

REPORT TO Scrutiny Community

Date of Meeting: 19 January 2016

Report of: Assistant Director Customer Access

Title: Development of Council's Homelessness Strategy – Draft for Consultation

Is this a Key Decision? No

No

* One that affects finances over £1m or significantly affects two or more wards. If this is a key decision then the item must be on the appropriate forward plan of key decisions.

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

This report introduces a draft strategy for public consultation. The approval of the final Strategy is a Council function.

1. What is the report about?

This report presents the draft Homelessness Strategy for Exeter and Teignbridge which has been developed from the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group convened to review homelessness in the city and to help form and shape the new Homelessness Strategy and action plan. The group is chaired by Cllr Harvey and involves representatives (both Members and Officers) from both councils.

2. Recommendations:

To agree the content and aims of the draft Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 2021 as a draft for Consultation. A copy of which will be available for members shortly.

To undertake a public consultation to gain feedback from stakeholders and other interested parties.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The strategy has been developed follow a series of Task and Finish Group meetings highlighting different issues which impact homelessness. There is a legal requirement to consult partners about our plans, which is essential as they are key components in our successful delivery.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

i) The proposed actions within the strategy do not commit any additional funding beyond that available to the service at present.

ii) There are implications for the use of operational resources to provide services outside of the Civic Centre where there is a clear benefit to do so as well as further investigating opportunities for integrated service delivery with key strategic partners.

ii) Financial pressures on the service and wider sector are discussed within the strategy. These include concern regarding the impact of welfare reform upon demand and viability of temporary accommodation models in the long term. The document highlights initial actions to mitigate these threats and will be reviewed annually to include relevant subsequent actions as required.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

There are no additional financial implications contained in this report.

6. What are the legal aspects?

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to review their services and outline how they will address homelessness in their locality. A review should be conducted at least every five years. The Homelessness Strategy incorporates not only the statutory duties the council must perform for those in need but also how it will act to prevent homelessness and provide advice and assistance to those in need.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The Council is statutorily obliged to have a homelessness strategy - in short this updates the council's existing policy. The monitoring officer cannot make a comment about detail of the proposal since the draft strategy is not attached.

8. Report details:

Despite central and local government efforts poor housing and homelessness still exist in modern Britain and continue to adversely affect the physical and mental wellbeing of many people, especially vulnerable groups.

The joint Exeter City and Teignbridge District Council Homelessness Strategy 2016 to 2021, sets out how the two councils, and their combined partners, will work together to tackle homelessness over the next five years.

Whilst there are some differences between Exeter and Teignbridge in the experience of homelessness, the causes and available solutions are the same. By working together we can establish better and more efficient services

and develop clearer, more accessible pathways for clients, stakeholders and residents. Where needed we will also be able to offer targeted coverage at a local level, from urban rough sleeping encampments in Exeter to the more isolated families facing homelessness in a rural setting in Teignbridge's smaller villages.

The Housing Options Teams in Exeter and Teignbridge have been jointly managed since May 2015. The decision to have a shared vision for homelessness across the area further helps us to respond more evenly as issues arise, as well as helping us to develop a more holistic conversation with partners, service providers and clients who often do not recognise local authority boundaries.

The strategy sets out both councils' aspirations for the next five years to prevent homelessness and improve experiences of those who become homeless locally. It is also a call to action to local stakeholders to help us deliver and develop further moving forward. The themes reflect the broad range of work that we do to address homelessness.

Working in partnership is key to the success of the strategy. We will continue to engage with the larger national organisations to provide context, as well as maintain and develop conversations with local organisations to help align our values and objectives to work together in resolving homelessness.

