



AGENDA ITEM:

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	6 September 2017
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	HOMELESSNESS REVIEWS
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Group Manager
Purpose of report:	To update Housing & Communities OSC on the performance of the Elms contract, managed by DENS.
Recommendations	That the Housing & Communities OSC to note the report.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<p><u>Customer service</u></p> <p>The aim of the contract is to improve outcomes for single homeless clients, reduce the cycle of repeat homelessness and eradicate street homelessness by working in partnership with DENS.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>The tender for the contract was awarded to DENS on the basis that they met the requirements set out from the scope of the bid and the Council's vision for the Elms Emergency accommodation. By having a more proactive partnership approach to preventing homelessness, this will help manage any impact on Council services, caused by continuing housing demands and rise in homelessness, thus reducing expenditure to meet demand, for example reducing B&B usage.</p>
Risk Implications	All staff employed at the Elms have received the Council's

	<p>essential training in line with the contract, this has included high profile training for Domestic Abuse & Safeguarding and Prevent. The contract is closely monitored by the Contract Manager to ensure effective performance and the risks presented are considered to be low.</p>
<p>Equalities Implications</p>	<p>Legislation and guidance states that all homeless clients should be given access to information and services to assist them in resolving their own housing difficulty; this will become increasingly more important with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The Council and DENS have formed a strong partnership through close management of the contract to ensure that the service provided is joined up and clients are provided with appropriate advice and assistance to secure accommodation. Where clients are prevented access to the Elms due to immigration or other health & safety restrictions, appropriate advice and intervention measures are taken to prevent risk and street homelessness wherever possible.</p>
<p>Health And Safety Implications</p>	<p>Due to the type of service provision and the transient nature of the client group, health & safety implications are present when managing such accommodation; these include exposure to complex and unpredictable behaviours. The Council and DENS have ensured that through close monitoring, partnership working with key agencies including the Police and prompt action all relevant steps are taken to ensure the safety of staff and members of the public.</p>
<p>Consultees:</p>	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Tracy Vause – Strategic Housing Team Leader</p> <p>Wendy Lewington, DENS Chief Executive</p> <p>Sean Fitzgerald – The Elms Manager</p>
<p>Background papers:</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – DENS report</p>
<p>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</p>	

Background

1. Prior to the completion of the Elms, Dacorum Borough had 14 bed spaces of night-shelter provision available to assist single homeless clients. With single homelessness and rough sleeping increasing, in addition to growing pressures on local charitable organisations as well as the Council, there was sufficient statistical information to evidence a need for an increase in provision. The brand new modern development, The Elms, built by the Council, includes residential space, IT suite, library and a communal garden in Redbourn Road, Hemel Hempstead. The emergency temporary accommodation has been developed through the Government's Places of Change Programme with £850,000 central government funding.
2. On the 18 December 2014 the contract for the delivery of The Elms was awarded to DENS, with a formal contract commencement date of 1 May 2015 and phased occupation of the building commenced. DENS were demonstrated expertise in a wide range of areas through their tender and this included extensive experience of running the DENS Night Shelter, Day Centre, Rent Aid, Foodbank and Equipped to Change programme. DENS have a strong understanding of working on the frontline to tackle homelessness and poverty by giving people the chance to build a better future.
3. The Group Manager Strategic Housing is the 'Contract Manager'. The Contract Manager monitors that the Supplier (DENS) is meeting all its obligations set out in the contract. The Council expects that DENS will ensure effective communication and cooperation with the Contract Manager. This contract is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Operational Manager (Strategic Housing Team Leader) and DENS Hostel Manager. Where there is underperformance or non-compliance, the Contract Manager will follow the Remediation Process set out in the terms and conditions of the Contract. Throughout the second year, the Contract Manager has monitored DENS against their mobilisation plan and key milestones. Regular monitoring of the contract includes:
 - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
 - Formal monthly meetings (recorded in writing) to review performance information and assess compliance with the Service Requirements;
 - Quarterly Audits;
 - Assessment of income and expenditure against DENS business plan;
 - User satisfaction; and
 - Risk management.

DENS provide monthly KPI's in a format that is readily understandable and detailed in graph or pictorial form where appropriate.

