

# **TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE – 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2004**

## **Report of Housing Manager – Private Sector and Development**

**(This matter is the responsibility of Councillor G Garner)**

### **REVIEW OF TAUNTON DEANE'S HOMELESS STRATEGY "PLANNING OUT HOMELESSNESS"**

The attached report on the Update of the Homeless Strategy was reviewed by the Housing Review Panel on 25 February 2004.

The report is for information on progress of the Update of the Homeless Strategy. This information report is presented to the Housing Review Panel twice yearly.

The Members of the Housing Review Panel have recommended that the report is accepted by the Executive.

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## **TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Housing Review Panel 25 February 2004**

"Report of Housing Manager (Private Sector and Development)

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Garner

### **Review of Taunton Deane's Homeless Strategy "Planning out Homelessness"**

#### 1. Executive Summary

This report aims to update the Review Panel on the progress and development of the Council's statutory Homeless Strategy, and gives members the opportunity to comment on or alter the proposals.

#### 2. Background

Members will recall that the Homelessness Act, 2002, required every housing authority in England to prepare a Homeless Strategy by July 2003. Taunton Deane's draft was completed in January 2003, and at that time officers promised to report back in a year following our consultation event.

#### 3. The Current Position

On 23 January we held a consultation event with all our partners. We reviewed the progress, delays and alterations. We considered the various elements affecting the prevention of homelessness, the supply of accommodation and the support of those who become homeless.

We agreed a new timetable of priorities to take "Planning Out Homelessness" forward, based on the findings of the consultation day and comments from a consultant who has been involved in our 'Best Value Review'.

On 9 February the Homelessness Steering Group met. We tidied and prioritised all the items raised on 23 January and made decisions on the way forward with Multi-Agency working.

Included with this report are copies of the Executive Summary of the Homeless Strategy from last year and a draft of its progress and this year's proposals.

Further updates will be provided at approximately this time each year.

#### 4. Recommendations

Members are requested to either -

- (a) accept the review in its entirety, or
- (b) Make suggestions to alter or add to the review, which should then be accepted.

The Panel should then recommend the acceptance of this report to the Executive.

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## DRAFT UPDATE OF HOMELESS STRATEGY 2004-2005

### PREVENTION

Issues in Priority Order	Agreed Action	Action	Costs and How they will be Funded
<b>1. Lack of cohesive Deane-wide homeless network</b>	Agree continuation of Steering Group to ensure multi-agency focus for all 3 headings. Involve other organisations as appropriate ( <i>case conferences for most difficult cases</i> ). To focus appropriate help from Supporting People funding.	Ongoing	Officer time – initially – independent organiser to be discussed and costed.
<b>2. Need to improve consultation and ensure it continues</b>	Annual consultation and review of the Strategy, progress, failures, etc.	Ongoing	Officer time.
<b>3. Difficult to reach agreement between services</b>	Develop protocols or service level agreements with all relevant institutions and services. To consider appropriate liaison officers with Social Services and Somerset Partnership.	Ongoing	Officer time and as '1'.
<b>4. Reorganise to introduce “spend to save”</b>	Train staff in methods used by Colchester and Harrow Beacon Authorities. Record outcome of this work. Firm direction of Homelessness and Management staff on possession issues. Culture change. Links to ASBOS.	Ongoing	Officer time. Two extra staff – funding in place - £50,000 SP and ODPM.
<b>5. Increase of 16 and 17 year olds requesting social housing</b>	Improve and pay for mediation services ( <i>relationship breakdowns, neighbour disputes, etc</i> ) - Relate, Outreach, YMCA and Parenting, Mediation Somerset	Started	Mediation Somerset £500 max per case from B & B budget.
<b>6. Lack of available information on services available and who does what</b>	Produce a Directory of Services and adequate signposting	Not started	Printing and staff time £500 from ODPM.
<b>7. Information for staff needs updating</b>	Provide a Working Guide. Update leaflets and lists	Not started	Printing and staff time £500 from ODPM.
<b>8. No help for homeless people in courts</b>	Provide an information desk in all courts manned by Shelter and CAB.	Started	Grant applied for.
<b>9. Council housing advice services limited</b>	Training - Homeless and Advice plus allocation staff	See 4	Staff time and reorganise.