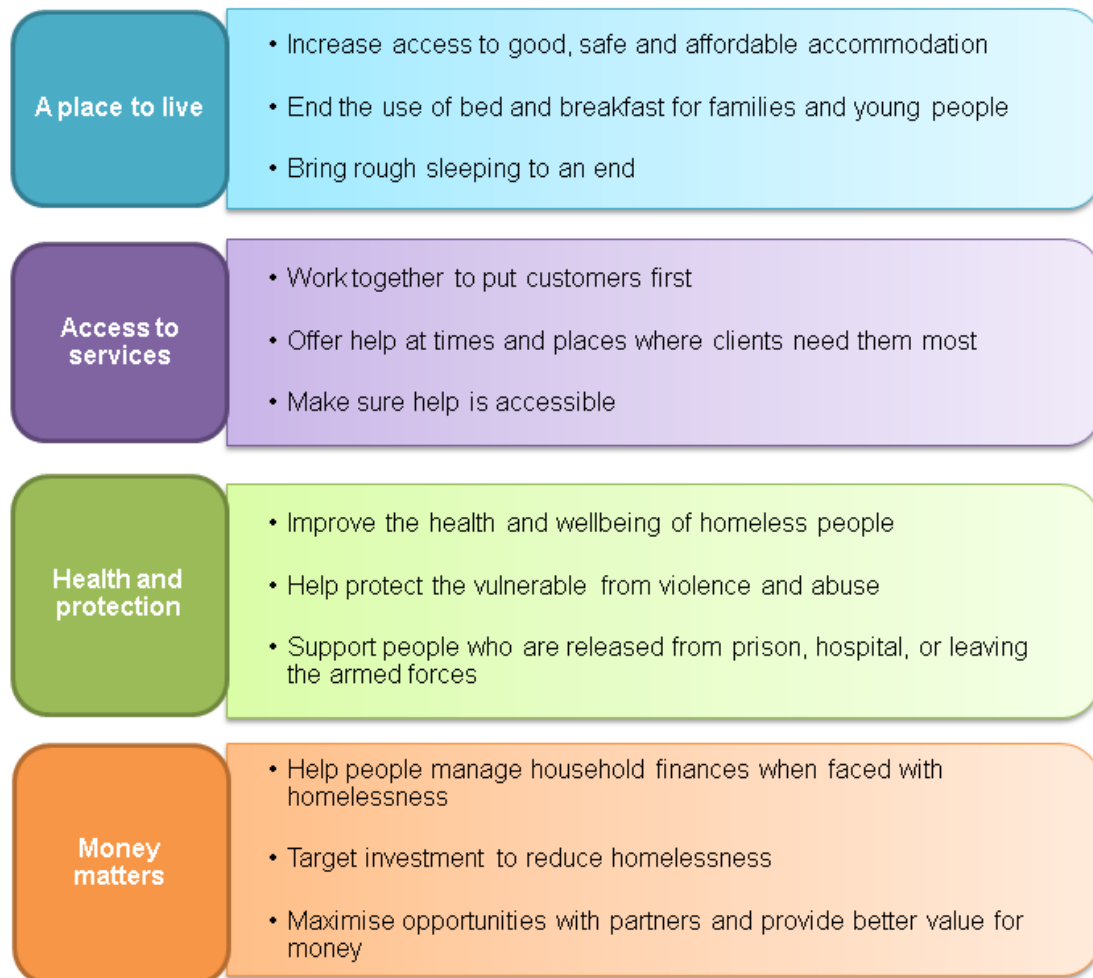
This strategy looks to deliver our services from a client, or customer, point of view and has been themed in such a way as to break away from a purely departmental led approach. These themes have been explored by the Task and Finish group with input from local stakeholders.

The themes are:

A Place to Live	Access to Services
This theme reviews the supply of accommodation in the local area and whether it is used effectively to meet local housing need.	This theme looks at how we offer services and engage with homeless people.
Health and Protection	Money Matters
This theme outlines how health and homelessness impact upon each other as well as the importance of protecting vulnerable people from violence and abuse.	This theme considers the financial pressures on local people facing in housing need and the wider homelessness sector.

To ensure our strategic aims are linked to local needs they are framed within our themes:

Homelessness Strategy 2016 – 21 Strategic Aims



In order to achieve these aims the strategy outlines an action plan. This action plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to keep the strategy relevant.

The proposed actions for 2016/17 are:

Project Indicator	Place to live 2016/17	Partner
HP01	Launch a referral service for private landlords to highlight when tenancies are at risk of failing to enable early intervention to save tenancies	Teignbridge Strategic Landlord Group, Exeter Landlord Forum, PATH, private landlords
HP02	Investigate role of a social lettings agency as a tool in accessing private rented accommodation for homeless people and complete an options appraisal to present to the steering group.	Teignbridge Strategic Landlord Group, Exeter Landlord Forum, PATH, CAB, private landlords
HP03	Increase access to affordable shared accommodation through direct leasing, or landlord support by 10 units across the local area	Teignbridge Strategic Landlord Group, Exeter Landlord Forum, PATH, private landlords
HP04	Develop an options appraisal report with registered partners to provide accommodation options to homeless people	Registered partners
HP05	Provide 4 crash pad units to be used as an alternative to Bed and Breakfast for families by both authorities	Registered partners
HP06	Develop emergency access accommodation options specifically for 16-17 year olds and care leavers	Devon County Council, Young Devon, Community Housing Aid, Supported accommodation providers
HP07	Produce a homelessness housing needs assessment to determine extent of gaps in current provision and report findings to steering group.	All
HP08	Develop a business case for a 'Housing First' model of accommodation for entrenched rough sleepers who refuse to access current provision	Julian House, St Petrocks, BCHA, Devon County Council, Devon and Cornwall Police
HP09	Review the impact of 'Safe Sleep' winter provision and determine whether a night shelter model is a viable option in the local area to provide emergency accommodation.	Julian House, St Petrocks
HP10	Number of cases where homelessness is prevented by client remaining in existing home (P1e data)	
HP11	2 combined training events for housing options staff in mediation and negotiation skills to help maintain existing accommodation.	

