

REPORT TO CUSTOMER FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE

Dates of Meetings: 2 February 2023 and 28 February 2023

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 21 February 2023

Report of: Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group

Title: Review of Exeter City Council's Homelessness Service

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive / Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report of the Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group and recommendations follow a request to the Scrutiny Programme Board by Councillor Barbara Denning regarding the impact of any increase in homelessness in Exeter as a result of benefit cuts and increases in the cost of living. At the same time, the City Council was consulting on its Homelessness Strategy. As well as a call for public views on the issues including those who had experienced homelessness, two sessions had been held with witnesses.

1.2 A cross party group of Councillors was formed to study the implications of any increase in homelessness and was chaired by Councillor Michael Mitchell, the Deputy Chair of the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee.

1.3 The members of the Task and Finish Group were:

Councillor Michael Mitchell (Chair)

Councillor Anne Jobson

Councillor Jemima Moore

Councillor Trish Oliver

Councillor Catherine Rees

Councillor Rachel Sutton

Councillor Tony Wardle

1.4 The Group had seven formal meetings and Councillors Rees and Sutton visited and talked to users of the St. Petrock's services.

Meeting 1 – 27 June - Determining the work programme and agreeing the key points and issues relating to Homelessness in Exeter and evidence providers.

Meeting 2 -27 September - Consideration of evidence received in regard to the 3rd October Evidence session.

Meeting 3 – 3 October - Session 1 - Homelessness in context – Shelter, Citizens Advice and Exeter City Council.

Meeting 4 – 11 October- Consideration of evidence received in regard to the 19th October Evidence session

Meeting 5- 19 October – Session 2 - The Exeter Context – Representatives from Julian House, St. Petrock's, Co Lab, Exeter Well Being and written evidence from DCC.

Meeting 6 – 10 November - Evidence Session - Exeter City Council and Homelessness services

Meeting 7 - 7 December - To consider the draft report and recommendations

1.5 The Committee would like to thank the organisations shown above for either attending sessions or submitting evidence for our consideration.

1.6 The Committee also invited members of the public to submit via the Council website their views, opinions and experiences of homelessness in Exeter. We are grateful to those who responded, especially those who discussed their own experience of homelessness in Exeter.

1.7 This Report includes the following elements:

- (a) Recommendations to the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee – Section 2;
- (b) Note extracts from the Evidence sessions – appendices 1,2,3c,4,5 and 6– Section 5; and
- (c) Evidence folder containing all the evidence submitted to the Task and Finish Working Group – appendices 1-15 – Section 5.

1.8 We wish to place on record our thanks to Housing Officers of Exeter City Council and Democratic Services staff who facilitated and assisted with our work.

The recommendations divide themselves into two categories –

- 1- Those that relate to other local and national bodies and to Central Government.
- 2- Those within the control of Exeter City Council.

During the course of taking evidence, we have looked at broader elements relating to homelessness in Exeter and arising from this evidence would wish to submit a number of broader recommendations regarding homelessness in Exeter. These recommendations fall into the two categories already identified.

2. Recommendations:

Following a series of meetings and taking evidence from a range of interested bodies the Task and Finish group believe that current referrals and contacts to the City Council and

outside bodies suggest that there will be an increase in demand placed upon the City Council in regard to its homelessness provision.

The views expressed by outside bodies concerned with Homelessness indicate that they anticipate increased numbers seeking homelessness support from those currently housed. In regard to street attached, rough sleepers and the plight of the single young homeless the data is already indicating that the demand on services has and is increasing.

The following recommendations for consideration by the Executive are based upon the evidence placed before the Task and Finish Working Group. They seek to address the stated objectives of the Task and Finish Brief i.e. the ability of and implications for the local authority if as a result of current economic issues there is a dramatic increase in the number of persons and families requiring the services of the Homelessness Team.

These recommendations fall into two groupings; firstly those to external bodies and secondly those relating to Exeter City Council responsibilities.

Government/External Bodies:

- (1) To seek via the City's two MP's and the Local Government Association a fundamental review and overhaul of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Scheme with consideration to be given to the Allowance reflecting Exeter's circumstances as an urban area in its own right and not averaged with neighbouring authorities in the assessment of the allowance (*as evidenced by Shelter and CAB in session 1 and St Petrock's in Session 2*);

NB: A map of the geographical catchment area for LHA, known as the Broad Market Rental Area, is attached at Appendix 15. There is a published review protocol for BRMA.

- (2) To lobby Central Government to increase the ability for local authorities to build social housing (*as evidenced by Shelter in session 1 and Julian House and St Petrock's in session 2*) and to undertake a review of Right To Buy (RTB) *
- (3) To lobby Central Government for the funding of local authorities and agencies to be for a minimum of three years for projects relating to housing provision, as opposed to short term support (*as evidenced by Shelter in session 1 and Julian House and St Petrock's in session 2*); *
- (4) To lobby Central Government to support changes to the planning system to control/limit short term lets and holiday homes (*as evidenced by Shelter and CAB in session 1*); *
- (5) To lobby Central Government to support the abolition of Section 21 evictions (*as evidenced by Shelter in session 1*);
- (6) To lobby Central Government to support the reform of the Business Tax and Council Tax regimes for an equitable contribution in respect of all properties (*as evidenced by Shelter and CAB in session 1*); and *
- (7) To seek a Government review of the current operation of the deposit system for private rented properties for mediation to get an agreement to last no longer than 28

days after which the full deposit is returned. This will assist the tenant to obtain a further deposit for an alternative property. *(as evidenced by Shelter and CAB in session 1)*. *

- (8) To seek the support of the Crown and Magistrate Courts for the use of Plain English regarding paperwork relating to court proceedings *(as evidenced by CAB in session 1)* *
- (9) To align with the County Council webpages to ensure linkage on information and advice that helps people to find early help and prevent people from becoming at risk of homelessness wherever possible *(as evidenced by Devon County Council in session 1)*;
- (10) To work with Devon County Council's Children's Services, to ensure the Homelessness Prevention Worker function is able to help young people earlier and prevent them becoming at risk of homelessness wherever possible including young people leaving care and making better use of existing tools like Positive Pathways to improve supporting young people earlier on *(as evidenced by Devon County Council Session 1)*;
- (11) To seek increased/joint service contributions from Devon County Council in co-production areas of work e.g. substance misuse services, social care, young persons including care-leavers etc.; and
- (12) To seek increased capacity around mental health services including support for the newly formed Mental Health Alliance and building on existing City Council officer support in this area *(as evidenced by Shelter and CAB in session 1)*;

Exeter City Council responsibilities:

- (13) To undertake a city wide response to the homeless, through a more formalised partnership approach building on the city's social capital and developing flourishing communities - this could be via the proposed Homelessness Housing Forum (HFF) comprised of local accommodation and support providers to see the system as a whole and address blocks and barriers. The HFF will build on learning from the Exeter Homelessness Partnership alliance as well as from national examples of good practice e.g. Homeless Link. This will build on the existing co-production mechanisms and with the ultimate aim of offering accommodation on first presentation. The involvement of the business/private sector will also be sought *(as evidenced by CAB in session 1 and Co-Lab in session 2)* ;
- (14) To maximise renewal of the City Council contract(s) with providers with Member involvement to add greater focus on key areas and targets, including analysis of the evidence base *(as evidenced by Shelter in session 1)* ;
- (15) To seek the involvement of a third party organisation in statutory homelessness mediation cases *(as evidenced by Shelter in session 1)*;
- (16) To welcome and support the In Exeter commitment to the provision of drinking fountains in the city centre and seek the review of the 24/7 provision of public toilets in the city *(as evidenced by Co-Lab in session 2)*; *

- (17) To welcome and support One Exeter's review of the use of Plain English for Council tax and other written communications and support face to face communications rather than by telephone (*as evidenced by CAB in session 1 and St. Petrock's in session 2*);
- (18) To seek City Council commitment to a continuation of funding for the leasing and purchasing options programme for supported and temporary accommodation programme (*as evidenced by St. Petrock's in session 20*);
- (19) To seek City Council commitment to the expansion of the Housing First model particularly through local registered social landlords; and
- (20) The Chair of the Task and Finish Working Group to liaise with the Executive Portfolio Holder in order to provide feedback to the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee within six months regarding the above proposals.

*Those recommendations marked with an asterisk are those that are likely to require additional resource, in terms of Member/officer/3rd party time and additional costs, in order to properly explore issues, feasibility and implement agreed actions/resolutions.

