

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET - 29 JUNE 2017**

**TELFORD & WREKIN HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2017 – 2022**

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: COMMERCIAL SERVICES**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING & ENFORCEMENT**

**PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1 SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 Housing authorities have a statutory duty to review and update their Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. The existing Homelessness Strategy was developed in 2013 and due to recent changes with the management of the Housing Services there was an opportunity to review the strategy.
- 1.2 A review was carried out of our current homelessness situation, trends and needs within Telford & Wrekin. This identified that whilst homelessness applications and acceptances have been on a downward trend, there remain concerns around particular groups such as those suffering from domestic violence and young people.
- 1.3 Engagement sessions were held with various organisations, internal and external services and through the Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny Committee to identify key actions to produce a new Homelessness Strategy for the next five years.
- 1.4 Four key priorities have been identified with actions relating to each priority to produce a clear Homelessness Strategy including key actions to deliver these priorities. Subject to approval this will then be developed into a detailed delivery plan that will be reviewed annually by the Homelessness Partnership Group. The priorities can be summarised as;
- Provision of high quality housing advice for all
  - Prevention of homelessness
  - Effective management of temporary accommodation
  - Prevention of rough sleeping.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **That Cabinet receive and approve the Homelessness Strategy for the period 2017 - 2022**
- **That delegated authority is provided to the Assistant Director for Commercial Services in consultation with the lead cabinet member for Housing &**

**Enforcement to agree the annual homelessness delivery plan and the annual review of the plan, which will involve taking into account feedback from the Homelessness Partnership Group.**

### 3 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council priorities	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and support our vulnerable children and adults</li> <li>• Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities</li> <li>• Regenerate those neighborhoods in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing.</li> </ul>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Residents in the borough who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE</b>	Strategy in place by June 2017	
<b>FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	Yes	<p>This strategy will be implemented using the resources available to Homelessness Prevention &amp; Cohesion services, including staffing. The budget in 2017/18 for this service is £303k.</p> <p>Additional one off funding has been approved for 12 months to provide support for the continuation of the No One Night Out (rough sleeping) initiative through Maninplace, Kip and Stay at a cost of £35k, with a further £60k to provide 12 months of targeted support to domestic violence and youth homelessness groups.</p> <p>Changes in legislation and Government policies could result in higher levels of homelessness and so higher costs to the Council, including the impact of the Welfare reforms which will need to be monitored closely.</p> <p>Implications arising from the Homelessness Reduction Bill will need to be assessed once Royal Assent has been given, however it is anticipated that New Burdens funding would be provided to assist with changes resulting from the Bill and mitigate any additional costs that may arise.</p> <p>AEM 15/05/2017</p>
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	Yes	<p>Under the provisions of the Homelessness Act 2002 local housing authorities are required to carry out a homelessness review and devise and publish a strategy based on the review. This strategy has to be drawn up at least every five years.</p> <p>A homelessness strategy is defined in the 2002 Act as</p>

		<p>one formulated in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Prevent homelessness in an authority's area;</li> <li>b) Secure that accommodation is and will be available in that area for people who are or may become homeless; and</li> <li>c) Provide support for such people or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent it recurring.</li> </ul> <p>There is no legal requirement that specific objectives or plans should be included in the strategy as such matters are left to the discretion of the Authority. However authorities must when formulating or modifying a homelessness strategy have regard to its current allocation scheme, any tenancy strategy, its housing strategy and equalities issues.</p> <p>The strategy supports the Council in meeting its statutory duty under the Housing Act 1996 to secure accommodation for certain types of homeless households who are in priority need (such as families with children) and who are unintentionally homeless (i.e. statutorily homeless households).</p>
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Yes	<p>Risks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased housing issues if people cannot be prevented from homelessness or are not a priority under homelessness.</li> <li>- Limited access to suitable accommodation to prevent homelessness, including adapted accommodation for those with disabilities.</li> <li>- Changes in welfare reform increasing the demand on the housing service due to being at risk of homelessness.</li> <li>- Housing demand not being met due to caps on local housing allowance and bedroom restrictions.</li> <li>- Increase in legislation under the Homelessness Reduction Bill widening the number of people that we owe a duty to help.</li> </ul>
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	Yes	<p>Impacts will be greatest in those wards where there is a higher risk of homelessness clients</p>

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4. Information**

#### **4.1 Legislation**

- 4.1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to produce a homelessness strategy at least every five years showing how we will address and prevent homelessness. This legislation also places a duty on housing authorities to ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness is available to everyone in their district free of charge. The legislation also requires authorities to assist individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and apply for help.
- 4.1.2 The Localism Act 2011 introduced significant changes to the Housing Act 1996. The stated policy objective is to enable local authorities to better manage housing demand and access to housing within the context of local circumstances. Local authorities are given the power to end their homelessness duty with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.
- 4.1.3 The Government announced support for the Homelessness Reduction Bill. This now waits for the final stage of Royal Assent when the Bill will become an Act of Parliament. A date for Royal Assent has yet to be set. This will add additional demand on the service including expanding the timescale to assist those threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56.