Project Indicator	Access to services 2016/17	Partner
HA01	Develop credit card sized promotional material to distribute to agencies such as letting agents, hospitals, with outline of services on offer and key contact information.	All
HA02	Produce self help guides for clients to help with basic advice needs and facilitate searches for accommodation.	Citizens Advice
HA03	Produce a cross boundary directory of housing and support resources in the Exeter and Teignbridge area	All
HA04	Pilot the completion of housing assessments in locations outside of the council offices where clients are more likely to engage.	St Petrocks, Citizens Advice, Job Centres, Health and Well Being Hub, Voluntary Sector
HA05	Develop staff specialism to provide links with key partner agencies, to attend operational meetings and provide referral contacts	
HA06	Develop data sharing agreements with partners agencies where appropriate	All
HA07	Complete 2 customer satisfaction exercises a year and review service provision as appropriate - for example mystery shopping, surveys, focus groups.	
HA08	Set up 2 annual events for front line staff to network and build relationships across statutory and voluntary organisations	All
HA09	Hold 2 training events for housing staff in motivational interviewing skills to provide positive advice that engages clients to take an active role to resolve their housing difficulties.	

Project Indicator	Health and protection 2016/17	Partner
HH01	Champion housing options inclusion in multi agency hubs to provide holistic services to vulnerable people.	Young Devon, Probation, Job Centre Plus, Voluntary Sector
HH02	Extend provision of security measures (Sanctuary Scheme) for all clients at risk of domestic violence.	Devon County Council, Devon Domestic Abuse Service
HH03	Develop housing pathways for: hospital discharge, prison release, youth homelessness, and veterans in housing need	NHS, CCGs, Working Links, Devon County Council, SSAFA and Royal British Legion
HH04	Implement recommendations from Integrated Care Exeter (ICE) programme to develop a health and wellbeing team for homeless people in Exeter.	ICE partnership
HH05	Evaluate the progress of individuals within the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) programme and use learning to influence service design.	MEAM partnership
HH06	Develop closer links with voluntary and community agencies, such as soup kitchens, food banks, and faith based organisations to promote consistency in tackling homelessness.	Voluntary Sector
HH07	Deliver 2 specialist safeguarding training event to housing staff to improve understanding and interaction with social care.	Devon County Council

Project Indicator	Money matters and employment: 2016/17	Partner
HM01	Investigate funding sources to develop money advice and budgeting services for homeless clients.	CAB, Homemaker, Voluntary Sector, Job Centre, DWP
HM02	Map current contracts relating to homelessness and their funding sources to define overlap and potential opportunities for combined commissioning	Devon County Council, Mental Health, NHS, CCG's Probation, CRC
HM03	Drive out duplication in referral and assessment processes through adoption of common forms and risk assessment.	Voluntary Sector, Devon County Council, Probation, Mental Health
HM04	Review viability of the current models of temporary accommodation and complete an options appraisal to outline proposed mitigations	
HM05	Explore ways of delivering services differently to improve value for money, including integrated services with partners	All
HM06	Increase awareness of welfare reforms with clients through the development of literature and self help guides to improve financial planning in setting up their new homes.	CAB, Homemaker, Voluntary Sector, Job Centre, DWP
HM07	Review use of council discretionary funds and agree common processes to reduce duplication and provide clarity to clients and advisers.	
HM08	Develop a cost calculator for homelessness services to effectively measure the impact of interventions and increase readiness to new public finance initiatives.	

The consultation is proposed to run from the 12 February 2016 until the 25 March 2016. It will ask respondents to consider the themes, aims and actions in the draft strategy, to advise if they believe something is missing. Also, where appropriate, stakeholders will be asked how they can help us to deliver a better offer for local residents facing homelessness in the area.

A short presentation of the key elements of the strategy will be made at the meeting.

Assistant Director Customer Access

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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