

REPORT TO: CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, 23 SEPT 2008

REPORT BY: ALAN CUFLEY HEAD OF COMMUNITY HOUSING

WRITTEN BY: NIGEL BALDWIN, ENABLING MANAGER

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2008 – 13)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To bring to the Cabinet Member's attention the fact that the Homelessness Strategy, the draft of which was endorsed by the Executive Member for Housing on 18 March 2008, has now been published and that an Action Plan is being progressed.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member notes the publication of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 on the city council website.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member supports the work of the Housing Partnership's Homelessness Focus Group as it confirms the Action Plan that will take the Strategy forward over the next 5 years.

3. BACKGROUND:

The City Council has a responsibility to prevent homelessness within Portsmouth and to publish a Strategy that describes the issues and presents the means by which homelessness will be tackled.

It is especially important to highlight and tackle the issue of homelessness as Portsmouth's level of statutory homelessness (families and vulnerable people) is higher than the average for the South East region.

During the period of the last strategy the Council agreed a Local Public Service Agreement target to reduce the number of households that the authority had a responsibility to directly assist. By adopting a preventative approach, we had great success in achieving and exceeding this target.

The Strategy that has now been published, endorsed on 18 March 2008 by the Executive Member for Housing, covers the next 5 years and has been researched, written, edited and consulted upon with the full support of the Homelessness Focus Group. Members of the group represent a broad cross-section of stakeholder organisations dealing directly with the incidence and consequences of homelessness. The HFG reports back to the LSP's Housing Partnership on the outcomes of its work.

Copies of the Strategy are available on the city council web site at http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/media/Homelessness_Strategy_2008.pdf

For the current strategy it was recognised through the Focus Group that the work programme should cover the many aspects of homelessness. Therefore, the published Strategy has a focus on households for whom local authority has no statutory responsibility to provide accommodation.

There are 3 parts to the strategy; the first describing homelessness in the city and how it manifests itself; the second provides depth to how preventative work set around a number of objectives and specific priorities will address the key issues, and finally the third section confirms the financial resources currently applied to addressing homelessness as well as re-affirming the importance of partnership working to achieve the outcomes that the Strategy demands.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

As stated above, the strategy contains a number of objectives that will guide the work of agencies working on homelessness issues in Portsmouth. These objectives are:

- Improving the range of options available to people in housing need
- Developing a prevention centred approach focussing on support for those most at risk of homelessness
- Addressing the underlying causes of homelessness amongst young people

The strategy also includes plans to reduce the use of temporary accommodation to assist homeless households by 2010 as required by central government.

These objectives are the basis of the homelessness strategy from which the detailed Action Plan is being developed. A copy of the draft plan is attached at Appendix 1.

5. DELIVERING THE OBJECTIVES

To be successful in tackling any of the issues raised in the Homelessness Strategy it is essential that the objectives and priorities are shared amongst a wide range of individuals and organisations. So, for example, the work of housing associations; other statutory agencies; organisations providing advice; and those providing support will be crucial to the success of the strategy.

The Strategy will engage with at least five of the ambitions set out in the Local Strategic Partnership's "Vision for Portsmouth" as follows:-

- Develop Portsmouth as a city of innovation and enterprise, with a strong economy and employment opportunities for all.
- Make Portsmouth a city where everyone feels safe and is safe.
- Develop affordable, quality housing where people want to live.
- Encourage and enable healthy choices for all and provide appropriate access to health care and support
- Protect and support our more vulnerable residents by shaping public services to meet their needs

In addition to the above, it is widely recognised that homelessness and the threat of homelessness can harm people's educational opportunities and achievement. The success of this strategy is therefore important in improving people's opportunity and achievement in education, skills and lifelong learning which is another of the Local Strategic Partnership's aspirations.

The LSP's Housing Partnership will continue to take a strong interest in the outcomes from this Strategy and the support from the Partnership's Homelessness Focus Group to lead on the delivery of this work is extremely important especially as it has been involved from inception. As the group has representation from the private, voluntary and statutory sectors advice agencies and support providers it is ideally placed to further develop the Action Plan for the delivery of the strategy and to monitor its implementation.

In taking forward the Action Plan the Homelessness Focus Group has undertaken to constantly review its core membership and those with whom it links in order that the full range of services are available to homeless people in need.

The Cabinet Member is invited to recognise this partnership support for the city council's Homelessness Strategy and to endorse their preparation and development of the necessary Action Plan.

Progress on the Action Plan will be reported to the Cabinet on a **yearly** basis.

6. CITY SOLICITOR'S COMMENTS AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The City Solicitor is satisfied that it is within the Council's powers to approve the recommendations as set out.

An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required as this was undertaken for the Homelessness Strategy that was approved by the Housing Executive on 18 March 2008. A copy is available on request.

7. SIGNING OFF THE REPORT

Signed.....
Alan Cufley Head of Community Housing

Dated.....

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved / approved as amended / deferred / rejected by the Cabinet member for Housing

Signed.....
Councillor Steve Wylie, Cabinet Member - Housing

Dated