	<i>(improve advice)</i> Develop Housing Options Programme		
<b>10. Lack of information available for those with greatest need</b>	Employ Welfare Rights Officer. Housing Benefits Welfare Officer.	Completed but SP Diffs	SP funding.
<b>11. Services can be difficult to access for certain groups</b>	Improve access to services, for example, outreach, rural issues, "One Stop Shop", Café idea, Women's Aid	Ongoing	Staff time. Costs being investigated. Some ODPM funding.
<b>12. Little information for school and college leavers</b>	Education/Connexions - 13-19 years and provide Youth Homeless Guide	Not started	Staff time only.
<b>13. Felt we were not doing all we could for disabled and there were also 'bed blocking' issues</b>	Consider Home Improvement Agency benefits	Ongoing	Costs agreed. £140,000 bid in progress.
<b>14. Concern over ever rising costs of houses in Private Sector and what would happen if the 'bubble burst'</b>	Form a focus group or lenders <i>(include Credit Union)</i>	Not started	Staff time only.
<b>15. Behaviour problems not being addressed</b>	Support bid by Mental Health Partnership to Department of Health to set up specialist team for Somerset.	Ongoing	Costs known. Bid in.
<b>16. Repeat homelessness difficult to monitor</b>	Improve IT systems.	Ongoing	Staff time only.

## SUPPLY

Issues in Priority Order	Agreed Action	Action	Costs and How they will be Met
1. <b>Lack of cohesive Deane-wide homeless network</b>	Agree continuation of Steering Group to provide multi-agency focus for all 3 headings. Involve other organisations as appropriate ( <i>case conferences for most difficult cases</i> ).	Ongoing as prevention	Officer time and cost of independent organiser.
2. <b>Need to improve consultation and ensure it continues</b>	Annual consultation and review of the Strategy, progress, failures, etc.	Ongoing as prevention	Officer time.
3. <b>Registered Social Landlords not allocating enough re-lets to homeless cases</b>	Improve liaison with Registered Social Landlords to maximise relet opportunities. In line with internal arrangements in Taunton Deane.  Be aware during stock options work. Any RSL hard to let flats to be used for singles in B & B.	Started and being monitored	Officer time.
4. <b>Insufficient social housing and move-on accommodation</b>	Follow recommendations of DCA Housing Needs Report. ( <i>Target of 131 units pa of which 50% should be flats</i> ). One in 10 as move-on ( <i>flats only</i> ) including some foyer-type units.	Started	Included in capital costs of enabling.
5. <b>No temporary accommodation planning particularly relating to reduction of 'bed and breakfast' value for money issues</b>	Develop a Temporary Accommodation procurement Strategy. Leasing arrangements to be considered	Private sector leasing scheme started	Costs met from B & B budget and enabling.
6. <b>Lack of sufficient grant capital to ensure adequate number of social housing units are completed</b>	Continue to develop S106 Planning Agreements/grants to Registered Social Landlords	Started	Staff time and Enabling Fund.
7. <b>Insufficient hostel accommodation means too much reliance on bed and breakfast establishments</b>	Review need for hostels ( <i>houses for families to reduce bed and breakfast - monitor further need at team meetings</i> ). Look at night shelter/winter watch issues for rough sleepers – Open Door Project. Four RSL Hostel Units planned in Wellington.	Started	Staff time Enabling Fund/Council's land.

