

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

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| REPORT TO: | Environment and Community Panel | | |
| DATE: | 4 July 2017 | | |
| TITLE: | Homelessness Review | | |
| TYPE OF REPORT: | Review and Update | | |
| PORTFOLIO(S): | Cllr Adrian Lawrence | | |
| REPORT AUTHOR: | Sheila Farley | | |
| OPEN/EXEMPT | OPEN | WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT: | Not at this stage. The subject of homelessness and a new Strategy may be brought forward in next 12 months |

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

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| PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY: |
| <p>The Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2019 identified that there should be an annual review.</p> <p>This report reviews the significant issues and changes since April 2016 as well as looking at challenges ahead</p> |
| KEY ISSUES: |
| <p>Review and update of previously agreed Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.</p> |
| OPTIONS CONSIDERED: |
| N/A. |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: |
| N/A |
| REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: |
| N/A |

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

The Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2019 identified that there should be an annual review.

This report reviews the significant issues and changes since April 2016 as well as looking at challenges ahead and is supported by 3 appendices

1. A review of current issues related to homelessness in BCKLWN, future threats and potential solutions
2. A review of homelessness trends
3. A review of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

This report reviews the situation as at June 2017. Situations can develop and change over time and Officers will continue to monitor changes and trends

2. Review

Developments and trends

There was a significant rise in homelessness applications and decisions in 2013-14 This pressure has continued as well as the complexity of issues amongst those people presenting as homeless. Positive work has been undertaken in relation to partnership working, commissioning new services and changes in our approach.

Nonetheless, significant challenges remain and new ones are imminent. These are detailed in the report and Appendix 1.

Rough sleeping

There has been a unprecedented rise in the number of people rough sleeping – from 5 to 42 reported to DCLG in November 2016.

This is especially difficult for the Council as there is not a specialist service for rough sleepers in the area. Instances of rough sleeping are considered on a case by case basis, having regard to individual needs. Solutions using existing services and emergency beds are utilised whenever possible. However, rough sleepers may not wish to engage with the council or other services nor take up offers of emergency accommodation.

Progress is being made in exploring the possibility of a joint funded outreach service.

Temporary accommodation

The high demand and lack of available settled accommodation led to an increase in the use of temporary accommodation including doubling the use of bed and breakfast (including outside the Borough) between August and November 2016 .

This situation has now improved but could re-occur if we have a duty to accommodate a household and all other avenues have been exhausted.

Future challenges

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The most significant impact in the future year will be the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which is expected to be implemented in April 2018. There will be significant changes and expansion of our duties including

- Duty towards homeless households and those threatened with homelessness changing from 28 days to 56 day,
- Duty to provide meaningful advice and information, Personal Housing Action Plan for all, prevent and relieve homelessness
- Council to be open to more challenges from clients about advice provided and decisions made
- Duty of public bodies to refer a (potentially) homeless person to a local housing authority (e.g. BCKLWN)

Welfare reform

The welfare reform agenda will continue to impact on households. The most significant will be the roll out of Universal Credit in the area. The transition to Universal Credit has not been smooth in some areas. The Council is working with DWP to benefit from those experiences and use feedback to frame our local implementation.

Housing related support and supported accommodation

There are ongoing and significant reductions in the former Supporting People funding (NCC) and services are being de-commissioned. This Council is assessing local priorities and reviewing services in order to develop proposals and funding with partners to re-commission or develop new services.

Temporary accommodation

There will be an ongoing need for temporary accommodation. The Council is developing 7 further units of temporary accommodation and a further 14 flexible units. The cost of temporary accommodation to the Council may also increase due to potential changes with the implementation of Universal Credit.

3. Issues for the Panel to Consider

For information, awareness and comment as detailed in the report

4. Corporate Priorities

The Homelessness Review does not bring forward any specific proposals. The Homelessness Service is business critical to the Council

5. Financial Implications

None specifically arising from this review

6. Any other Implications/Risks

None specifically arising from this review

7. Equal Opportunity Considerations

None specifically arising from this review

8. Consultation

The original Homelessness Strategy was subject to wide consultation. This report brings forward a review of progress, current and future issues.

9. Conclusion

Whilst much has been done to develop the Council's approach and response to homelessness, there are significant and unprecedented challenges ahead with change and extension of our homelessness responsibility, some of the most fundamental changes to welfare benefit and housing subsidy systems and continuing pressure on housing.

As a consequence, it is likely that a fundamental review or new Homelessness Strategy will need to be developed within the next 12 months – dependant on issues such as the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This would include an Action Plan identifying tasks and targets from 2018/19.

10. Background Papers

Report to ECP 6 July 2016