Those recommendations not otherwise denoted afford a good fit with the strategy key priority areas and can be reasonably accommodated and progressed within the homelessness strategy delivery plans to follow.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The Task and Finish Working Group request that the above recommendations be adopted by the Scrutiny Committee for consideration with the new homelessness strategy which requires formal approval by Executive on 7 February 2023 and Full Council on 21 February 2023 prior to the formulation and implementation of action plans around each strategic priority.

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

Any recommendations not already covered by the Strategy and subsequently adopted by Council will feed into any additional resources required to implement the strategy.

Approval of the strategy as it stands presents no additional specific resource requirement. However the extent and scope of the actions to be planned under the key strategic priorities will need to be modelled with direct relation to the existing and future local homelessness budgets; that of the Council and also those of relevant partner organisations.

5. Report details:

5.1 A summary of those organisations who came forward as witnesses:-

Both sessions introduced the Group to a number of organisations approaching homelessness from different perspectives. These are:-

Shelter – a well-known national organisation locally based in Plymouth;

CAB – working for many years with the City Council, also covering appearances at court to support those faced with eviction;

Devon County Council and Exeter City Council statutory roles under the recognised resource problems;

CoLab – changes to partner agencies operating as a consequence of the Pandemic has resulted in CoLab becoming one of the first point of calls and has been given the moniker of “social A&E”. CoLab has experienced a significant increases in visitors with complex needs and continues to offer a wider range of ongoing signposting and support initiatives such as adult learning;

Julian House and St. Petrock’s – both working at the “bottom of the pyramid”; and

Below are summaries of the representations with the full statements provided, other than Devon County Council’s, attached as appendices.

5.2 A summary of individual views of the witnesses attending the first Session on 3 October 2022 are set out below:-

Shelter – Stuart Francis Dubois – Director of Social Housing at Plymouth – Appendix 1 – Minute extract from the first session and statement

Shelter support clients by providing legal advice to those facing eviction with an increasing focus on influencing systematic change across the housing sector. It operates on a national level.

Shelter see a vast building of social housing as a key goal – current social housing being unable to adequately address the problem with 108,000 on the social housing waiting list in Devon and Cornwall with 14-15,000 in Plymouth alone. Without a revolution in house prices, the situation would worsen, certainly over the next two years with the squeeze on income and poor credit history

CAB – CitA – Karen Devaraj – Office Manager and Carolyn Naylor – Appendix 2 – Minute extract of the first session

CAB operate an advice and information service and is represented on the Exeter Private Rental Forum. It also works with Young Devon and supports the Homemaker scheme with a presence in the Civic Centre providing support with rental arrears, homelessness and debt. Cases are split 45-50% benefits, 28-32% debt and 15% housing. Cases are interwoven, involving relationship breakdown, debt and domestic violence/abuse etc. The typical split in repossession is 25% private sector and the balance social housing. Carolyn attends Court every Tuesday with cases from outside Exeter such as Teignbridge and Mid Devon also helped.

Carolyn suggested the following areas as potential solutions:-

- changes to the planning system to control/limit short term lets, holiday homes and student lets;
- rent controls and cap on rent increases;
- help from other sources with deposits; and
- increase the Local Housing Allowance.

The Group noted the consensus for the partnership with the City Council to become more focussed on key areas and for targets to be re-negotiated.

Exeter City Council – Richard Crompton, the City Council’s Service Lead - Housing Needs and Homelessness – Appendix 3a. A third session was held on 10 November to consider Appendix 3b from Richard Crompton. Appendix 3c is the minute extract from that session. Also attached at Appendix 14 is the 6 December 2023 presentation to Members on Rough Sleeping.

Devon County Council – summary of support provided by the County Council – Children Services, Integrated Adult Social Care and Public Health – Extract from Devon County Council representation.

Forums where Devon County Council engage with Exeter City and other partners include:-

