

ITEM 7 Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019

Report of the Housing and Environmental Health Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

- 1. That the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019 be approved.**
- 2. That the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019 is reviewed in line with the forthcoming Housing Strategy.**

SUMMARY:

- Significant progress has been made in tackling and preventing homelessness and providing sustainable housing options for customers.
- The key priorities, themes and the new Delivery Plan for 2016-2019 will seek to meet the immediate and future needs of households threatened with homelessness during the lifetime of this Strategy.
- The Homelessness Strategy is evidence based and has been developed in consultation and partnership with stakeholders, and customers.
- Targets and evidence data detailed in the Delivery Plan will be used to measure progress and the Delivery Plan will be regularly monitored.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All local housing authorities are required to consider housing needs within their areas, including the needs of homeless households and have statutory duties to ensure that advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is available free of charge.
- 1.2 Under The Homelessness Act 2002 local housing authorities must have a strategy for preventing homelessness in their district. The strategy must apply to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just those who may fall within a priority need group. Authorities are also encouraged to take steps to relieve homelessness in cases where someone is found to be homeless but is not owed a duty to secure accommodation under the homelessness legislation.
- 1.3 All local housing authorities are legally required to carry out a homelessness review in their district and to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the results of the review at least every five years.
- 1.4 The purpose of the review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the district, and identify what is currently being done and by whom, and what level of resources is available, to prevent and tackle homelessness in Test Valley.

- 1.5 In formulating the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019, the Council has considered the necessary levels of activities required to:
- prevent homelessness in Test Valley,
 - secure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in Test Valley who are or may become homeless,
 - secure the satisfactory provision of support for people in Test Valley , who are or may become homeless, who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
 - ensure that there are sufficient resources available.
- 1.6 A new all-party Parliamentary Group on homelessness was set up recently to consider whether the introduction of a new legal prevention duty in England requiring councils to provide advice and support for anyone at risk of homelessness, is required. This Group has yet to come forward with its recommendations.

2 Background

- 2.1 This is the Council's 5th Preventing Homelessness Strategy and is a three year strategy. It has been brought in line with Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2019 '*Investing in Test Valley.*'
- 2.2 A new Housing Strategy will be developed during the course of 2016 which will reflect the forthcoming anticipated changes brought about by the Government's current legislative programme. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy will be reviewed and updated within 12 months of the Council adopting the new Housing Strategy, in the autumn.
- 2.3 The draft Strategy has been written in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the DCLG Code of Guidance on Homelessness Prevention and Homelessness and follows consultation with customers, stakeholders and voluntary agencies that provide housing advice, housing options and homelessness services in the Borough.
- 2.4 The updated Strategy is a technical document for use by the Council and its partners and comprises :
- *The Homelessness Evidence Base (Review) 2014/16* - A review of the Council's progress in tackling homelessness locally during financial years 2013/14- 2015/16 (appendix 1).
 - *National Framework and Homelessness Nationally* - The National framework and homelessness nationally (appendix 2).
 - *Financial Assessment* - detailing what resources are available to the Council to tackle homelessness and homelessness prevention (appendix 3).

- *The Delivery Plan* – Setting out priorities and how the Council will move services forward in 2016-2019, working with a range of partner agencies and stakeholders to tackle and improve services over the lifetime of the new strategy (appendix 4).
- *Temporary Accommodation Strategy* - Sets out how the Council will meet its statutory duties to provide temporary accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (appendix 5).

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 'Live' where the supply of homes reflects local needs is one of the current corporate priorities with the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 3.2 Maintaining and developing the safety net for those in the greatest housing need and are most vulnerable is one of the objectives under the 'Live' theme of the Corporate Plan.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The new strategy has been drafted following consultation with key statutory non statutory and third sector agencies in the Borough at a workshop event on 22 June 2015.
- 4.2 We have sought face to face feedback from service users at the family hostel in Junction Road, Andover, Dene Court (Two Saints direct access hostel, Andover), Andover Crisis and Support Centre (women's refuge) and Young Mums Matter (accredited tenancy training for young mothers) project.
- 4.3 The Draft Strategy was endorsed by Officers Management Team on 3 May 2016.

5 Options

The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019 is appended to this report. A summary of the main priorities of the strategy are set out below. Detailed actions against each of these priorities can be found in the Delivery Plan (appendix 4):

- 5.1 ***Building on existing services*** - This priority includes day to day operational activities required to maintain existing levels of services, and activities required in response to likely levels of homelessness, responding to Welfare Reform and the prevention of homelessness over the next 3 years. It also includes meeting government priorities around rough sleeping, domestic abuse and homelessness prevention including single homeless people.
- 5.2 ***Ensuring that housing related support arrangements for the most vulnerable are safeguarded*** – This priority relates to ensuring accommodation based and housing related support is available for vulnerable residents (young people, drug/alcohol/domestic abuse, mental health, complex needs, rough sleepers). This is achieved by working in partnership with a wide range of agencies and includes the new services developed following the ending of Supporting People (SP) programme.