<b>8. Insufficient move-on accommodation for women escaping violence</b>	Provide another Women's Refuge satellite home	Completed	Loss of one 2-bedroom Council flat.
<b>9. Closure of some houses in multiple occupation</b>	Link with Regulatory Reform of Grants Order to stem loss of Houses in Multiple Occupation. Discuss assured shorthold tenancies with the Government Office of the South West TAH taking on more tenancies.	Started	Staff time. Some grant funding. Existing budget.
<b>10. Lack of statistical information for demands of special needs groups</b>	Quantify, develop and provide more supported housing (Special Needs Housing Group and decommission Warden Scheme). Better definition of Special Needs.	Started	Enabling capital Staff time.
<b>11. No 'wet house' for street homeless</b>	Supply Wet House (already in train)	Completed	Staff time financed by Housing Corporation.
<b>12. Knowledge gaps re gypsies' requirements and no sites currently available</b>	Improve liaison with County Gypsy and Traveller's Team	Started	Staff time only.
<b>13. Insufficient private lets</b>	Nominate Liaison Officer to Private Landlords/Property Agents to increase supply	Started	Staff time and reorganisation.
<b>14. Some homeless applicants still unable to access private rented sector. Widen scope of bond and deposit schemes</b>	Widen scope of bond and deposit schemes. Introduce rent in advance and arrangement fees.  Better information to Lettings agents.	Started	Staff time and reorganisation.

## SUPPORT

Issues in Priority Order	Agreed Action	Action	Costs and How they will be Funded
<b>1. Lack of cohesive Deane-wide homeless network</b>	Agree continuation of Steering Group to ensure multi-agency focus for all 3 headings. Involve other organisations as appropriate ( <i>case conferences for most difficult cases</i> ).	Ongoing	Officer time and cost of independent organiser.
<b>2. Need to improve consultation and ensure it continues</b>	Annual consultation and review of the Strategy, progress, failures, etc.	Ongoing	Officer time.
<b>3. Insufficient support and services rather fragmented.  Better co-ordination required.</b>	a) To develop floating support for all tenures (Supporting People Forum) b) Debt Counselling - Citizens Advice Bureau c) Pre-tenancy support	Started	CAB – investigating staff time.
<b>4. Detoxification services fragmented and not directed</b>	Encourage the co-ordination of detoxification support through multi agency agreement	Research completed	Staff time.
<b>5. Many unsure of support services already available or planned.  Supporting People team to note.</b>	Publicise available services including floating support.  Now urgent and important.	Not started	Staff time and ODPM funding £500.
<b>6. Concerns over temporary nature of the building occupied by “Open Door” and “The Home Furniture Service”</b>	Ensure viability and continuation of “Open Door” and “Home Furniture Service”	Started	Staff and Enabling Funds.
<b>7. Some homeless people have difficulty in accessing General Practitioners and Dentists</b>	Ensure access to General Practitioners and Dentists through Primary Care Trusts	Not started	Staff time.
<b>8. Some victims of violence want to remain in their own homes, but are unable to do this without support</b>	Support Women’s Refuge in providing outreach workers to enable victims who wish to remain in homes – meeting outside the home.	Started	SP funding – Women’s Aid staff.
<b>9. Homeless cases are often grouped together as a problem by the press. This stops them accessing some accommodation</b>	Improve public relations	Not started	Time from all relevant organisations.
<b>10. Lack of information relating to those homeless</b>	Monitor non-priority homeless cases, intentional	Started	Rural Housing enabling costs. Staff

<b>cases not covered by the legislation or who do not apply for housing</b>	homeless and vulnerable people who do not apply for social housing, Councillors interested in being used for this purpose		time. Open door surveys.
<b>11. Little use of Information Technology and statistical base limited</b>	Improve information technology and statistical base.  IT in libraries, Connexions, Job Centres, and all relevant agencies.	Ongoing	Staff time and overtime. Funding for IT ideas to be investigated.
<b>12. Little liaison with prisons</b>	Improve liaison with appropriate prisons.  Probation and Prison Service amalgamating.	Not started	Staff time.
<b>13. Little guidance for homeless people.</b>	Investigate a 'Mentor' service.	Not started.	Staff time for all relevant agencies.
<b>14. The problems relating to accommodating and supporting refugees</b>	Form a support group for refugees. (Not yet necessary).	Not started	Staff time.