

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Scrutiny Committee – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

### **Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy 2017 – consultation draft (Dec 2017)**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Terry Beale**

**Report Author: Heather Stewart (Advice & Homelessness Manager)**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy 2017 (SHRS) is a legal requirement in accordance to the Homelessness Act 2002.
- 1.2 It provides a detailed account of the results of the Homelessness Review undertaken across the five District and proposes an Action Plan that covers 4 priorities, such as:
  - Supporting the transition in services required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017,
  - Supporting clients to remain in their existing accommodation,
  - Supporting clients to access suitable and affordable accommodation; and
  - Building and maintaining strong working relationships across partnerships.
- 1.3 Homelessness Reviews has been carried out in 2003, 2008 and 2013 by the five Somerset District Authorities- Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council.
- 1.4 Although the current Strategy was due for review in 2016, it was extended to Dec 2017 to enable a response to the impact of implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on current services and our partners. The Homeless Reduction Act became live in April 2018.
- 1.5 The Strategy is currently a draft document at the moment however all authorities are working to the document and have started looking at consultation for the review of the strategy in April 2019.
- 1.6 The Review & Strategy will be published as a Consultation Draft in October 2018 with all authorities are working towards the action plan contained in the strategy. However, it will cover only the next eighteen months (as opposed to three years) to enable a continuous review of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- A. Provide 'in principle' support to the draft Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy
- B. To challenge/scrutinise the detail and identify content that may require further clarity or amendment. To provide a view on whether Scrutiny consider some aims / priorities are more important than others
- C. To challenge the content of the draft Equalities Impact Assessment and to suggest any further additions / amendments

## 3 Risk Assessment

3.1 The development of the draft Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy is supported by a comprehensive Risk and Issues register. Some of the key risks are described below:

### Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Staffing levels may need to be increased due to the increased demand. This has to be balanced with recent Somerset County Council cuts	5	4	20
Mitigation: To continue regular monitoring and horizon scanning to ensure adequate staffing levels	3	3	9
Key partners do not engage with the consultation process, therefore jeopardising the robustness of the final content and our ability to deliver the Action Plan	3	4	12
Mitigation: A comprehensive engagement plan has been developed by SSHP. This highlights the key forums and partnerships that must be engaged	2	3	6
The Action Plan is too aspirational, with too much content that will not be delivered with limited and diminishing resources	3	3	9
Mitigation: This will be tested through consultation, and aims/ priorities may be prioritised	2	3	6
Insufficient support for transition in services causing an escalation of B&B costs	4	4	16
Mitigation: Training of staff, updating of IT and increasing partnership options have been implemented	3	3	9
Increase of ASB and crime on the streets due to the inability to reduce and prevent homelessness	4	4	16
Mitigation: Training of staff, updating of IT and increasing partnership options have been implemented	3	3	9
The needs of those with Protected Characteristics (i.e. those who may be vulnerable) are overlooked	3	4	12

Mitigation: A comprehensive EIA has been developed which is also subject to the current consultation process	2	2	4
The loss of reputation of the Council due to the inability to reduce and prevent homelessness	4	4	16
Mitigation: Training of staff, updating of IT and increasing partnership options have been implemented. Help from HAST has also been explored	3	4	12

<b>Likelihood</b>	5	Almost Certain	Low (5)	Medium (10)	High (15)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)
	4	Likely	Low (4)	Medium (8)	Medium (12)	High (16)	Very High (20)
	3	Possible	Low (3)	Low (6)	Medium (9)	Medium (12)	High (15)
	2	Unlikely	Low (2)	Low (4)	Low (6)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)
	1	Rare	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Low (5)
			1	2	3	4	5
			Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
<b>Impact</b>							

Likelihood of risk occurring	Indicator	Description (chance of occurrence)
1. Very Unlikely	May occur in exceptional circumstances	< 10%
2. Slight	Is unlikely to, but could occur at some time	10 – 25%
3. Feasible	Fairly likely to occur at same time	25 – 50%
4. Likely	Likely to occur within the next 1-2 years, or occurs occasionally	50 – 75%
5. Very Likely	Regular occurrence (daily / weekly / monthly)	> 75%

