

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNITY 9 NOVEMBER 2010

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2008-2013

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on progress in meeting the targets and actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013 was approved by the Executive in September 2008 following a complete review of the previous Strategy; that included extensive public and stakeholder consultation and an Equalities Impact Assessment.
- 2.2 The Strategy sets out the actions the Council will take in order to ensure that everyone in the city has the opportunity to live in a suitable home that they can afford.

Key areas of the Strategy include:

- Prevention of Homelessness and a reduction in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation
 - Reducing the need for anyone to sleep rough in the city
 - To increase housing options to all those in housing need and looking to move on from supported accommodation
 - To specifically reduce youth homelessness
 - To increase access into the private rented sector
 - To increase client and agency involvement with the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy
- 2.3 The adoption of the initial strategy followed extensive public consultation and consultation with over 200 service users. This consultation is being repeated in November 2010 to inform a strategy refresh. The review of the strategy will also take the implications of the comprehensive spending review on 20 October 2010 into account.

3 PROGRESS AGAINST TARGETS

- 3.1 The Homelessness Strategy includes an action plan to measure progress and an updated plan is attached as Appendix I to this report. Some of the actions completed within the plan are:
- Benchmarking/peer review completed of existing housing advice services
 - Exeter hosting the Devon wide Enhanced Housing Options Project funded by £250k of Government grant
 - Street Homeless Outreach Team reviewed and re-tendered to the Shilhay Community
 - Creation of the Short Term Accommodation and Resettlement scheme (STAR) to help reduce rough sleeping

- Improved range of housing options available to help reduce the number of households requiring temporary accommodation.

3.2 In addition to this the headline performance indicators are,

- Reduction of households in Temporary Accommodation to 130 as of 31/03/2010 compared to 350 households in 2005
- In 2009/10, 34% of all households approaching the service had their homelessness prevented using a range of alternative housing options
- Rough sleeping figures have declined to 6 in November 2009

3.3 Although Members may wish to note that in Quarter 1 of 2010/11 the Homelessness Service saw the following increase in demand.

- New approaches to housing advice have increased by over 20%
- Homeless preventions have increased by over 50%
- Homeless acceptances have increased by 30%
- Home Choice applications have increased by nearly 40%
- The number of households on the housing register has increased by 12% in three months

3.4 There are also a potential number of pressures and challenges facing the service in the future depending on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and other changes to national policy. These include:

- Changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) – currently estimated to be an average 17% lower next year. This could lead to an increase in arrears among private sector tenants and result in higher eviction rates. It may also discourage more landlords from taking tenants who rely on LHA in the future.
- Cuts to Supporting People contracts – estimated to be at least 30% next year. This will limit some of our current homelessness prevention and support options and could lead to an increase in the use of temporary accommodation.
- Government Homelessness Grant – currently £350k. There is still uncertainty as to what will happen to this grant. Any cuts to this grant will impact directly on a range of homelessness support and prevention options leading to more people being housed in temporary accommodation.
- Changes to Housing Benefit Subsidy for temporary accommodation. This is currently very generous and helps some accommodation schemes to break-even. Central Government cuts to this will impact on the Council's costs.

5 RECOMMENDED that the Scrutiny Committee Community notes:

- (1) Progress being made towards achieving targets set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 Action Plan.
- (2) The increased demand being placed on homelessness services as a result of the economic climate.

HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/1110SCC7
22.10.10

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: