

Decision Maker: CARE SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday 4th July 2017

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY UPDATE

Contact Officer: Tracey Wilson, Head of Compliance & Strategy
Tel: 020 8313 4013 E-mail: Tracey.Wilson@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Sara Bowrey, Director: Housing (ECHS)

Ward: Borough-wide

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress towards adopting a new homelessness strategy by 2018 to comply with statutory requirements.
-

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **The Care Services PDS Committee is asked to note the report and comment on the key priority areas identified from the homelessness review for the new homelessness strategy.**

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The priorities and initiatives set out in the Homelessness Strategy will feed directly into service delivery to provide support and advice to vulnerable adults and young people to prevent homelessness wherever possible or to assist in securing and sustaining alternative accommodation suitable to their needs.
-

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy: Further Details
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Supporting Independence
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Operational Housing
 4. Total current budget for this head: £7,264,500
 5. Source of funding: Revenue Support Grant
-

Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): Not Applicable.
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Not Applicable.
-

Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable: No Executive decision.
-

Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable.
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): More than 5,500 households approach the Council for housing advice each year. There are currently around 1450 households in temporary accommodation, of which nearly 850 are in forms of nightly paid placements. Early impact analysis of the extended duties contained within the forthcoming Homeless Reduction Act suggests a potential caseload increase in the region of 40%.
-

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: All Members will be consulted during the production of the Homelessness Strategy to ensure that feedback is incorporated into the final strategy before it is presented for formal adoption.

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on each Local Authority to carry out a review of homelessness and develop a new strategy every 5 years:
- 3.2 **The Homelessness Review** provides a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness in the borough as well as considering all of the activities in place to prevent homelessness and assist people who are or may become homeless.
- 3.3 **The Homelessness Strategy** sets out how the Council will prevent homelessness and provide support to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless during the coming 5 years.
- 3.4 The current homelessness strategy expires at the end of the current financial year. Bromley is therefore currently embarking on the development of a new housing strategy.
- 3.5 The Table below sets out the timeline and current progress position in relation to the homelessness review and development of the new homelessness strategy:

2017-2018	Action	Status
Nov – Jan 17	Desktop Research, benchmarking, good practice	Completed
Jan – Apr 17	Data/trend analysis	Completed
Feb – Apr 17	Consultation/workshops with stakeholders and service users to inform the review and strategy	Completed
May – Jul 17	Production of the Homelessness review	In draft – on track to be completed by 31 th July
Jul 17	Member update	Scheduled for July PDS agenda.
Jun – Sep 17	Draft Strategy. This includes focus and stakeholder groups to feed into the strategy productions and presentation at the Health & Wellbeing board.	Commenced – draft strategy scheduled for Members consideration in September for approval to proceed to formal statutory consultation
Oct/Nov 17	Statutory Consultation	On track to commence in October
Dec 17	Review of consultation feedback and any subsequent revisions. NB this will also include and additions required once guidance is received in the relation to the Homelessness Reduction Act roll out.	On track to commence in December
Jan/Feb 18	Final Strategy to Members for Approval	On track to commence January 2018
Mar 18	Strategy Published	On track for March publication.

Homelessness Review:

- 3.6 The homelessness review has now been completed in partnership with a wide range of agencies and stakeholders. The headline summary of the review findings are set out below:
- There is an overall strong track record in tackling and preventing homelessness, particularly through working in partnership with a range of departments and agencies.
 - High levels of homelessness prevention have been maintained and despite increasing numbers in temporary accommodation zero use of shared facility B&B style accommodation has been achieved for families and young people.
 - A range of innovative schemes have been launched to increase the supply of temporary accommodation.
 - Homelessness is increasing in the borough as it is across London as access to private sector and affordable housing supply becomes more limited.
 - An increasing number of private rented sector residents are facing evictions as landlords reduce access for benefit dependent and low income households due to concerns regarding the welfare reform changes that have reduced the benefit available to rent, alongside a very buoyant rental and sales market.
 - In order to tackle homelessness effectively services must work holistically to tackle poverty, minimise the impact of welfare reform, improve access and standards for private rented accommodation and increased education and employment activities.
 - There are a range of agencies committed to working in partnership ensuring that resident's are able to quickly access the correct information and advice in a timely manner to most effectively prevent homelessness.

Homelessness Strategy

- 3.7 The new strategy must incorporate these priorities into an effective action plan for the next 5 years.
- 3.8 The Homelessness Strategy is currently being drafted in partnership with key stakeholders and service users.
- 3.9 The strategy will set out what we and our partners will do to prevent homelessness and support people who are homeless in the borough. Joint working is critical to effectively utilising resources for the best possible outcome for our service users.
- 3.10 The key themes for the forthcoming strategy are set out below:
- Prevention and early intervention – develop partnership to better prevent homelessness by tackling the root causes of homelessness
 - Support and sustainment – developing a multi-agency approach to build resilience and reduce risk of homelessness
 - Increasing the supply of good quality private rented accommodation
 - Access to suitable temporary and settled accommodation – reducing the reliance on nightly paid accommodation
 - Ensuring the adequate provision of supported accommodation services for vulnerable client groups
 - Increase in partnership working to deliver integrated services to better prevent homelessness and support people in housing need.
 - Minimising the impact of welfare reform and improve access to employment opportunities.
 - Accessible information and advice
 - Temporary accommodation outreach and visiting services to minimise the impact of more distant placements.

- Meeting the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

4.1 The initiatives and priorities set out within the homelessness strategy will seek to ensure that vulnerable adults and young people are supported to remain in their own homes wherever possible to secure alternative suitable and sustainable accommodation solutions.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Housing objectives are set out within the relevant Departmental business plans:

5.2 The new homelessness strategy will set the strategic framework ensuring objectives are compliant with the statutory framework within which the Council’s Housing function must operate and incorporates both national targets and priorities identified from the findings of review, audits and stakeholder consultation.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The pressures faced in relation to increasing homelessness and temporary accommodation has been widely reported. Any financial implications arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act will be reported to Members alongside the established budget monitoring and performance monitoring reports.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Council has a number of statutory obligations in relation to housing. These include the provision of housing advice and assistance to prevent homelessness or divert from homelessness; assessment of homeless applications; to make temporary and permanent housing provision for those applicants to whom the Council has a statutory rehousing duty; supporting such households to sustain accommodation; to have a published Allocations Scheme, a Housing and Homelessness Strategy and a Tenancy Strategy.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Personnel and Procurement Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	The Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017