

	REPORT TO CABINET TO BE HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2015	
	Key Decision	YES
Corporate Priority Aim 3 – Creating Healthy and Vibrant Communities	Cabinet Portfolio Holder	Cllr Bill Chatt, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Housing

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR (TW) – 15/281

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND REVIEW 2015-20

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to approve the adoption of a new Homelessness Strategy for the period 2015-20.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

To ensure that the Council has adequate plans and measures in place to effectively prevent homelessness within the Borough and meet its legal obligations.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS:

See attached matrix.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of a new Homelessness Strategy for the period 2015-20. The draft strategy includes a review of levels of homelessness within the Borough as well as key actions required over coming years to effectively meet future challenges.

2. CORPORATE AIMS/PRIORITIES AND THE COMMUNITY PLAN

- 2.1 Contributes to Aim 3 of the Council's Corporate Plan, 'Creating Healthy and Vibrant Communities'.

3. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 and Parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996 place a variety of obligations on the Council toward the homeless. These duties include; homeless prevention, housing advice, the provision of temporary accommodation and the provision of permanent accommodation for homeless people who are deemed to be owed a full duty under the legislation.
- 3.2 The Act also requires Housing Authorities to undertake 'reviews' of homelessness within their areas and to have strategies in place to tackle identified issues. The purpose of these strategies is to outline the ways that Councils and their partners work together to prevent homelessness and to provide housing and support for the homeless.
- 3.3 The Council's existing Homelessness Strategy has been subject to annual updates since its adoption in 2010, however public sector funding pressures along with the projected impact of the Governments further welfare reform measures mean that a more detailed revamp to the strategy is now required.
- 3.4 In addition, the Government expects that all Homelessness Services Authorities should be working towards attaining their 'Gold Standard' as set out in their recent guidance on "*Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness*". A key element of the Gold Standard is the need to have homelessness strategies in place that conform to certain criteria. The draft strategy as developed complies with this Gold Standard.
- 3.5 This strategy provides a statistical update with regard to levels of homelessness within the Borough. A refreshed and updated homelessness strategy action plan is included.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Full consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders to support the development of this strategy. This has included one to one sessions with key partners and a presentation to the local homelessness forum. Feedback from members of the public has been sought via a web based consultation. In addition service user feedback has been sought.
- 4.2 Members of the Safer and Stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to provide comment on the strategy prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 The strategy seeks to build on the strengths of previous work undertaken by the Council and its partners. The primary aim of the strategy is sustain this success in the face of future challenges.

5.2 The Strategy provides various statistical information concerning trends in homelessness locally. Overall levels of homelessness have been reducing in the Borough in recent years. This is very much in contrast to national trends. Key points to note are:

- At the national level, over the last 5 years there has been a 36% increase in the number of households who were homeless and owed a full housing duty under the legislation. At the local level however there has been a 34% decrease over the same period.
- At the national level there are around 0.7 'homeless' households per 1000 households. At the local level there are 0.21 per 1000 households.
- Whilst the number of households becoming homeless is decreasing locally, the number who have had their homelessness prevented by an intervention from the Council or one of our funded partners is increasing. Last year 873 households who were deemed to be a risk of homelessness had their homelessness prevented. This was up from 770 households in 2010/11.
- The main cause of homelessness within the Borough continues to be domestic violence. Between 2009/10 to 2014/15, 114 households were made homeless as a result of domestic violence.
- Nationally the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation is increasing. In April 2014 there were over 64,000 households living in temporary accommodation nationally, an increase of 11% on the year before. Between 2012 and 2014 there was a further 12% increase (DCLG Homeless Statistic 2014). At the local level however, number in temporary accommodation are reducing. As at 31 March 2015 there were 42 households in temporary accommodation as compared to 54 on 31 March 2010.
- Spending on temporary accommodation locally has also reduced. Total spend on all forms of temporary accommodation in 2014/15 was £156K as compared to £267K in 2010/11.
- Rough sleeping remains a challenge within the Borough. Whilst numbers fluctuate due to seasonal variations, it is estimated that up to around 10 people are sleeping rough on any given night within the Borough.

