



Report of the Landlord Services Manager

Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee - 22 August 2018

Draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan

Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To present the Committee with the draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.• To provide the Committee with the opportunity to comment and influence the draft aim, key principles, objectives and actions.
Policy Framework:	Local Housing Strategy 2015-2020.
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) Members consider the draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan and provide their comments.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a responsibility on all local authorities to produce a homelessness strategy by the end of 2018 to set out how the Council plans to tackle homelessness in its area over a four year period. The strategy must have a detailed action plan to address gaps in service provision and must include plans for:
- The prevention of homelessness
 - Securing accommodation for people who are homeless or are threatened with homelessness
 - Provision of support for people who are homeless or are threatened with homelessness

- 1.2 The Homelessness Strategy has a clear link with the Council's poverty agenda and Swansea's Wellbeing Strategy as it has a significant role in contributing to the achievement of the objectives to ensure that children have the best start in life and building stronger communities through the early intervention and prevention of homelessness.
- 1.3 It also supports the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as the Act requires public bodies to carry out their functions in a sustainable way which improves the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of an area. Homelessness Prevention is a Well-being of Future Generations national indicator therefore is a key contributor to the Welsh Government's national goals. The five ways of working set out in the Act will be incorporated into the key principles of the Homelessness Strategy (see paragraph 4.2) these are:
- Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse
 - Addressing long-term challenges
 - Working in partnership with others
 - Avoiding conflicts between public body objectives
 - Involving people

2. Homelessness Review

- 2.1 The strategy must be developed as a result of a review of homelessness in the area, which requires analysis of:
- a) The levels and likely future levels of homelessness
 - b) The activities carried out to:
 - Prevent homelessness
 - Ensure suitable accommodation is available
 - Ensure that satisfactory support is available
 - c) The resources available to carry out the above
- 2.2 The key findings from the Homelessness Review are included in the strategy.

3. Structure of the Strategy

- 3.1 The strategy is attached at appendix A. it is structured around the following sections:
- Purpose of the strategy
 - Aims and objectives
 - Key principles
 - National and local strategic context
 - How homelessness services are delivered in Swansea and key achievements
 - The Homelessness Review
 - Future levels of homelessness
 - Key priorities
 - The way forward
 - Monitoring, evaluation and review
 - Equalities

4. Draft strategic aim, key principles and objectives of the strategy

4.1 *Draft strategic aim*

The aim of Swansea's Homelessness Strategy is to ensure every person has access to good quality advice, accommodation and support at the earliest possible opportunity in order to prevent homelessness.

4.2 *Key principles*

In order to successfully deliver this Strategy we will:

- Safeguard people from harm.
- Ensure equality of access to services and promote social inclusion and community cohesion.
- Maximise the resources available to deal with homelessness.
- Continue to encourage and promote local partnership and regional working, where appropriate, in order to make the best use of resources.
- Work in line with the five ways of working set out in the Future Generations Wellbeing Act:
 - *Prevention – preventing problems occurring or getting worse*
 - *Long term – balancing short-term needs with addressing long term needs*
 - *Integration – avoiding conflict between public body objectives*
 - *Collaboration – working in partnership with others*
 - *Involvement – involving people*

4.3 *Draft Objectives*

The following draft objectives have been developed:

- Objective 1: Ensuring service users are at the centre of service delivery.
- Objective 2: Prioritising early intervention and prevention of homelessness.
- Objective 3: Ensuring suitable accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless.
- Objective 4: Ensuring appropriate support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
- Objective 5: Providing robust responses to support rough sleepers and end the need for individuals to sleep rough.

4.4 *Action plan*

A detailed series of actions to achieve the objectives has been developed and the full action plan is attached at appendix B.

4.5 The actions have been developed with reference to the following key pieces of evidence:

- Findings from the Homelessness Review
- Consultation with providers of homelessness, support and housing services
- Consultation with service users
- Consultation with other Council services such as Supporting People, Domestic Abuse Services, Poverty and Prevention

- Welsh Government Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales
- Welsh Government Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2018-20
- Wales Audit Office report “How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness”

5. Next steps

5.1 A formal public consultation exercise is scheduled to take place during September. It will comprise of the following elements:

- A questionnaire will be available on-line and hard copies for:
 - Support and accommodation providers
 - Partners
 - Service users. This will be promoted by members of the Supporting People and Homelessness Forum and providers will be asked to encourage and assist service users to complete the questionnaire. Council officers will also offer to meet with any organisations and their service users if they wish to discuss any aspects of the strategy and action plan in more detail.
- Specific stakeholders will be contacted directly and asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on the strategy, for example: Health Board, Housing Associations, BME representative groups, support and accommodation providers, key 3rd sector partners such as Shelter, Crisis, CAB, Prison Service, Probation, other local authority services such as Education, Social Services, Poverty and Prevention.
- Drop in sessions will be arranged to provide an option for face-to-face discussions.

5.2 Following the formal consultation process, the draft strategy and action plan will be considered by Cabinet. Scrutiny have requested to carry out pre-decision scrutiny on the draft strategy and action plan so appropriate arrangements will be made to facilitate this.

5.3 The final strategy and action plan will be reported to Council for information on 20th December and the strategy will be implemented on 21st December.

6. Equality and Engagement Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

6.2 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening form has been completed and it has identified that a full EIA is required. This process has commenced and will be completed once the final strategy is ready for consultation.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications for this report. However, there are financial implications associated with the delivery of the strategy and the action plan. The Welsh Government provided Transitional Funding to local authorities in recognition of the increased resources required to meet the new duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It has committed to providing additional funding for the prevention of homelessness for 2018/19 and 2019/20. This money is essential to the Council's achievement of the aims, objectives and actions set out in the strategy and to sustain high levels of homelessness prevention work.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a responsibility on all local authorities to produce a homelessness strategy by the end of 2018 (i.e. 31st December) to set out how the Council plans to tackle homelessness in its area over a four year period.

8.2 The Act replaces Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, the Homeless Persons (Priority Need) (Wales) Order 2001, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006.

8.3 The legislation has changed the law on homelessness in Wales and provides a different framework for homelessness in the rest of the United Kingdom. For example, whilst local authorities in England and Northern Ireland are encouraged to focus on preventing homelessness where possible, their duties in respect of homelessness are not framed around prevention as the primary driver.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices:

Appendix A	Draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022
Appendix B	Draft Action Plan