

REPORT TO: People Scrutiny
Date of Meeting: 2 June 2016

Report of: Assistant Direct Customer Access

Title: Joint Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021

Is this a Key Decision? No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

The approval of the strategy is a Council function

1. What is the report about?

The purpose of the report is consider the Joint Exeter and Teignbridge Homelessness Strategy and to identify how the proposed plans address the priority issues identified by residents, key partners, members, and stakeholders through the response to consultation. The strategy has been developed through a cross- party Task and Finish Group comprised of members from Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council and local partners.

2. Recommendations:

- That Members comment on the issues, or actions that have been proposed as part of this work.
- That Members endorse the content and aims of the draft Joint Homelessness Strategy for Exeter and Teignbridge 2016-2021, for consideration for the Executive and full Council
- That Members note the findings of the Business Impact Assessment
- That Members note the process and outcomes of the 'You said, we did' consultation exercise.

3. Reasons for the recommendations:

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to review their provision to help homeless people and publish plans about how any gaps found will be addressed. This strategy has been developed following a series of cross party Task and Finish Group of members from Exeter City Council and Teignbridge District Council and local partners. The draft strategy has been subject to a six week public consultation which included two events to collect wider feedback. The consultation response is broadly in favour of our plans and partners are keen to assist in the development of projects.

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 Comments:

This report raises no issues for concern to the Monitoring Officer

8. Report Details:

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

It is a statutory requirement for local housing authorities to review the services provided to homeless people. The current homelessness strategy ended in April 2016. As the Housing Options Team is jointly managed across two local authority areas, the development of the strategy has mirrored this arrangement to maximise the efficiency and opportunities that exist from working together. A review of homelessness has been conducted through a Task and Finish Group, which involved members and officers from both Teignbridge and Exeter Councils.

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.

Members will recall that the main themes and aims of the Strategy were discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the 19th January 2016. These remain unchanged. Members have also had the opportunity to comment through the public consultation exercise undertaken 12 February 2016 to 29 March 2016 including a consultation event at the Courtney Centre in Newton Abbot on the 25 February 2016 and a public event at the Guild Hall in Exeter on the 24th March 2016.

Main changes from the consultation

The majority of consultation responses were supportive of the proposed approach. Some developments include:

- Cosmetic changes to format including a further plain English review and layout of charts.
- Inclusion of Private Sector Leased properties into the cost of homelessness
- Promotion of ‘Streetlink’ phone line to provide clarity on how local residents and organisations can refer rough sleepers to support and accommodation services.
- Inclusion of conversations with wider partners including faith based organisations to ensure local delivery makes the most of available resources.
- For comments regarding wider affordable housing delivery respondents have been referred to the respective Housing Strategies which are now in place. The Homelessness Strategy will continue to be reviewed alongside the wider strategic housing responsibilities in each local authority.

More detailed consultation responses can be seen in the “You Said, We Will” document.

Key Themes and Actions

There is a clear strategic link between the development of the homelessness strategy and the wider Teignbridge Housing Strategy 2015 – 20 which the key themes being mirrored into a homelessness context.

The themes are:

A Place to Live	Access to Services
Reviews the supply of accommodation in the local area and whether it is used effectively to meet local housing need.	Looks at how we offer services and engage with homeless people.
Health and Protection	Money Matters
Outlines how health and homelessness impact upon each other as well as the importance of protecting vulnerable people from violence and abuse.	Considers the financial pressures on local people facing homelessness, financial constraint on the sector locally and how we achieve value for money.

Place to Live

- Increase access to good, safe and affordable accommodation

- End the use of bed and breakfast for families and young people
- Bring rough sleeping to an end

Access to Services

- Work together to put customers first
- Offer help at times and places where clients need them most
- Make sure help is accessible for everyone

Health and Protection

- Improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people
- Help protect the vulnerable from violence and abuse
- Support people who are released from prison, hospital, or leaving the armed forces

Money Matters

- Help people manage household finances when faced with homelessness
- Target investment to reduce homelessness
- Maximise opportunities with partners and provide better value for money

Homelessness Strategy Projects 2016/17

Following the consultation with members, staff, key partners and the public, we have prioritised a number of projects to deliver the aims of the strategy. These are detailed in the strategy document. We have not included the internal, day to day operational work that is carried out on a routine basis.

We will be carrying out annual project reviews and monitoring them on a quarterly basis to respond to the changing political and financial climate and to anticipate changes to welfare reform. We plan to hold an annual event work with members and partners to give an update on projects and prioritise work for 2017/18, as well as continue with the joint members group to review progress and emerging issues.

9 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, Economy safety and the environment?

The strategy has a positive impact in helping some of the most vulnerable groups in our society to access accommodation and support services. There are actions to specifically assist in the safeguarding of children and adults with improvement of experiences in leaving institutions such as hospitals as well as installing an emphasis on preventing homelessness to reduce the impact of homelessness on people's lives.

A shared Business Impact Assessment has been developed in consultation with the Exeter City Council Policy, Communications & Community Engagement Team to ensure that the positive elements are reviewed and that there are no specific negative impacts on local residents and partner organisations.

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:

Draft Joint Homelessness Strategy – Working Together
Business Impact Assessment
You Said, We Did – Consultation responses

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