



Author/Lead Officer of Report:
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Report of: Executive Director Place
Report to: Cabinet
Date of Decision: 13th December 2017
Subject: Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-22

Is this a Key Decision? If Yes, reason Key Decision:-	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- Expenditure and/or savings over £500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	
- Affects 2 or more Wards	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? Neighbourhoods and Community Safety		
Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? Safer and Stronger Communities		
Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 1301		
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-		

Purpose of Report:

This report presents the 'Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-22', which sets out the Council's vision and strategic priorities for homelessness prevention and reduction, to Cabinet. The strategy has been developed by officers of Sheffield City Council in consultation with partner agencies delivering services, customers and other stakeholders, reflecting the fact that the significant issues that need to be addressed require a strategic city wide approach agreed by all of the key partners.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the draft Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017 – 2022 attached as an appendix to this report and approves it as a statement of the Council's strategic approach to homelessness prevention and reduction.
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services to develop an action plan to implement and deliver the Strategy.
3. Notes that the implementation of any of the proposed actions may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.

Background Papers:

Appendix 1: Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017 – 2022

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted)</i> Karen Jones
		Legal: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted)</i> Andrea Simpson
		Equalities: <i>(Insert name of officer consulted)</i> Louise Nunn
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	EMT member who approved submission:	<i>(Insert name of relevant Executive Director)</i> Laraine Manley
3	Cabinet Member consulted:	<i>(Insert name of relevant Cabinet Member)</i> Jayne Dunn
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Decision Maker by the EMT member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: Suzanne Allen	Job Title: Head of Citywide Housing Services
	Date: 15 th November 2017	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 'The Sheffield Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-22', which is attached as an appendix to this report, sets out the strategic direction and priorities for homelessness prevention and reduction in Sheffield over the next 5 years. It has been developed by officers of Sheffield City Council, in consultation with partner agencies delivering services, customers and other stakeholders.

Putting a new Strategy in place will enable us to both respond to the risk of an increase in homelessness, and to facilitate meeting new homelessness duties. A Strategy and action plan agreed with key partners will enable better collaborative and joined up service provision, particularly when addressing more complex needs.

A review of homelessness in Sheffield has been undertaken to inform the Strategy and what the priorities should be. This found that homelessness in the City has reduced by 60% in the last 5 years against a backdrop of a national increase. However, in the last 12 months, there has been a 4% increase in homelessness acceptances in Sheffield and the right actions need to be put in place to address the risk of further increases. There are still a disproportionate number of single people with mental and physical health needs accepted as homeless in Sheffield compared to the national picture.

There is a good range of local specialist services but these are mainly focussed on helping at crisis point, and we need to do more to help prevent homelessness occurring.

The strategy has been developed in the context of a shortage of affordable housing, welfare changes and cuts to public sector budgets that all have an impact on the people who are most vulnerable to homelessness.

The Homelessness Reduction Act is due to be implemented in April 2018 and this will bring significant new duties to provide more help to people who are at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy reflects the new duties and also ensures the best use of available resources across the City.

- 1.2 The Strategy sets out our vision to minimise homelessness in Sheffield by focussing on early prevention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way to a new settled home.

If a crisis does occur, we will provide good quality housing options and support people to resolve their housing problems in ways that are resilient and long lasting.

The Strategy identifies 6 priorities that will make the most difference to

addressing homelessness. These are

Priority One: Proactively Preventing Homelessness

Many people are already experiencing a housing crisis or problem before they ask for advice from homelessness services. They may have been in touch with other services that may have been able to help or referred them to specialist services earlier. We will get better at reaching people earlier with the right advice, practical help and support to keep their current home or move in a planned way.

Priority Two: Strengthening Partnerships to Support Vulnerable Groups

Some vulnerable groups are at a greater risk of homelessness and of repeated incidence of housing instability. This includes young people, care leavers, and families with complex needs, victims of domestic abuse and some BME communities. There are groups with very complex needs who may be substance misusers, have mental health issues and contact with the criminal justice system. We will improve our targeted interventions and partnership work to help people find last housing solutions. This includes how we assess needs and plan support jointly across agencies and design the specific services that are provided.

Priority Three: Tackling Rough Sleeping

We want to see an end to rough sleeping in Sheffield by doing more to prevent the risk and improve the support that is available. The numbers of people sleeping rough are at low levels compared to other major cities, but we have seen some increase locally. The main focus currently is on dealing with rough sleeping at crisis point or mitigating the impact. There are a range of services but the activity needs more co-ordination. We will concentrate more on preventing rough sleeping happening and improving the effectiveness of services for entrenched rough sleepers.

Priority Four: Improving Housing Options and Housing Support

We will always try to help people keep their current home but sometimes a move is necessary. We need to improve the range of housing options available to both prevent homelessness and meet rehousing duties. We need more affordable options for young people and for those with complex needs. As well as providing housing we want to improve the support available to help people keep their home and live independently.

Priority Five: Addressing Health Needs

Poor health can be both a cause and effect of homelessness. Being homeless can make it more difficult to access health services, have a healthy lifestyle and reduce life expectancy. A high proportion of people who become homeless have diagnosed mental health and long-term

physical health problems. We need to get better at helping people to address their health needs and have access to the right services.

Priority Six: Improving Access To Employment, Education And Training

Having the means to pay for housing is one of the major obstacles to resolving housing problems and increasing choice. There are low levels of being economically active or being in education or training amongst groups who have experienced homelessness. To help future resilience and independence we will do more to help people affected by homelessness to enter employment, education and training.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy supports the vision set out in the Council's Housing Strategy 2013 - 2023 to help vulnerable people to live independently. It supports the Corporate Plan 2015 -18 priorities of better health and wellbeing, tackling inequalities and having thriving neighbourhoods and communities. Poor health can be both a consequence and cause of homelessness. Being homeless can make it more difficult to access health services and live a healthy life. The strategy sets out how we will tackle this to ensure those at risk of homelessness or who are homeless have access to appropriate services and work closely with health partners to identify health interventions that will be of most use. The strategy focusses on early prevention to help people keep their home or move in a planned way. This involves looking at locality working to support people to stay in their community with support and affordable housing so people sustain tenancies in areas they want to live in. The Strategy also supports the tackling inequality ambition. Some groups are at a greater risk of homelessness and the strategy supports improving our partnership work and targeted interventions to meet needs.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 There is a duty to under the Homelessness Act 2002 to consult with such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as considered appropriate and who may contribute to the achievements of the objectives of the strategy. There is no duty to consult service users but in carrying out any functions relating to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness the Council should have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The Homelessness Code of Guidance advises that service users and homeless people themselves, or organisations representing their interests, should be consulted before the strategy is adopted.

Consultation with customers and other stakeholders was undertaken in 2015 and 2016. This included specific stakeholder events focussed on the homelessness strategic priorities, and customer focus groups to

discuss the detail of their experiences and how services could best support them.

A Homelessness Call for Evidence was completed in 2015 that invited experts on homelessness to provide information and views about effective homelessness prevention particularly with young people and people with complex needs. A Housing Health Needs Audit was completed in 2016 and involved over 200 customers of supported housing services. There has been consultation with customers about the development of new services that are detailed in the Housing Independence Commissioning Strategy 2016-2020, approved by Cabinet in February 2016. The Housing Strategic Forum that brings together housing providers and the Housing Equalities Group have been consulted on the strategic priorities.

This feedback has been used in the development of this Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Further consultation will take place with the partners and relevant customer groups in the development of the specific projects that will support the Strategy and the Action Plan as appropriate.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

- 4.1.1 Further reducing the level of homelessness in the City will have a positive impact on all residents.

Some groups and communities are at a greater risk of homelessness and this is recognised and addressed in the strategy. Locally, people with mental health and physical health issues, and black and minority ethnic groups are over represented among homeless people. Targeted actions are proposed that will address this.

An EIA has been completed reference 1301. This is appended to the report.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 4.2.1 There are no financial or commercial implications arising directly from this report. The implementation of any proposals set out in the strategy may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the financial and commercial implications will be considered fully at that time. It is essential that resources are effectively deployed to support the strategic objectives set out. There will be severe challenges to face with an overall reduction in public funding and a potential increase in the need for services because of economic pressures and the new homelessness duties. The government has now announced what additional monies will be available to support the implementation of the new duties contained

within the Homelessness Reduction Act. This amount is £427.652 over three years 2018-2022.

Some changes to housing support services will be achieved through the Housing Support Commissioning Plan. This will involve the prioritisation of resources rather than overall expansion to services due to the continued reductions in available funding. Funding of Supported Housing is currently being reviewed by the Government and this will affect how services are commissioned and funded. We will monitor the progress on these changes and ensure our approach to providing support makes the best use of available resources.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 All local housing authorities have a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to produce a homelessness strategy. In formulating its homelessness strategy the Council must have regard to its Allocations Policy, the statutory allocations scheme made under section 166A of the Housing Act 1996 and approved by Cabinet in March 2013, and its Tenancy Strategy made under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011 and approved by the Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods in January 2013. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy is consistent with both of these documents.

4.3.2 The homelessness functions of a local housing authority are set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. The Council has a number of duties to both prevent homelessness occurring or to provide accommodation to certain people who are homeless and to give advice and assistance. In developing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy the statutory requirements and DCLG guidance and good practice have been taken in to account.

4.3.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is due to come into force in April 2018 and will make substantial amendments to the existing legislation. Changes include:

- A duty to help people to secure accommodation 56 days before they are at risk of losing their current home.
- Anyone who has been served with a valid section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 Eviction Notice that expires in 56 days or less will now be classed as “threatened with homelessness”.
- A duty to help people for 56 days following homelessness occurring.
- Specified public authorities will have to notify the Council of service users who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- The duty to provide advisory services is expanded and should cater for different groups who are at more risk of homelessness.
- Councils will have to carry out needs assessments for all eligible applicants and agree personal plans to help them to secure accommodation.
- Councils will need to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants.

- If people do not co-operate by refusing an offer of accommodation from the Council to relieve homelessness the main homelessness duty will not apply. If an applicant does not take reasonable steps agreed in their plan, this can also end the duty.
- New rights to review are also contained in the legislation.

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy takes the effects of the Act into account.

- 4.3.4 The implementation of any proposals set out in the strategy may be subject to further decision making in accordance with the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, and the legal implications will be considered fully at that time.

4.4 Public Health Implications

- 4.4.1 The priorities contained within the Strategy reflects the aims contained within the Sheffield City Council Public Health Strategy April 2017 – March 2019, approved by Cabinet in March 2017, particularly in relation to Healthy Life Expectancy, Addressing Health Inequalities and the ambition to maximise the health and well-being opportunities through the housing strategy, and development in the housing sector more broadly, including supported housing.

This Homeless Prevention Strategy also helps the Council respond to the priorities and recommendations contained in the Director of Public Health Report for Sheffield 2017, "Adding Life to Years and Years to Life" specifically in terms of Mental Wellbeing for Life'.

5. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Consideration was given to not developing a new strategy in light of the substantial reduction in homelessness that has been achieved in the last 5 years. However this option was rejected we still need to do more to prevent homelessness earlier and address the risk of an increase in homelessness.

6. **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 To address the risk of an increase in homelessness and implement new statutory duties require a strategic city wide approach agreed by all of the key partners.