

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET - 19<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013**

**HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

**JOINT REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS & EMPLOYMENT and ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR FAMILY & COHESION SERVICES**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR CHARLES SMITH**

**PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to support priority homeless people. In addition, the Council recognises the need to support non-statutory homeless people into sustainable housing.
- 1.2 A review of present arrangements for dealing with homelessness has been undertaken in partnership with Stay, LIFE, Maninplace, KIP, Wellington YMCA, West Mercia Police, Wrekin Housing Trust, Sanctuary House, Homeless Link and Bromford and a revised homelessness strategy developed for consultation

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013-2016 and agrees to a period of 60 days consultation with a final report being brought back to Cabinet for approval later this year.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the transfer of all property related functions, relating to Homelessness, to the Development, Business and Employment Service Area and grants delegated power for making decisions relating to the property currently owned or leased for the purpose of providing temporary accommodation [annex 1 attached] to the Assistant Director for Development, Business and Employment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Development & Borough Towns.
- 2.3 That Cabinet grant delegated approval to the Assistant Director for Development, Business & Employment to enter into any contracts necessary in consultation with Cabinet Member for Housing, Development & Borough Towns to award any contracts necessary for the delivery of Phase 1 works outlined in this report.

- 2.4 That Cabinet grants delegated approval to the Assistant Director for Development, Business & Employment for the disposal and acquisition of properties in order to deliver the homelessness strategy.
- 2.5 That Cabinet recommend the utilisation of £110,000 of capital receipts towards the refurbishment of Refuge.
- 2.6 That Cabinet recognise that a revenue budget of £64,000 per annum from 2014/15 is required to allow for the delivery of the homelessness strategies for which there is currently no budget provision. This budget will be met by the identification of further savings from within the Family and Cohesion Service and Development, Business & Employment.
- 2.7 That Cabinet grant delegated approval to the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection to execute all legal documentation necessary to give effect to the recommendations contained within this report.

### SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priorities	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regenerating those neighbourhoods in need and work to ensure that local</li> <li>Ensuring people have access to suitable housing</li> <li>Putting our children and young people first</li> <li>Improving local people's prospects through education and skills training</li> <li>Protecting and supporting our vulnerable children and adults</li> <li>Improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities</li> </ul>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Protecting and supporting our vulnerable children and adults.
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE</b>	If approved the recommendations in this report and actions within the Homelessness Strategy will be delivered by the end of 2016. Annual progress reviews will also be carried out.	
<b>FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council currently owns 17 houses and leases in 31 properties from the private sector which are used to accommodate homeless people in both the medium and short term. The Council owns supported accommodation hostels at Refuge and Dodmoor Grange.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The capital cost of the alterations at the refuge are estimated at £110,000, which will be funded from the sale of existing homelessness housing stock following a review of the portfolio by the Property and Design team.</li> <li>• Repair and maintenance budgets for the owned stock were given up as a budget saving in 2009/10 and have been charged against capital from 2010/11 onwards. There is no further capital allocation for these costs. Revenue budget provision of £64,000 per annum from 2014/15 is required in order to carry out the necessary repairs and maintenance of the Homelessness housing stock and this will have to be met from the identification of additional savings, split equally, between Family and Cohesion Services and Development, Business and Employment Services. JAC/DR 20/08/13</li> </ul>
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	<p>In addition to the Statutory Powers in respect of homelessness and housing under the Housing Acts 1985 and 1996, the Council can utilise the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011. The proposed actions must be in the social, economic or environmental interests of the Community.</p> <p>The ability to charge for the service to landlords derives from the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011, as it is a discretionary service the amount of the fee will be subject to the general rules for all discretionary fees. In charging a fee to Private Landlords, if providing a commercial service the Local Authority must set up a company to do so. If not on a commercial basis, the charge must not exceed the expense of provision of the service. The Private Landlord must agree to the charge. The Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>The Local Authority has a duty to produce and publish a Homelessness Strategy under the Homelessness Act 2002.</p> <p>We understand funding for the Bond Scheme and the Prevention Scheme is not coming from a central government grant but from the service areas own budget. If it were to come from a grant any restrictions on the use of the funds would need to be adhered to.</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Yes	Working co-operatively with our partners and the voluntary sector creates opportunities to enable us to provide a co-ordinated approach to delivering services, to effectively tackle and reduce the risk of homelessness in Telford and Wrekin.
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	No	Borough-wide impact

