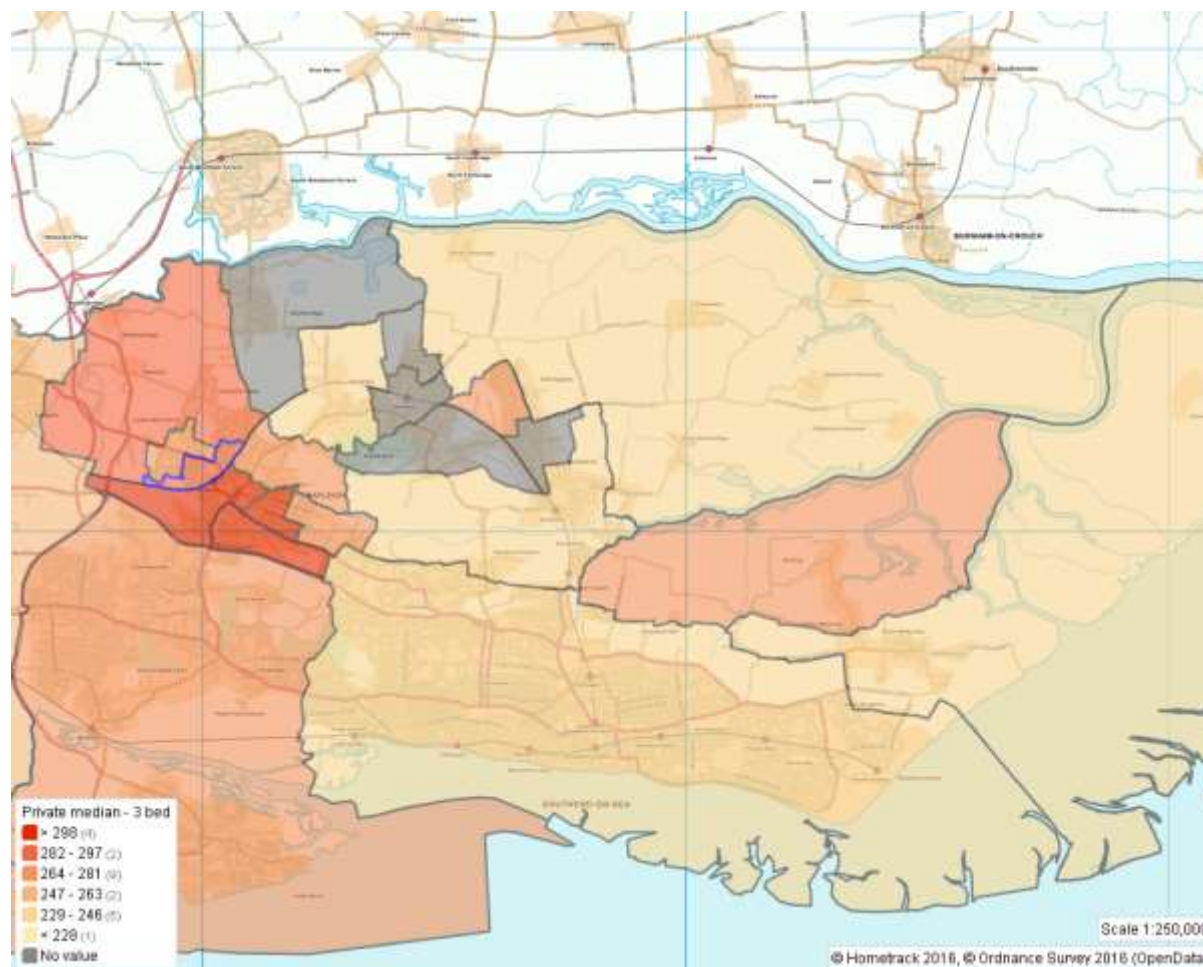


## Private rented cost by wards 2 bed room



AREA	Average Rent
HULLBRIDGE	£196
LODGE	£196
NORTH HAWKWELL	£167
DOWNHALL	£206
ROCHFORD	£206
CENTRAL HOCKLEY	£219
WHEATLEY	£219
WHITEHOUSE	£221
SWEYNE	£227
FOULNESS	£237
RAYLEIGH	£222

## Private rented 3 BEDROOM property



AREA	AVERAGE RENT (INCREASE FEOM LAST QUARTER)
Ashingdon	£229
Rochford	£265 (+36)
Foulness/Wakering	£253 (+24)
Barling/Sutton	£265
North Hawkwell	£265
Trinity	£288 (+12)
Lodge	£276
Whitehouse	£323
Wheatley	£323 (+17)
Downhall/Rawreth	£282
Sweyne Park	£277
Hockley West	£242
Grange	£282
Rayleigh	£300