

# HEREFORDSHIRE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2008-2013

## PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: SOCIAL CARE ADULTS AND HEALTH

CABINET

10 JULY 2008

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

For Cabinet to endorse the Homelessness Strategy, including the associated Action Plan, prior to full publication in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG).

### Key Decision

This is not a Key decision.

### Recommendation(s)

- THAT** (a) **the Homelessness Strategy 2008–2013 be agreed, including the associated appendices and action plan, to meet the national and local targets; and;**
- (b) **annual update reports be presented to Cabinet on progress against the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.**

### Reasons

The Council is required, under the statutory requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002, to carry out a review of homelessness and to write a new five-year Homelessness Strategy by 31st July 2008, setting out an action plan to meet specific outcomes.

### Considerations

1. In accordance with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002, the Strategy and Review has considered:
  - a) The levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the County;
  - b) The activities, services, resources and teams provided within the County which:
    - help to prevent homelessness;

- will secure accommodation or ensure it is available for people in the area who are or may become homeless;
  - will provide support for people who are or may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent homelessness re-occurring.
2. The objectives and plans of the Homelessness Strategy comply with those set out in the Homelessness legislation, which are:
- a) the prevention of homelessness;
  - b) ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become, homeless;
  - c) ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become, homeless.
  - c) Herefordshire Council has incorporated these aims into a multi-agency Homelessness Strategy for Herefordshire, delivered by a partnership of statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations. This Strategy seeks to address the accommodation, health, support and other needs of homeless people and ensure the provision of high quality homelessness advice and other services to prevent the likelihood of homelessness occurring in the County.
  - d) As is the case in most local authorities areas, Herefordshire experiences a substantial demand for affordable housing, and there is every indication that this trend will continue, locally and nationally, in the future.
  - e) The shortage in the supply of affordable housing for vulnerable single people and homeless families is a significant issue in Herefordshire. Levels of homelessness in the County could rise without an effective and targeted homelessness prevention approach. Increasing the supply of affordable accommodation is also an important factor in tackling potential homelessness.
  - f) As the Homelessness Strategy indicates, a range of agencies concerned with the provision of services to homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, have demonstrated a high commitment to work together with the Council to prevent homelessness in the County. The Homelessness Strategy has been jointly developed with them, and is a multi-agency response to the needs of vulnerable households in Herefordshire.
  - g) The Herefordshire Community Strategy is the overarching strategic document for Herefordshire Council and its public, private and voluntary sector partners. The Community Strategy sets out a shared vision for the County to 2020. This links with the Herefordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities and is managed by the Herefordshire Partnership. The Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group has ensured that this Strategy has considered the themes set out in the Community Strategy and ensures that there are links from the actions required within this Strategy to the themes within the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan, the Local Area Agreement and the Service Plan along with the national indicators. Developing these links will be important if the Council is to meet its LAA Ni 156 target to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation to 82 by 2010.

- h) To achieve a successful implementation, the aims, objectives and actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy link to the main strategies, including the Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011, Supporting People Strategy and the Local Area Agreement. The
- i) links to the strategies are discussed in the attached document.
- j) As part of the review process we have aimed to establish, as comprehensively as possible, a profile of homelessness in Herefordshire. We also recognise that the profile of homelessness locally can change over time, as new housing market pressures develop, or new opportunities arise, so the collection of data and information must be an ongoing and shared process. This, in turn, will inform continued Strategy development and the annual monitoring and evaluation process.
- k) The following have been identified in the Homelessness Strategy as the six main outcomes:
- The prevention of homelessness through the effective targeting of housing options and services;
  - To end the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation and to continue to reduce the overall number of households in temporary accommodation;
  - To ensure sufficient accommodation and support is available for people who are, or who may become, homeless;
  - Improve joint working amongst all agencies concerned with homelessness and prevention;
  - To reduce homelessness and its related impacts amongst vulnerable client groups including young people and children;
  - To maximise the effectiveness and targeting of homelessness services through the use of improved data collection and intelligence gathering.
- l) Due to the issues that have been identified within the Strategy and review, it is recommended that the Action Plan be monitored regularly and reviewed annually. The annual review will enable: -
- a) The regular and consistent monitoring of performance against targets;
  - b) An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Strategy;
  - c) The tackling of homelessness trend data and preventative activity.
- m) The Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG), composed of selected members of Herefordshire Council, relevant staff and members from the Homeless Forum, will undertake the review, evaluation and monitoring process. HSIG will meet on a quarterly basis and the resulting annual review will be presented to Cabinet.

## **Legal Implications**

The Council has a statutory obligation to publish a Homelessness Strategy.

## **Financial Implications**

The Action Plan includes reference to the resource implications of individual actions. Where possible proposals have been limited to working within existing financial resources however, the cost implications of a number of proposals will be subject to further evaluation involving the Resources Directorate. Where such evaluation identifies additional revenue costs, some will be considered within relevant corporate revenue budget setting programmes. A number may be subject to funding bids through other programmes including, for instance, through the Supporting People programme where appropriate, or through CLG homelessness grant opportunities.

No new financial commitments will be entered into until the funding has been approved in line with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules

## **Risk Management**

The onus of responsibility for managing homelessness and implementing the Homelessness Act 2002 in Herefordshire falls on the Council. Failure to carry out the actions detailed within the Homelessness Strategy 2008 will result in the Council being unable to respond to the growing problem of homelessness in the County.

Consideration will need to be given to the resources available to implement the action plan, as although every effort has been made to contain the plan within existing or available resources, some of the necessary actions may incur costs above and beyond these resources.

In the absence of a planned response to the issue of homelessness, the Council faces risks around community sustainability, increased financial costs associated with the provision of temporary accommodation, and rising numbers of people living in such environments across the county.

## **Alternative Options**

There are no alternative options.

## **Consultees**

Consultation on the Homelessness Review and the Homelessness Strategy 2008 was carried out in partnership with the following: -

Shelter; Supported Housing for Young People (SHYPP); Home Point – Choice based lettings agency; Probationary Service; RSL Forum representative; Marches Housing; Women's Aid; West Mercia Police; Mental Health Services; Drugs agencies; PCT; Supporting People, Herefordshire Council; Children Social Services, Herefordshire Council; Housing Needs and Development, Herefordshire Council; Homelessness Team; Citizens Advice Bureau; Homeless Forum; Private Sector Housing; Kemble Housing; Adult Social Services; Housing Benefit; Shropshire HSIG; Community Safety and Drugs Partnership, Herefordshire Council; 67 Service Users.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Homelessness Strategy for Herefordshire 2008-2013

## **Background Papers**

None