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **2. INFORMATION**

In 2012, a comprehensive review of homelessness in Telford & Wrekin was undertaken by a small task force in order to:

- Assess the impact of national context, in particular the introduction of the Welfare Reform Bill, introduced in April 2013, on homelessness and service provision;
- Understand the current scale and nature of homelessness on a local level and the likely increase in demand;
- Review current service provision to prevent and tackle homelessness, in the context of national and local factors.
- Assess future service needs and challenges.
- Ensure more rapid assessment of individual homelessness cases and the delivery of initiatives to meet the Council's statutory duty to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The review identified a number of issues with the most significant being:

- An over reliance on Bed & Breakfast accommodation to meet the Council's statutory duty on homelessness. This had resulted in a budget pressure and was at the same time failing to address the longer term needs of people being accommodated.
- An overreliance on officers within Family & Cohesion Services in delivering a fully integrated solution to homelessness. This includes officers being responsible for dealing with homeless presentations, determining priority need and assessing which scheme would best suit the need, the carrying out all of the property management work, including finding premises, repairs and maintenance, liaising with landlords, determining rents, arranging inspections and dealing with property related health and safety issues. The review concluded that officers in a client facing role were not best placed to manage property related functions and that there was evidence that is leading to the inefficient use of resources.

A revised Homelessness Strategy (Annex 2) has been developed which sets out how the Council will work with partners to **prevent and tackle statutory and non statutory homelessness**, including eliminating the need for rough sleeping. It identifies the following aims and priority actions over the next three years and set out how they will be achieved.

- Prevention Services to have responsibility for the development of a suite of services, including advice and support, to reduce the number of people becoming homeless and address the needs of those that are.
- The Service Area for Development, Business & Employment to take over responsibility for managing all property aspects of delivering the Homelessness Strategy including for example negotiating leases and managing repairs and maintenance. Further details are provided in Annex 3 with one immediate action being the refurbishment of existing accommodation at Refuge at a cost of circa £110k with works to be funded from the disposal of surplus properties within the homelessness portfolio.

- The strategy concentrates on meeting the temporary housing needs of service users with property solutions being brokered by Development, Business & Employment Services working with private sector partners using a “Social Letting Agency” type model
- Meeting the Council’s statutory duty to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers, in particular the need for a transit and tolerance sites and the need to increase the size of existing sites to meet need

### **3. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Please see financial comment above.

### **4. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

### **5. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Cabinet report presented 25<sup>th</sup> July entitled ‘Acquisition of land at Donnington Wood and Snedshill ‘which gained approval to plans address the accommodation needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community.
- Cabinet report presented 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 ‘Bringing Empty Properties back into Use and Tackling Rogue Landlords.

**Report presented by Clive Jones, Assistant Director of Family & Cohesion Services and Kate Turner Assistant Director Development, Business & Employment**