- the **Devon Youth Homeless Prevention Partnership engaging on the Care Leavers Protocol and Homelessness Prevention Worker function and the Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership**, where Integrated Adult Social Care have engaged in conversations to consider alternative commissioning arrangements for the 18+ homelessness prevention contribution; also raised in April 2022 as a key issue at Team Devon – Leaders and Chief Executives as part of the collective focus on Housing;
- **Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (STAR Project)** : In collaboration with Exeter City Housing officers, Co-Lab, Devon Partnership Trust, Clock Tower Surgery, Bournemouth Churches Hosing Association, YMCA, Julian House, the BtheChange Community Interest Company operating across the South West supporting those either at risk of entering or who are in the criminal justice system, Devon County Council has submitted a bid to the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities to support rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping into drug and alcohol treatment services. Subject to receipt and approval of the Memorandum of Understanding, Devon County Council will be drawing down £1.4 million to be spent up until 31 March 2024. The aim is to improve access and outcomes for those living with alcohol or other drug dependency, and in turn should support individuals to sustain tenancies and progress through the tiers of the housing system;
- Devon County Council using Office for Health Improvement and Disparities funding, has funded the **trial of a new injectable depot opiate substitute** (Buvidal) delivered by the Clock Tower Surgery which has a transformational impact on those who have been living with long term illicit heroin dependency;
- the lead commissioner for Substance Misuse recently met with three of the Exeter Homeless Partnership team to receive their lived experience insights;
- the County Council’s Children’s Services works with District Councils to co-fund a **Homelessness Prevention Worker function** for 16/17 year olds and care leavers age 18-25.
- work is also underway with District Councils and other partners – e.g., colleagues in Health Services – on the **retendering of the County Council’s contract for support hours into young people’s supported accommodation**, to support the availability of appropriate supported accommodation options for young people aged 16/17 (or 18-25 if a care leaver). Other multi-agency works to avoid homelessness where possible, or to support young people who do become homeless to access appropriate accommodation, is carried out by Social Work services, for example, **Preparation for Independence** work carried out by Personal Advisors;
- **Devon County Councils 18+ Homelessness Prevention Contribution** contract purchases professional relationships for individuals whose homelessness is inextricably linked with complex and chaotic life experiences. Devon County Council’s total annual contribution is £1.45 million, supporting up to 245 people at any one point in time across the County Council area. The following is purchased within the Exeter City Council boundary – Gabriel House - £262,544.76, Exeter YMCA - £157,166.88 and a portion of the County wide Floating Support Service which totals £711,377.00; and

- **Covid 19 and Partnership Working:** Working as a partnership through the Devon Covid-19 Homelessness and Health Coordination Cell, knowledge and resources were shared to establish a response to vaccinations for both staff and people who are homeless. In addition, Contain Outbreak Management Function (COMF) has also been allocated from Devon County Council Public Health to a number of projects in Exeter to support the agenda including a health recovery lead at Gabriel House; winter adaptations and responses at St. Petrocks; additional homeless health outreach from the ClockTower surgery; and conversion of public toilet space for multipurpose venue at CoLab.
- Devon County Council put forward the following suggestions:-
 - (1) working together to ensure the County Council webpages contain information and advice that helps people to find help early and prevent people from becoming at risk of homelessness wherever possible;
 - (2) for Children's Services, working together to ensure the Homelessness Prevention Worker function is able to help young people earlier and prevent them becoming at risk of homelessness wherever possible; and
 - (3) making better use of existing tools like Positive Pathways to improve supporting young people earlier on.

5.3 A summary of individual views of the witnesses attending the second Session on 19 October are set out below

CoLab – Fiona Carden and Laura Greenhill – Appendix 4

CoLab is a multi-agency, wellbeing hub that enables people and organisations to work together, to create conditions for people to lead their best lives, and do their best work and for organisations to achieve their greatest impact and value.

A team of three (one full time Welcome Team Leader and two part time staff) have a range of skills and expertise including housing, criminal justice and substance misuse. The team are skilled at managing the needs of the individual as well as sometimes challenging behaviours.

CoLab hosts a number of agencies and organisations who work together to support people with complex lives. The organisations most closely aligned to homelessness are Julian House outreach team, two City Council Housing Officers and the City Council Complex Lives Navigator team, Bournemouth Churches Housing Association and Seetec Training Provider and its Interventions Alliance system who provide housing support for those in the criminal justice system. CoLab work closely with the Clocktower Doctors' surgery and its One Mental Health team offer a joint provision between the Clocktower surgery, a Community Mental Health Team in the building and Mental Health Navigators for Mind.

CoLab were supportive of the following proposals:-

- (1) city wide response to the homeless, through a more formalised partnership approach, building on the city's social capital and developing flourishing communities;
- (2) seek to engage businesses/private sector;
- (3) additional public toilets in the city; and
- (4) introduction of drinking fountains in the city centre.