The Council will also require the following information (as a minimum) to be provided at each monthly meeting, to be based on the previous Month:

- Total number of clients accommodated in the crash pad;
- Total number of clients accommodated (excluding crash pad);
- Average length of stay (excluding crash pad);
- Number of clients referred by the Council;
- Number of clients referred by other agencies;

- Number of self-referring clients;
- Local connection of clients accommodated;
- Number of occasions that cold weather provisions are put in place, with reasons for initiation;
- Total number of days cold weather provisions are in place;
- Number of, and reasons for, unilateral support plans;
- Number and length of exclusions;
- Number of evictions;
- Details of all evictions and exclusions;
- Numbers of rooms ready to re-let: within 24 hours; within 36 hours; over 36 hours;
- Numbers of clients receiving their initial support plan: within 24 hours; within 36 hours; over 36 hours;
- Number and type of repairs logged;
- Number and type of health and safety incidents;
- Any relevant Force Majeure Events or Relief Events;
- Number and type of incidents of conflict and behavioural management;
- Number of CCTV requests;
- Details of CCTV requests;
- Number of complaints;
- Details of all complaints and compliments;
- Client training feedback;
- Details of active partnership arrangements.

To further assess compliance with the Service Requirements the Council will also carry out quarterly audits of:

- Initial assessments and eligibility checks (including local connection);
- Support plans;
- Client feedback mechanisms;
- Site and premises.

The Council will periodically engage clients in feedback sessions to assess whether DENS are meeting their needs. The Council will also ask clients to say whether they feel they have had sufficient opportunity to be involved in providing feedback and scrutiny through DENS processes.

- DENS will also need to carry out:
- a six monthly continual improvement review,
- an Annual Performance Report, and
- an Annual Equality Impact Assessment
- and provide these to the Contract Manager when they are due.

The continual improvement review is to include:

- new or potential improvements to the Services including the quality, responsiveness, procedures and client support services in relation to the Services;
- the emergence of new and evolving relevant technologies which could improve the Services, and those technological advances potentially available to DENS and the Council which the parties may wish to adopt;

- new or potential improvements to the interfaces or integration of the Services with other services provided by third parties or the Council, which might result in efficiency or productivity gains or in reduction of operational risk; and/or
 - changes in business processes and ways of working that would enable the Services to be delivered at greater benefits to clients.
4. Currently the Strategy Improvement and Engagement team are in liaison with DENS to establish a robust involvement and monitoring programme for 2018, this programme will assist the Council in undertaking a full review of the contract and will help form the basis of a full options appraisal of the Contract and consideration of how the building should be managed after the contract expiry.

Partnership working and service improvements

1. To ensure successful operational management of the Elms, the Council's Operational Manager (Strategic Housing Team Leader) has held fortnightly operational meetings throughout the second year of the contract. Meetings are formally recorded and key actions/issues brought to the attention of the Contract Manager (Group Manager, Strategic Housing) to ensure a prompt resolution. Quarterly Core Group meetings are held to ensure that the contract is appropriately implemented and monitored, this close monitoring and management of the contract has ensured that there have been no contract breaches or major operational issues in Year 2.
2. To ensure effective partnership working the Council and DENS have held a number of joint training events, liaison meetings and forums, which have been held at the Elms.
3. Crucially DENS have been a key partner in the support and delivery of the Council's 2016-2020 Homelessness Strategy and this has led to DENS Chief Executive being nominated as the Chair of Dacorum's Homeless Forum.
4. The Elms has three rooms built to provide vital facilities for disabled clients, which can also accommodate carers. It has become apparent through monitoring client's accommodation during the first two years that this is over resourced and doesn't make best use of the building, the Contract Manager is currently investigating the feasibility of converting two of the disabled units, to provide increased accommodation and more flexible use of the space available.

Challenges

1. One of the main identified challenges is in relation to the increasing complex and challenging behaviour presented by managing the client group that is accommodated at The Elms. Trying to establish support and sustain close partnership working with key services such as mental health, is proving an ongoing challenge for both DENS and the Council, it is also one that the Homeless Forum partners have raised, this is a key area that requires addressing to enable successful move on for clients from the Elms and becomes increasingly more important given future changes such as the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act. Further details can be seen in Appendix 1.

Performance

1. Delivery against The Elms yearly targets and Key Performance Indicators' are shown in the DENS report in Appendix 1.

2. The following table shows the payments that DENS will make to the Council following the tender:

Charge to DBC	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Payment to the Council annually following tender clarification	£46,691	£70,335	£71,870	£76,155	£78,896	£343,947
Payment to the Council quarterly following tender clarification	£11,672.75	£17,583.75	£17,967.50	£19,038.75	£19,724	£343,947

This payment to DBC reflects an estimate of income and expenditure based on:

- 90% occupancy, a rent of £270 per week per resident which will be fully reimbursed by housing benefit
- A payment charge that is 4% of the received rent income from housing benefits
- The Council's payments team invoice DENS quarterly for the above charges as per the Contract
- Annual monitoring of expenditure is undertaken by the Contract Manager and DBC accountant, to ensure that any increase in expenditure for items i.e. utilities is reflected and amended within the contract.
- DENS are maintaining payments in line with contract requirements.