

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE

Date: For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Care Services Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 14th November 2017

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Key

Title: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

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

Ward: Borough-wide

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report presents the draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 and seeks authorisation to commence an 8 week public consultation exercise prior to its finalisation.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Strategy establishes the Council's priorities in order to prevent homelessness and to ensure appropriate accommodation and support is available to people who are or may become homeless. The draft strategy and action plan are appended to this report.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Care Services PDS Committee is asked to:

- i) Note and recommend to the Council's Executive that the draft strategy is released for public consultation.

2.2 The Council's Executive is asked to:

- ii) Authorise a final 8 week consultation exercise, upon conclusion of which a finalised Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021 and action plan will be presented back to the Executive for consideration and approval.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: The strategy seeks to support vulnerable adults and children through the provision of effective housing advice and support to assist them to secure safe sustainable accommodation and prevent the risk of homelessness.
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence
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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: £5,735k
 5. Source of funding: EC&HA approved revenue budget. Contingency budget set aside for homelessness and welfare reform pressures. New burdens Homeless Reduction Act grant funding.
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Applicable: Executive decision.
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Not Applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The Council currently experiences in excess of 5000 approaches from homeless people or facing housing or related difficulties which could result in homelessness. The Homelessness strategy sets out the Council's strategic aims to prevent homelessness and support people to be able to secure sustainable accommodation.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Bromley's Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017 set out 4 key themes: housing advice and homeless prevention, housing options and access to housing, supporting vulnerable people and working in partnership. The Homelessness strategy 2018-2022 sets out achievements against these strategic aims as well as setting out the Council's plans for the prevention of homelessness over the next 5 years.
- 3.2 Some of the achievements arising from the strategic aims of the Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017 include:
- 9,712 households were prevented from becoming homeless between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2017. 6,555 were helped to remain in their own home and 3,157 were helped to move into alternative accommodation.
 - Meeting the Council's duty to provide temporary accommodation without placing any young people into bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - As of April 2017 achieving zero use of shared-facility bed and breakfast accommodation
 - Development of a new early intervention prevention team to assist households before crisis is reached to increase the effectiveness of homeless prevention initiatives
 - Updated all of the housing department's communications, and including a new housing advice online form to enable people to access advice and assistance more quickly
 - Provision of specialist welfare reform and money advice to assist those households negatively impacted by welfare reform.
 - Completed the refurbishment of two former residential homes to create 83 units of temporary accommodation in the Borough
 - Recommissioning of the Council's young people's accommodation and support services
 - Recommissioning of the Council's tenancy sustainment floating support service
 - Setting up a welfare fund to assist households with essential items when moving into their new home.
 - Entered into a property purchase programme, 'More Homes Bromley' to buy 400 units by the end of 2018
- 3.3 The Council's proposed Homelessness Strategy has been developed in consultation with service users and stakeholders. It details the Council's approach and further planned developments to strengthen homeless prevention and increased access to affordable and sustainable accommodation thus reducing demand for emergency accommodation.
- 3.4 The strategy is based on a review of the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the Borough and the activities and resources available to prevent homelessness and support homeless people. The homelessness review sets out the background to increasing homelessness and growth in the use of temporary accommodation which is creating a significant budget pressure for the Council and clearly shows the immense challenges ahead in relation to rising pressures surrounding homelessness and accommodation supply.
- 3.5 It must be noted that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which comes into force from April 2018 provides for a significant change in the Council's statutory duties in relation to homelessness and temporary accommodation and the new strategy must address these requirements. Details of the full implications including the cost of implementation and grant funding available are scheduled to be reported to Members during December following publication of the draft code of guidance and new burdens grant funding offer.
- 3.6 The Council needs to ensure all opportunities are considered to both prevent homelessness and meet increasing need whilst reducing reliance on temporary accommodation. This presents a real challenge in the context of the local housing market and welfare reform.