## 4 Background and Full details of the Report

4.1 The current Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy (SHRS) was prepared in 2013 and had an end-date of 2016 but agreed extension to Dec 2017. It contained Goals such as:

- Reduction and prevention of homelessness
- Provision of appropriate advice, accommodation and support if a crisis occurs
- Maximising effective partnership working to provide cost effective and responsive services

- 4.2 The process of review began in 2016 but was extended to 2017 due to the introduction and impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on the partners. To date, there has been a 62% uplift since April in both TD & WS in approaches that consists of both singles (expected) and families (unexpected), especially in families who are intentionally homeless.
- 4.3 The Review has considered the way homelessness services are delivered across the area and has established current levels of homelessness, who is becoming homeless locally and why, and examined the trends in homelessness. It has also considered available accommodation and support services to identify gaps in provision.
- 4.4 Most importantly, it also expounds on the problems encountered in the delivery of the outgoing Action Plan and homelessness issues affecting the region such as:
- Dual diagnosis clients that may fall between mental health teams and drug/ alcohol teams
  - Provision of adequate accommodation options for single homeless clients, especially as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a greater emphasis on Local Authorities to cater for non-priority need clients
  - Housing options for the 25- 34 year age group as they are expected to live in shared accommodation and is restricted to the shared accommodation housing elements of Universal Credit, which in turns creates a problem of moving clients on from programmes and freeing up spaces when they reach the age of 25
  - Difficulties experienced in working with partners such as the County Council, hospital discharge and mental health schemes
  - Rising occurrence of repeat homelessness due to cutbacks in funding for floating support services for families in crisis
  - Preventing homelessness for 16/ 17 year olds by engaging with schools and the County Council
  - Lack of access to social housing due to scrutiny of client's housing and personal history
  - Universal Credit due to primarily the delays in new claimants receiving payments up to 6 to 8 weeks which causes debt and discourages risk averse landlords. Clients are also struggling to make the online application and to continue to make appointments with the Job Centre thereafter
  - Increase in the number of older persons over 85 year age bracket that might require assistance
  - Skills gap in the skillset and attributes required for a Housing Options Officer such as negotiation skills
  - Large parts of the private rented sector remains unaffordable due to the Local Housing Allowance cap
  - Rural homelessness and its challenges
  - Increase in rough sleepers and the need to develop and improve cross region links to

ensure that when a rough sleeper moves from one District to another after exhausting services in an area, they are recognised and supported

4.5 It is also intended that the SHRS will be a partnership approach between the District and its partners in the delivery of the Action Plan.

4.6 The intention is for the SHRS to be a living document in the 18 months and this will be achieved through the:

- Monthly review and discussion of the Action Plan
- Monthly sharing of Best Practices

4.7 The SHRS will be published as a Consultation Draft in October to be ready for January 2019 and will be active for 18 months.

4.8 The draft SHRS is attached at Appendix A. A supporting Equalities Impact Assessment is provided at Appendix B. the updated action plan to date is Appendix C.

## **5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities**

5.1 The draft SHRS will enable us to address many of the themes and issues within our Corporate Strategy:

5.2 TD Key Theme 1: People – The draft SHRS seeks to develop a range of additional housing types suitable in particular for single person households, young people in rural communities and elderly people. It would also seek to work with others to support the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents.

5.3 Key Theme 4: An Efficient and Modern Council - The draft SHRS challenges us to think creatively and radically review how our homelessness services are delivered, by whom and to what standard in order to best allocate our resources.

5.4 WS Key Theme 1: Our Communities - The draft SHRS seeks to increase the availability and affordability of homes for local people to rent.

5.5 Key Theme 3: Our Place & Infrastructure – The draft SHRS makes it a priority to work in partnership to mitigate negative impacts on the community from the construction phase of Hinkley Point C.

