

## EXETER CITY COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNITY 6 SEPTEMBER 2011

#### 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 2008-13 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 Strategy will be rewritten for early 2012 before the statutory requirement date of 2013 as the following significant changes have affected the sector and require a strategic response before 2013.
- Devon County Council cuts to Supporting People Services in the Homelessness Sector of nearly 50% (£2.9 million of a £6.1 million budget)
  - Changes to Local Housing Allowance which will negatively affect 2,771 claimants in Exeter with the cumulative loss of £1,423,189 in housing benefit.
  - Potential increase in repossessions should homeowners fail to maintain their mortgage payments due to loss of employment

## 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.
- 3.2 In addition to this the headline performance indicators for 2010/11 are,

- Slight increase in the number in Temporary Accommodation from 130 as of 31 March 2010 to 139 as to 30 June 2011 despite an increase in approaches to the service of 13% in the past year
- A record high number of households whose homelessness was prevented of 571
- An increase in roughsleepers counted at the official street count of March 2011 of 21 (up from 6 in the previous year). Although this figure fluctuates for example 9 individuals were counted at the informal hot spot count on 8 July 2011).

3.3 Members may wish to note the following which shows the trends in the Housing Needs Service for the last 5 years,

	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
<b>Homeless Approaches</b>	1659	1589	1357	1451	1504	1710
<b>Homeless Preventions</b>	N/A	N/A	368	534	474	571
<b>% Approaches Prevented</b>	N/A	N/A	27%	37%	32%	33%
<b>Homeless Applications</b>	316	257	240	240	183	214
<b>% Approaches with Applications</b>	19%	16%	18%	17%	12%	13%
<b>Homeless Acceptances</b>	225	183	128	123	106	119
<b>% Approaches Accepted</b>	14%	12%	9%	8%	7%	7%
<b>% Applications Accepted</b>	71%	71%	53%	51%	58%	56%
<b>Reviews of Decisions</b>	24	12	15	37	22	20
<b>% Applications Reviewed</b>	8%	5%	6%	15%	12%	9%
<b>Overtured</b>	7	4	6	9	5	7
<b>% Reviews Overtured</b>	29%	33%	40%	24%	23%	35%
<b>County Court Appeals</b>	0	2	0	0	0	0

NB. Homeless applications are made by households whose homelessness we have been unable to prevent and who are seeking emergency housing. The council would have an ongoing duty (acceptance) to house any such applicant who was considered to be genuinely homeless, who had a priority need, who had not caused their own homelessness and who had a local connection to Exeter. If we decide we do not have such a duty applicants can challenge the authority and review this decision. A decision would be overturned if the Housing Needs Manager considers the original decision was incorrect.

As can be seen from the information above the service is receiving more enquiries year on year since 2007 but this has not seen the same increase in homeless acceptances as prevention work has increased to meet the increased demands.

**4 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 intention to produce a new strategy for early 2012
- (3) The achievements of the service during this time
- (4) The increased demand being placed on homelessness services as a result of the economic climate and cuts to Supporting People services

ACTING HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/911SCC6

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

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