Julian House – Richard Jones – Service Manager and James Ellison of the Rough Sleepers Outreach Team – Appendix 5 – Challenges and Solutions in Julian House summary

Julian House projects include:-

- Assertive Homeless Outreach Team;
- Bay 6 – Hospital Liaison;
- Exeter Prison Resettlement;
- Exeter Young Person’s Trainer Tenancies;
- Next Steps Accommodation Programme;
- Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme - Manston Road;
- Exeter TA Crescent; and
- Expert by Experience.

The Julian House Assertive Homeless Outreach Team has a strong working relations with Together Drug and Alcohol Services, addressing in partnership an individual’s housing and dependency needs. This sub cohort often present challenging behaviours making it very difficult for providers to deliver sustainable accommodation options. The Team benefits from a Together Recovery Worker.

Addiction is a relapsing condition and a high volume of clients exhibiting needs around combined Rough Sleeping and Drug misuse problems return to rough sleeping very quickly after an accommodation placement is secured. There is now more effective joint work with Together Drug & Alcohol Service and through the well-funded RSDATG (Rough Sleeper Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant).

Recent data indicate that all the multi-agency efforts to work on the intersection between rough sleeping and drug misuse have started to address this population need and Julian House is seeing fewer rough sleepers citing drug misuse as causing rough sleeping. For males experiencing rough sleeping Single Homeless with Support Needs (tenancy sustainment and money management) and Offender at Risk of Offending are occurring at greater frequency.

There have been high numbers of complex and risky clients released from HMP Exeter to No Fixed Abode who then sleep rough. This concerning trend has been raised with HMP Exeter, Probation and the City Council and some action is planned to mitigate going forward;

The most pronounced issues experienced regarding relieving rough sleeping is the shortage of accommodation options. There are a group referred to as the ‘Target Priority Group’ of 28 people who are closely monitored by the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Homelessness and the City Council with the aim of achieving a sustainable exit from the streets. The Next Step Accommodation Programme (NSAP), Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) properties and the process of rationalising/rejuvenating the housing pathway for individuals who have experienced rough sleeping will create some additional options for this complex cohort.

It may be useful for statutory and non-statutory providers to establish a clearer understanding of all accommodation options available. A homeless accommodation panel comprised of local accommodation and support providers is suggested to see the system as a whole and address blocks and barriers.

Rowan Livingstone and Peter Stephenson – St. Petrock’s – Appendix 6

St Petrock’s is Exeter’s local homelessness charity, legally constituted in 2001 but operating under the umbrella of Exeter Community Initiatives for several years prior to that date. Its

focus is on emergency survival services for rough sleepers from its centre on Cathedral Green coupled with personalised support to help address associated issues such as mental health, access to accommodation and drug and alcohol problems. It has close and effective co-operation between various voluntary and statutory agencies associated with homelessness in the city.

Pressing Needs identified by St. Petrock's:-

Private rented accommodation have inflated way ahead of the local housing allowance, making it virtually impossible for people to move out of supported first-stage accommodation. As a result, the limited supported housing in the city is largely "silted up", meaning people cannot get off the streets. This is particularly acute for higher risk or more challenging clients who have to compete with the general population for the limited properties available.

There are growing numbers of calls from desperate people facing homelessness due to the cost of living crisis likely to accelerate as fuel price increases and mortgage interest rises have impact.

Homelessness prevention must be given much greater attention both locally and nationally. The Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Homelessness strategy to end rough sleeping, welcome as it is, is doomed to failure unless matched by substantial investment in prevention well before someone becomes a rough sleeper, by which time the associated issues of mental ill-health and drug and alcohol problems are likely to have become much more challenging.

There is no magic wand, but we can all treat desperate and scared people with respect and compassion.

Additional comment from Peter Stephenson

With regard to recommendation (5) "To support the abolition of Section 21 evictions", whilst something we at St Petrock's would generally support, may have unforeseen negative consequences. One of the reasons some landlords are willing to offer tenancies to people who may pose them a financial risk is that Section 21 provides a "no fault" mechanism to evict a challenging tenant who would not perhaps not reach the threshold of one of the discretionary grounds for eviction, or indeed to avoid the wait for a court date to hear such grounds. By removing Section 21 we may find such landlords are no longer willing to take those risks and therefore will not offer tenancies to those who might be a riskier proposition, so actually increasing homelessness. It will be interesting to see the long term impact of ending Section 21 in Scotland to see if such concerns are realised.