5.6 Key Theme 4: An Efficient and Modern Council - The draft SHRS challenges us to think creatively and radically review how our homelessness services are delivered, by whom and to what standard in order to best allocate our resources.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

6.1 Should the transition in services required fail and we are subsequently unable to support clients to remain in their existing accommodation or access suitable and affordable alternative accommodation, this would cause B&B costs to escalate.

6.2 There could also be the potential costs of legal challenges should internal protocols fail due to the onerous set of review rights imposed by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

6.3

## **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 It is a legal requirement in accordance to the Homelessness Act 2002 that Housing Authorities have in place a Homelessness Strategy based on a Homelessness Review within their Boroughs. This exercise should be carried out and the strategic documents reviewed at least every five years.
- 7.2 As per 6.2, there could also be the potential costs of legal challenges should internal protocols fail.

## **8 Environmental Impact Implications**

- 8.1 None directly, although the draft SHRS does seek to improve (through reducing rough sleeping) the town environment by reducing litter, including dangerous litter such as needles.

## **9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 The draft SHRS will seek to improve safeguarding arrangements and improve community safety by the up skilling of staff, sharing of best practice, development of protocols to refer clients, review of the Countywide Pre Eviction Protocol, review of banding, policy and processes around domestic violence to ensure consistency and to improve outcomes for dual diagnosis clients and ensure clients are not discharged/ released without suitable accommodation by improving partnership working between Community Mental Health Teams and Drug/ Alcohol Dependency Support.

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 10.1 There are significant equality and diversity implications. Understanding homelessness issues and the effect on those with protected characteristics, helps us to respond with interventions. The draft SHRS is supported by a comprehensive EIA (see Appendix B). The EIA is subject to consultation and we welcome feedback. The EIA (as it continues to develop) will help inform the content of the SHRS. Members are encouraged to read the draft EIA and provide comment.

## **11 Social Value Implications**

- 11.1 In our contractual arrangements with the Voluntary and Community Sector such as YMCA and CAB, we shall endeavour to ensure that social value is delivered and a social return on investment is obtained.

## **12 Partnership Implications**

- 12.1 The draft SHRS proposes Aims/ Priorities that seeks to integrate complex systems – communities, housing, social care, health services and town and country planning to ensure that the right quality of support is provided.
- 12.2 The draft SHRS has also been prepared by a partnership comprising all five Somerset district councils in consultation with its partners.

## **13 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 13.1 The draft SHRS supports the Health & Wellbeing Strategy by firstly seeking healthy planning and policy together with focussing greater attention on prevention. The SHRS also seeks to support families and people with low resilience to ensure smooth access

to relevant and tailored services. It also seeks the joining-up of support services to ensure people are able to regain and maintain their independence for as long as possible.

13.2 The development of the SHRS is also a priority for the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.

#### **14 Asset Management Implications**

14.1 No direct implications, but the development of the SHRS should challenge our thinking on how we may best utilise our assets for the benefit of our communities especially in exploring options to increase the number of single units available to single homeless clients, particularly for the 25-34 year age group.

#### **15 Consultation Implications**

15.1 Consultation and engagement is critical to the development and success of the SHRS. We need to create a product that has support and buy-in from a range of key partners and the local community. We will begin Consultations in October 2018 and should have the result by January 2019. The SHRS is supported by a comprehensive consultation plan that coordinates and guides our approach to engagement. We have a timetable of targeted consultation activity during the next few months.

#### **Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes / No** (delete as appropriate)
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes / No** (delete as appropriate)
- **Full Council – Yes / No** (delete as appropriate)

**Reporting Frequency:**    **Once only**    **Ad-hoc**    **Quarterly**  
 **Twice-yearly**    **Annually**

#### **List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix A	Draft Somerset Homelessness Review & Strategy
Appendix B	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix C	Update Action Plan to September 2018

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