## **4.2 Demand**

- 4.2.1 Homeless presentation and the way in which they are recorded has changed over the years, with greater focus on preventing homelessness, the figures shown in the Homelessness Strategy show a downward trend in homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation.
- 4.2.3 However going forward there are a number of things that will impact on these figures going forward, including;
- Welfare reform
  - Introduction of the new Homelessness Reduction Bill.

## **4.3 Homelessness Strategy Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The Homelessness Strategy has four clear priorities which lead to specific high level key actions (See Appendix 1). These priorities are listed in the order they appear and not in order of importance:
- Priority 1: Ensure that high quality housing advice is accessible and well promoted to all, to ensure that those households or other support services that are able to identify their own housing solutions are able to do so.
  - Priority 2: Join up council and external services to prevent homelessness arising wherever possible particularly targeting young people and those affected by domestic abuse.
  - Priority 3: Ensure that temporary accommodation is well managed and meets the needs of the service, ensuring people move onto sustainable housing as soon as possible and minimise the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

- Priority 4: Work with partners to support vulnerable groups and to prevent rough sleeping in the Borough.

4.3.2 Additional funding has been secured to enable a number of new actions to be delivered that will contribute to these priorities, these include;

- Extend the existing rough sleeping project to be run all year round in partnership with Maninplace. (This service has only ever been funded for 3 months of the year in the coldest months). This service provides a place of safety and a contact for rough sleepers in Telford & Wrekin which also provides support and sign posts clients to other services to help them break the cycle of rough sleeping.
- Provide 24/7 support and expand the use of Dodmore Grange for young people on an initial twelve month pilot.
- Design a suite of leaflets with housing and tenancy advice which are accessible to print from the housing website to assist people to self-serve 24/7.
  - Carry out exit surveys with young people to understand their experiences in supported/temporary accommodation to help reduce homelessness and increase successful moves to future tenancies.
- Develop a tool kit aimed at young people to help prevent homelessness that is promoted to schools and colleges.
- Identify homelessness champions in each service area and with partners to enable quick responses for clients.
- Develop a training package for people in temporary accommodation with a certificate to show they are tenant ready to help move clients into sustainable housing.

Funding has also been approved for 12 months to fund 2 posts to provide a prevention role within Housing to target support at preventing youth homelessness and also domestic violence, allowing additional support to co-ordinate information that is easy accessible for these key groups and the wider homelessness agenda and linking into the channel shift agenda to provide clear up-to-date information on our website.

### **4.3 Consultation**

4.3.1 Consultation and engagement sessions were carried out with key partners and internal services. The sessions included partners such as: Voluntary Organisations that provide support for homelessness clients, Police, Registered Social Landlords, Children Services, Adult Services, Community Safety, and Housing.

4.3.2 Consultation was also carried out with the Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny Committee as part of their work programme. A presentation on the draft report and delivery plan was provided to the committee and members fed back that they wholeheartedly supported the strategy and the emphasis on prevention. They

also acknowledged the Council's good track record on homelessness acceptances in comparison to the national average. Several suggestions were made and these have been added to the delivery plan.

## **4.5 Monitoring**

4.5.1 The Homelessness Partnership Group which consists of a range of partners from Registered Housing Providers, Voluntary Organisations, Partners, Police and internal services meets ever quarter and will review the actions from this strategy as a key agenda and will contribute to a more detailed delivery plan. The Delivery Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis at this meeting, taking into account feedback from this partnership group. The Homelessness Partnership Group will also continue to review the representation of relevant services and will extend the invite to this group to any service that has a link to homelessness and the prevention agenda. Feedback on the monitoring will also be provided to the cabinet member for Housing and Enforcement.

## **5. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 A light touch equality impact analysis utilising available evidence has been undertaken on the Homelessness Strategy in relation to the General Equality Duty. The available evidence did not indicate that there was any negative impact on people who share protected characteristics. The evidence was limited in some aspects and actions to improve record keeping are taking place. This will ensure a comprehensive evidence base is available to support the aims of the duty and demonstrate a truly inclusive service.
- 5.2 Consultation has been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders. As a result, the Action Plan within the Strategy sets out a range of measures for tackling homelessness in Telford & Wrekin through providing positive interventions and promoting the inclusion of all disadvantaged groups. To ensure the positive work continues expert service users by experience will be encouraged to participate in the annual review.

## **6. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

None.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **Homelessness Strategy**

***Report prepared by Toni Guest (Housing, Nuplace and Commercial Service Delivery Manager), [toni.guest@telford.gov.uk](mailto:toni.guest@telford.gov.uk), 01952 381860***