5.3 Overall the Council's approach toward tackling and preventing homelessness remains positive. There are a number of reasons why the local situation differs from the national position.

- The Council's internal approach to preventing homelessness is strong and has been embedded for some years.
- The Council benefits from a strong range of externally funded prevention services. These services are provided by partner organisations funded through the North Yorkshire Supporting People Partnership. Over £2M in Supporting People grant continues to be used to pay for key services locally. These services include the Young Persons Pathway provided through Foundation Housing along with a range of other services including the Stonham support service for homeless people.
- The service provided through the Young Persons Pathway remains particularly effective. Whilst demand for Pathway services is very high locally, outcomes for young people who approach the Pathway are positive, with over 80% having their situation resolved either through advice or mediation. Where homelessness for the young person is unavoidable, supported accommodation is provided. In 2014/15 69 young people successfully 'moved on' from such accommodation.
- Whilst homelessness caused by domestic violence is high, the Council continues to benefit from the work of the Making Safe partnership. In 2014/15 66 households at risk of homelessness had their homelessness prevented following an intervention by this scheme.
- In addition to Supporting People funded services, the Council continues to actively support a range of local voluntary sector organisations to help it meet its obligations. Partnership working and co-operation between different organisations locally remains strong.
- The Council also uses the private rented sector to help meet local need. Households at risk of homelessness are encouraged to take up private rented accommodation and thus avoid the upheaval of homelessness. This has been supported through the Council's Bond Assistance scheme and a range of other support and incentives and close internal working between the Council's housing options and private sector housing teams. In 2014/15 407 households were successfully helped or signposted into private rented accommodation throughout the year as compared to 216 households who were helped to access social housing.
- Since the last strategy was adopted, new services and working arrangements have been developed. These include the Changing Lives Service (aimed at helping to turn around the lives of some of the most chaotic single homeless people in the Borough). In addition new

joint working protocols regarding rough sleeping have been developed between agencies.

- Improvements have been made in respect of temporary accommodation. Reductions in revenue spending on temporary accommodation can be attributed to both reductions in demand and the switch to more cost effective forms of provision. In 2012 the Council took the decision to invest £750K in capital funding (through prudential borrowing) to work in partnership with housing associations to bring empty property back into use as temporary accommodation. Further investment has been made into the Council's old homeless hostel at Newburn House. This building now forms an integral part of the Changing Lives scheme.

5.4 Whilst overall progress to date remains positive, it is important that the Council does not become complacent. Homelessness remains a high risk, volatile area of activity and the future long term impact of Government policy changes remains uncertain. In addition the Council faces a range of new challenges that could impact on its ability to meet its obligations. Key challenges include:

- Further changes to housing benefit eligibility are likely to have an impact on demand. These include changes to the way working tax credits are calculated, the removal of entitlement to housing benefit for 18-21 year olds and the lowering of the cap on the amount families are able to receive in benefits overall.
- The ending of housing benefit for young people is of particular concern. Whilst exemptions to this are likely to include payments of benefit to the 'homeless', young people in supported housing and other vulnerable groups such as care leavers. Overall this change has fundamental implications for the future viability of the Young Persons Pathway and is likely to drive up demand.
- The impact of the Supreme Court ruling *Kanu v LBC Southwark 2015*. This landmark ruling changed the 'vulnerability test' that is applied by Councils when assessing what duties are owed to single homeless people and is predicted to significantly increase demands on local authorities.
- Public sector funding cuts more generally are likely to have an impact. For example, savings of £1.7M are required to the North Yorkshire Supporting People programme.
- General levels of rough sleeping within the Borough and individuals with multiple and complex problems.