- 3.7 The approach set out in the draft strategy, builds upon the achievements of the previous strategy and sets out a comprehensive end to and approach centred upon 3 keys strands, prevention, access to supply and appropriate support.
- 3.8 The proposed strategic priorities within the draft strategy are:
- **Early identification and prevention of homelessness:** To support people wherever possible before crisis and to provide excellent services to those at point of crisis to either prevent homelessness or assist them to secure alternative sustainable accommodation.
 - **Achieving positive outcomes for our young people.** Preventing youth homelessness and ensuring young people are supported to make a positive transition into adulthood.
 - **Increase access to and promote the supply of accommodation:** To make best use of all available housing options to increase access to accommodation that is affordable and sustainable, and to increase through-flow from temporary accommodation.
 - **Achieving positive outcomes: Improving health and wellbeing and supporting people to break the cycle of homelessness:** To ensure services are accessible and tailored to individuals to enable them to secure safe and suitable accommodation and to assist people to develop the necessary skills and resilience to sustain accommodation and avoid repeat homelessness.
- 3.9 Throughout, the draft strategy stresses the importance of working with statutory agencies, voluntary and community groups, registered providers and private sector landlords to address the wide range of issues that can be linked to homelessness.
- 3.10 In line with statutory requirements, it is proposed that the draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022, is now published for an 8 week public consultation period prior to the draft being finalised.
- 3.11 Consultation will take the form of an online public survey together with a number of consultation sessions with key stakeholders and service users. The draft strategy is also due to be presented at the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.12 Upon conclusion of the consultation all feedback will be analysed and considered. A finalised homelessness strategy and action plan, together with the outcome of the consultation will be presented back to Executive for consideration and approval.
- 3.13 The finalised Strategy will then be published in spring 2018.
- 3.14 The action plan will be subject to annual review to reflect and changes in pressures, legislative requirements and resulting priorities. Key actions will also feed into and from the Portfolio and departmental business plans.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 The strategy recognises the importance of suitable sustainable accommodation to enable vulnerable adults and young people to reach stability and improve their life chances/. The actions contained in the strategy seek to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist people to access suitable accommodation to meet their needs and achieve independence.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is a legal requirement for every local authority to have a published homelessness strategy.
- 5.2 The homeless code of guidance states that local authorities in implementing their strategies must consider the needs of all groups of people in their district who are homeless or likely to become homeless.

5.3 The proposed strategy builds upon approved policy in relation to the focus on preventing homelessness wherever possible and assisting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to access sustainable suitable accommodation. The proposals will contribute to the priorities set out in Building a Better Bromley.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The strategy adopted to manage homelessness is likely to impact on the costs the Council incurs in meeting statutory duties.
- 6.2 Regular reports have been presented setting out the current and growing pressures in relation to homelessness and the provision of temporary accommodation.
- 6.3 The proposed strategy has been developed to ensure the best use of Council resources, in particular the management of costs associated with the use of temporary accommodation.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In 2002 the Government amended the homelessness legislation to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. In particular Section 1(4) requires that every housing authority district formulates and publishes a homelessness strategy.
- 7.2 The strategy must be developed in accordance with Section 1(1)(b) and be based on a review of the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the district and the activities and resources available to prevent homelessness and ensure that accommodation and support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
- 7.3 Section 1 (5) of the Homelessness Act requires the local authority and Section 1(6) the social services authority to take their Homelessness Strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.
- 7.4 The Code of Guidance states that an effective action plan should be developed to ensure that the objectives set out in the Homelessness Strategy are achieved.
- 7.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 comes into force in April 2018 and extends the current duties in relation to the level of provision local authorities must provide to households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The proposed strategy has been drafted to meet these new statutory duties.
- 7.6 In line with the duties contained in the Equalities Act 2010, the equalities impact assessment (EIA) of the Homelessness Strategy is being updated during the consultation process to enable any necessary remedial action to be incorporated into the financial strategy. The EIA will be published alongside the final strategy

8. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Where particular actions contained within the action plan contain procurement and commissioning implications these will be reported through due process.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Homelessness Strategy 2012-2017 Homelessness contingency reports – Temporary accommodation placement Policy LB Bromley Allocations Scheme