

## **HOMELESSNESS CONSULTATION EVENT 1ST DECEMBER 2006**

**Report By: Change Manager - Homelessness**

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

1. To report on the outcomes from the Adult Social Care & Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee's homelessness consultation event in December 2006 and to consider and agree the recommendations.

### **Financial Implications**

2. To be considered as part of the implementation of the review recommendations and within the transfer and reshape of homelessness and housing advice services from Herefordshire Housing Ltd to Herefordshire Council.

### **Background**

3. The number of homelessness presentations and acceptances in Herefordshire had risen steadily since 2002, accompanied by a significant rise in spending on temporary accommodation. Since the service transferred back in-house to Herefordshire Council, the number of homelessness presentations and acceptances has fallen significantly, and these are now at lower levels than in 2002. The number of people living in temporary accommodation has also reduced, as has the financial expenditure associated with these temporary placements. The primary reason for the reduction of homelessness in the County has been the introduction of a homelessness prevention approach, together with the homelessness prevention fund, a proposal agreed by Cabinet in July 2005.
4. The Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee requested a second homelessness consultation event be held in December 2006, as a follow on from the initial homelessness event held in October 2005. This event was to include representatives from relevant agencies across the County.
5. The event focussed on lessons learned in the last year in terms of tackling the main causes of homelessness in Herefordshire and explored opportunities for closer working arrangements in the future. Summary notes from the consultation event are attached at Appendix A, and have informed the recommendations at the end of this report.

## **Recommendations**

**THAT:**

- (a) the Committee notes the level of ongoing debt-related homelessness in Herefordshire, and that the Council considers ways of proactively tackling this issue;**
- (b) knowledge of options in the housing market should be increased, amongst the public, and amongst the agencies working with customers threatened with homelessness;**
- (c) agencies continue to work together to share information and further develop an 'early warning' approach to homelessness, building on good practice established during the last year;**
- (d) mediation and sanctuary options have made an impact in reducing homelessness in Herefordshire and should continue to be considered with young people and victims of domestic violence whenever appropriate;**
- (e) agencies continue to work closely with schools to successfully prevent youth homelessness and further work is undertaken to develop further potential in the private sector housing market;**
- (f) the Council continues to develop preventative and reconciliatory protocols in relation to homelessness in partnership with other agencies;**
- (g) the Council explores new ways of preventing homelessness for families who have experienced this in the past, and considers the support required to ensure these families do not become homeless in the future; and**
- (h) the recommendations set out with this report should be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Social Care Adults and Health for consideration.**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None identified