5.5 The strategy contains a range of actions to meet the challenges of coming years. The Strategy Action Plan can be found in **Appendix A** of the document. Key actions and priorities to note include:

- Continued emphasis on prevention. Sustaining key services where they are providing value for money and the need to sustain and bolster local partnership arrangements.
- Increased emphasis on the role of Customer First to deal with routine housing related enquiries with the aim of freeing up housing options staff to focus on additional planned preventative work.
- Additional emphasis is placed within the strategy on ensuring that where private rented accommodation is used that such accommodation is safe and well managed. This includes increased emphasis on the inspection of properties along with the potential introduction of Selective Licensing.
- Continued emphasis on tackling the main causes of homelessness, including domestic violence including the development of a women's refuge.
- Greater emphasis on working with partners to deliver employment and training opportunities for homeless people.
- An on-going commitment to support the Young Persons Pathway, along with various actions to help mitigate the impact of welfare reform.
- Minimisation of levels of rough sleeping, including an on-going commitment to undertake a series of multi-agency rough sleeper counts to both tackle existing issues and help inform a future approach.
- The re-commissioning of the Changing Lives service and existing services aimed at tackling rough sleeping.
- Support for NYCC to engage with Supporting People recommissioning programmes and continued advocacy for resources to meet local need.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy

There are no new policy implications for the Council that arise from this report.

6.2 Financial

There are no new financial implications for the Council that arise from this report at this time

The strategy does however set the overall priorities for action over the next five year period that could have future financial implications for the Council.

Any such elements of the homeless strategy action plan that require funding decisions would require future Cabinet approval, as would any future potential funding reductions or cuts to service delivery.

6.3 **Legal**

The Council has a range of legal responsibilities in relation to provision of services for the homeless including the need to have effective Homeless Strategy and Reviews in place. There are no new legal implications arise from this report.

6.4 **Equalities and Diversity**

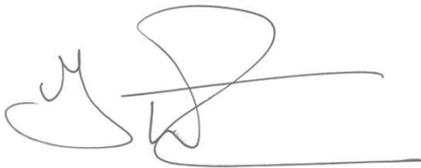
The provision of services for the homeless and vulnerable people has a positive impact in terms of equality and diversity for residents in the Borough.

6.5 **Staffing Issues**

No implications

6.6 **Planning, Environmental, Health and Safety, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder**

No implications.



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Background Papers: None

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT OR WISH TO INSPECT ANY OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS, PLEASE CONTACT ANDREW ROWE ON 01723 383598 OR E-MAIL andrew.rowe@scarborough.gov.uk

Risk Matrix

Risk Ref	Date	Risk	Consequences	Mitigation	Current Risk Score	Target Score	Service Unit Manager/ Responsible Officer	Action Plan
1	April 2012	The Council does not regularly update its Homelessness Strategy	<p>The Council will not have adequate plans in place to meet local need.</p> <p>Increased costs associated with processing homelessness and providing temporary accommodation</p>	Adoption of the new action plan.	A1	A1	Housing Manager	

Glossary of Terms

Risk	An event which may prevent the Council achieving its objectives
Consequences	The outcome if the risk materialised
Mitigation	The processes and procedures that are in place to reduce the risk
Current Risk Score	The likelihood and impact score with the current mitigation measures in place
Corporate Objectives	An assessment of the Corporate Objectives that are affected by the risk identified.
Target Risk Score	The likelihood and impact score that the Council is aiming to achieve
Service Unit Manager	The Service Unit or Officer responsible for managing the risk
Action Plan	The proposed actions to be implemented in order to reduce the risk to the target score

Risk Scoring

Impact	5					
	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
		A	B	C	D	E
	Likelihood					

Likelihood:

A = Very Low
 B = Not Likely
 C = Likely
 D = Very Likely
 E = Almost Certain

Impact

1 = Low
 2 = Minor
 3 = Medium
 4 = Major
 5 = Disaster