- 5.3 ***Supporting people to access suitable alternative accommodation*** – This refers to the resources required to manage homelessness and levels of homelessness most effectively; reviewing the supply of temporary accommodation and identifying future local temporary housing needs and how these can be best met; the delivery of affordable homes which directly impacts on the Council's ability to manage homelessness through the housing register and tackling the move-on of homeless households from temporary accommodation.
- 5.4 ***Increased use of the Private Rented Sector*** – The Council has been successful in accessing private rented accommodation with/without the use of our Rent Deposit Loan Scheme. With a reduction in affordable housing provision likely, the tightening of registered providers' affordability criteria and homelessness levels likely to increase, the availability of the private rented sector for homeless households is essential, if the prevention of homelessness is to be effectively managed. The measures in this section of the Delivery Plan are about improving that access.
- 5.5 ***Building and maintaining effective partnership working*** - Much of the work of the Housing Options Team is delivered in partnership with other statutory and non statutory agencies. The accommodation based and community support arrangements (operational and strategic) put in place following the end of Supporting People will require careful on-going monitoring. The services will be reviewed again in 2018/19 and the need to ensure TVBC is best placed to influence future delivery of services beyond 2018/19.
- 5.6 ***Supporting a successful welfare reform transition in Test Valley*** - Working with the Revenues Service, Registered Providers, Citizens Advice Bureau and Department of Work and Pensions to respond to the impact of social and welfare reform and prevent homelessness is a key priority for the strategy. , It will also be a priority to make effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and assist households impacted by welfare reforms to move on to more affordable accommodation and where possible, to find employment.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 The Council is required for the reasons detailed at para 1.1–1.7 to have a Preventing Homelessness Strategy in place. An extension to the current strategy was agreed until June 2016, to allow time to reflect on the anticipated changes brought about by the Government's current legislative programme and the adoption of a new Housing Strategy.
- 6.2 The emerging Housing Strategy is likely to be considered by Cabinet in the autumn. In the meantime, it is recommended that the draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019 is approved. The Strategy will be reviewed within 12 months of the new Housing Strategy being adopted.

- 6.3 The Cabinet received a Homelessness Update in December 2014 and the Council agreed to make two temporary housing options officer posts permanent in order to continue to provide an effective homelessness service and maintain the progress made in reducing both the use of and expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation. These posts were originally created to address a rise in homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast in 2012/13 and demonstrated the Council's 'spend to save' commitment to tackling homelessness.
- 6.4 With regards to bed and breakfast, in 2012/13, 76 households were placed in bed and breakfast at a gross cost of £126,700. The number of households placed and the expenditure on this form of interim accommodation has reduced significantly in the 3 years since 2012/13. In 2015/16 expenditure was £23,065, with 14 households spending an average 23 days in bed and breakfast.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 A risk assessment has been completed in accordance with the Council's Risk management process and has identified significant (Red or Amber) risks as detailed in the risk assessment. The Required Actions proposed to reduce these risks will not incur additional control costs/insurance as outlined in the Resource Implications section of this report.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 The Council will seek to ensure the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is kept to a minimum and expenditure on this type of accommodation is maintained at 2015/16 and 2016/17 budgeted levels.
- 8.2 In July 2015, Members agreed to provide revenue support funding (£18,000 pa) for 3 years (effective from 1/4/2016) to the Junction Road Families' Hostel to ensure the hostel provision was sustained and bed and breakfast costs contained to a minimum.
- 8.3 Housing Revenue Grants were also approved for the Andover Crisis and Support Centre (£11,900 pa) and Two Saints Housing Association (£10,500 pa) for three year period 2015-2018 to assist the Council in meeting its statutory homeless duties.
- 8.4 The Council's Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allocation has increased for 2016/17 to £150,378 and can be used to prevent homelessness and assist households impacted by welfare reform, whilst they seek alternative accommodation.
- 8.5 The Council, in partnership with other Hampshire local authorities has successfully bid and attracted additional funding into the Borough to assist with rough sleeping (£34,000 in 2014 from DCLG) and move on accommodation for victims of domestic abuse at the Andover Crisis and Support Centre (£60,000 in 2015/16). The Council will continue to seek out future funding opportunities during the lifetime of new strategy.

- 8.6 The new social inclusion and housing related support services commissioned and funded by Hampshire County Council will be periodically reviewed and update reports provided.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal responsibility on local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy.
- 9.2 The Council has statutory duties to assist those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 The EQIA has identified a potential for discrimination or adverse impact around social inclusion. All opportunities to promote equality will be taken.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Community Safety – Social cohesion and integration.
- 11.2 Environmental Health Issues – None
- 11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – None
- 11.4 Property Issues - None
- 11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – None specific

12 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

- 12.1 The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2016-2019 is a key document that details the Council's priorities for preventing homelessness where possible, and meeting the needs of those threatened with homeless and homeless households in the borough for 2016-2019. The Strategy and the Delivery Plan will be kept under ongoing review.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

Social Inclusion Service Model proposal by Hampshire County Council 12 March 2015

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	1	File Ref:	Homelessness
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(Portfolio: Housing and Environmental Health) Councillor Sandra Hawke

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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	22 June 2016
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