## Annex 1 – List of Existing Property owned or Leased for temporary Accommodation

### Temporary Accommodation Properties Wrekin Housing Trust

Brookside  
TF3 1NH

Overdale  
TF3 5BP

Dawley  
TF4 2DH

### Private Landlords

Hollinswood  
TF3 2BP

Hollinswood  
TF3 2BP

Hollinswood  
TF3 2BS

Hollinswood  
TF3 2BT

Hollinswood  
TF3 2BT

Malinslee  
TF3 2HF

Brookside  
TF3 1TJ

Hollinswood  
TF3 2BS

Hollinswood  
TF3 2EH

Malinslee  
TF3 2HP

Wellington  
TF1 1SP

Wellington  
TF1 1SP

Hadley  
TF1 4LB

Madeley  
TF7 5BE

Madeley  
TF7 5BE

Dawley  
TF4 2QN

Suttonhill  
TF7 4EX

Suttonhill  
TF7 4EX

Madeley  
TF7 5AG

Woodside  
TF7 5PE

Woodside  
TF7 5PQ

### **Council Owned**

Brookside  
TF3 1SL

Brookside  
TF3 1SL

Stirchley  
TF3 1YU

Stirchley  
TF3 1YU

Suttonhill  
TF7 4HD

Suttonhill  
TF7 4HD

Suttonhill  
TF7 4HH

Suttonhill  
TF7 4AF

Suttonhill  
TF7 4JW

Suttonhill,  
TF7 4AL

Malinslee  
TF3 2HH

Suttonhill  
TF7 4HA

Woodside  
TF7 5LT

Woodside  
TF7 5PS

Woodside  
TF7 5QP

Woodside  
TF7 5NS

Woodside  
TF7 5NE

### **Council Owned - Units**

10 properties

Randley  
TF3 2AW

### **Refuge (Council owned)**

Flat 1

Room 2

Room 3

Disabled flat 7

Flat 8

Flat 9

Room 10

Room 11

Room 12

Room 13

Room 14

Room 15

Flat 16

Room 17

Room 18

Flat 19

**Annex 2 Draft Homelessness Strategy**

**(See Attached Document)**

### Annex 3 – Transfer of Property Function regarding Homelessness and Immediate and Future Actions

Priorities	Actions	
	Immediate	Future
To provide more cost effective ways of managing the portfolio of properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer responsibility (and associated budget) for all property management activity, including repairs and maintenance, to the Development, Business &amp; Employment Service Area.</li> <li>• Review rents paid and charged so as the drive out further efficiencies and reduce costs.</li> <li>• Review arrangements for leasing in premises from the private sector and introduce a management fee to generate income.</li> <li>• Introduce a recovery scheme to charge tenants and landlords that abuse Council run schemes.</li> </ul>	
To ensure clients can move more quickly into sustainable accommodation allowing more efficient use of the resources available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend initiatives above to other Council services with residential accommodation requirements (e.g. Social Services)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the business case for increasing the budget to extend the existing Bond and Prevention Scheme to allow clients to move into sustainable accommodation more quickly and reduce the pressure on Council premises and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation*</li> </ul>
To meet a gap in the current provision of accommodation in particular for short term and non statutory homeless persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct asbestos and condition surveys on all premises within the portfolio to determine costs to bring properties in line with Decent Homes Standards.</li> <li>• Carry out alterations to Refuge to increase efficiency and enable the Council to meet its objectives in providing support to non statutory homeless households as well as short term accommodation and emergency facilities. The refurbishment works, estimated to cost circa £110k and are to be funded through the disposal of surplus properties.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review in detail the existing property portfolio and look to hand back and dispose of existing properties and/or refurbish to bring up to Decent Homes Standards and/or acquire new through leasehold/freehold so as to maximise the use of resources, improve geographical location of units etc*.</li> <li>• Consider converting void commercial premises into residential accommodation where the location is suitable.*</li> <li>• Consider converting existing premises into house shares and/or houses of multiple occupation to ensure efficient use of accommodation.*</li> </ul>
To meet the challenges that will arise from the welfare reforms introduced in April 2013 which is set out in the Homelessness Strategy.		
To address the geographical spread of premises to clients can, wherever possible, remain close to their local community.		

<p>To develop strong links with the private sector to enable a coordinated provision of accommodation and advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a Social Lettings Agency, within Development, Business &amp; Employment to source affordable, good quality accommodation that is suitable for the requirements of the client in conjunction with the voluntary and private sector.</li><li>• Use the Business Advice Point in Wellington as a single point of contact for landlords to get help and advice.</li></ul>	
---	--	--

\*Will require a further report to cabinet if a positive business case can be determined