James Bogue – Exeter Wellbeing – Appendix 7

Exeter Wellbeing works in partnership with a wide number of organisations and is largely externally funded or through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Its work includes Wellbeing, community grants including support during Covid, the Live and Move Programme funded by Sport England and support for refugees.

It runs a number of projects but not necessarily housing focussed.

5.4 Individual representations from Councillors (Councillor Diana Moore and Trish Oliver) and activists – Appendices 8, 9 and 10

Councillors D. Moore and T. Oliver. The Service Lead – Housing Needs and Homelessness has responded to Councillor D. Moore’s questions.

Kate Hannan on behalf of Inclusive Exeter

Stephen Froom on behalf of Diverse Ltd.

5.5 Representations from those who have experienced homelessness, one of whom remains in supported accommodation and is awaiting a permanent placement – Appendix 11 and Appendix 12

5.6 Councillors Catherine Rees and Rachel Sutton met with Peter Stephenson and Rowan Livingstone of St. Petrock’s together with those with lived experiences of homelessness on Wednesday 2 November 2022 – Appendix 13

6. How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan?

9.1 Exeter City Council’s Corporate Plan has the following priorities:

- Delivering net zero Exeter 2030;
- Promoting active and healthy lifestyles;
- Building great neighbourhoods;
- Providing value-for-money services; and
- Leading a well-run council.

Reducing homelessness is central to the key corporate strategic priority of “Housing and Building Great Neighbourhoods and Communities” through the tackling of social inequality and maximising homelessness preventions and reliefs. This is primarily achieved through the provision of housing advice and multi-faceted support and assistance. And through the supply of emergency, first and second stage housing options with suitable personalised support to address single and multiple needs. The priorities of the new homelessness strategy are reflected in the following 2022-26 Corporate Plan commitments:

Housing advice and homelessness support - We play a leading role in ensuring that the most vulnerable citizens receive the best advice and, where possible, an accommodation offer at the earliest opportunity with ongoing bespoke support.

We will:

- ***Publish and implement a new Homelessness Strategy that supports our ambition to reduce rough sleeper numbers, and end rough sleeping where possible by 2025.***
- ***Increase integrated offers of accommodation and treatment to build better recovery from homelessness as well as homelessness prevention in the first place.***

Continue co-production and partnership work with the voluntary sector to provide accommodation units with tenancy training and support where needed

7. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

7.1 The main risk is the internal capacity to deliver on the recommendations. This is mainly mitigated by the number that can be reasonably integrated into the planned actions under the homelessness strategy. However those recommendations likely to require additional officer / other party input will need to be assessed on a potential cost benefit basis.

7.2 Other risks are that a failure to progress the recommendations and effect positive change (e.g. new capacity in homelessness prevention or relief) will expose the Council to increased statutory homelessness presentations. This will include households requiring homelessness relief (i.e. already homeless) and requiring emergency accommodation and support plus statutory case management. This is highly likely to present costs to the general fund in excess of the current homelessness budget, therefore wielding a greater financial cost to the Council's overall budget.

8 Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

8.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

8.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

8.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

8.4 In putting forward recommendations no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because: because

8.4.1 The report is for information only and the parties likely to be affected by implementation of the recommendations are included in the EQIA submitted with the homelessness strategy report to Executive on 7 February 2023.

9 Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

9.1 Important to complete this section in light of the Council declaring a Climate Emergency. Consider whether the recommendations you are making in the report will help, hinder or have no direct impact on delivering our carbon reduction target (carbon neutral by 2030).

9.2 You should think about things like:-

- Travel (and, if travel is unavoidable, whether lower carbon options will be pursued e.g. walking, public transport, electric car);
- Infrastructure (e.g. LED lighting, energy efficient heating/hot water, solar panels, electric car charging points);
- Waste (e.g. recycling, composting, reducing non-recyclable waste); and
- Any other specific carbon reduction initiatives.

9.3 If there are no direct carbon/environmental implications for the decision please state:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

10 Are there any other options?

There is not an option to not publish and deliver to a homelessness strategy. Local Authorities with responsibility for Housing and Homelessness have a statutory duty to have a published and active homelessness strategy. Authorities delivering services under the Rough Sleeping Initiative (as Exeter is) are also required to document their respective strategy for preventing and reducing rough sleeping.

Author: Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group, Chaired by Councillor M. Mitchell

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

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Statements from witnesses

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 4.36
01392 265275