



Report of the Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy

Cabinet – 15 November 2018

Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022

Purpose:	To seek Members approval for the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018 - 2022, which has taken into account feedback from the consultation.
Policy Framework:	Local Housing Strategy (2015 -2020).
Consultation:	Finance, Legal, Access to Services. Public consultation exercise between 1 st September 2018 and 30 th September 2018.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that Cabinet: 1) Note the consultation responses. 2) Approve the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan for implementation by 31 December 2018.
Report Authors:	Rosie Jackson / Steve Porter
Finance Officer:	Aimee Dyer
Legal Officer:	Lyndsey Thomas
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Background

- 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 Wellbeing 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. Strategic Aim, Key Principles and Objectives of the Strategy

4.1 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.
- Uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4.3 Objectives

The following 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. 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 Consultation Feedback and Analysis

5.1 Stage One Consultation

Consultation for the Homelessness Strategy took place in two stages. The first stage was a key part of the Homelessness Review and involved extensive consultation with stakeholders during 2017. It included the following:

- *Service users* – via a survey distributed by service providers, which was also available on-line (131 responses received). In order to ensure that the survey was accessible, support and housing providers were asked to support and encourage their service users to complete the survey and support and assistance was also offered by council officers on request.
- *Four service user focus groups* – Service users from a range of Wallich Services; Service users from Crisis; Young People engaged with homelessness and support services; and women currently receiving support from Women’s Aid and BAWSO (Black Association of Women Stepping Out).

In order to ensure that the focus groups were accessible an open offer was made to all members of the Supporting People and Homelessness Forum (which consists of all support and housing providers along with key homelessness organisations) to hold focus groups with their service users.

- *Service Providers* – via a survey and prioritisation exercise with the Supporting People and Homelessness Forum.
An on-line survey was undertaken with providers of homelessness, support and advice services during March 2017 to gather their views on the issues and priorities that should be addressed by Swansea’s Homelessness Strategy. 28 responses were received.
- *The general public* – via an on-line survey (116 responses received)

A summary of the stage 1 consultation findings is included in the strategy document and strongly influenced the development of the objectives and action plan.

5.2 Stage 2 Consultation

The second stage was the formal consultation process on the draft Strategy and Action Plan. This took place between 1st September and 30th September 2018, and involved the following elements:

- *Survey* – an on-line survey (hard copies were also available) was open to all stakeholders (24 responses received). The survey was widely promoted with stakeholders.
- *Email responses* – a number of stakeholders chose to respond via email, including Shelter and Crisis.
- *Drop in sessions* - Two drop in sessions were held during September, which were open to the public and partner organisations.
- *Scrutiny*
 - i) A Scrutiny Working Group was held during August 2018 to look at the Homelessness Service.
 - ii) A special meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee was held on 1st October in order to feed directly into the consultation process.
- Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee – the Committee considered the development of the Strategy and Action plan in March and August 2018 and were supportive of the proposals.

5.3 Summary

Overall, the consultation responses to the Strategy and Action Plan have been positive. There is general agreement to the Council's proposals and vision for the delivery and improvement of Homelessness Services over the next four years. A number of suggestions have been made to create some additional actions and modify a small number of the draft actions, and where possible these suggestions have been incorporated into the final documents. An additional key principle has also been included to confirm commitment to uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this has also been strengthened by an additional action as part of the development of a Homelessness Charter to develop a separate charter for children and young people.

A summary of the Stage 2 consultation responses is attached at appendix C, along with the Council's response to the comments and details of any changes made to the Strategy and Action Plan as a result.

5.4 Results from the Consultation Survey

The survey provided the opportunity for people to have their say on the aims, objectives, key principles and areas for development. There was also the opportunity to provide further comments on each section of the

Strategy. The full results from the survey can be found in appendix C. However the summary of the results were as follows;

- 90% felt that the Strategy is easy to read
- 89% felt that the objectives are clear
- 74% felt that the key priorities of the Strategy are clear.

6. Equality and Engagement Implications

6.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of its 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.

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

6.3 An EIA screening form was completed in March 2018 and identified that a full EIA was required. This has been completed and is attached at appendix D.

6.4 The EIA indicated that the Strategy will have a positive effect on protected groups. No negative impacts were identified. However, whilst the Homelessness Service collects the demographic and equalities information that is required by the Welsh Government the EIA has identified that this does not necessarily cover all relevant protected groups. Therefore, an action has been included in the Action Plan to review Housing Options equalities monitoring systems, which will include carrying out consultation with equalities representative groups regarding best use of equalities monitoring data.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 The legislation has changed the law on homelessness in Wales and provides a different framework for homelessness to 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.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The Strategy and Action Plan will be delivered through existing Homelessness and Supporting People budgets.

Appendices

Appendix A – Homelessness Strategy

Appendix B – Action Plan

Appendix C – Consultation analysis and survey results

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment