

HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY 2008 - 2013

Agenda Item

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Background Papers:- Draft Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008 - 2013
Financial Implications: -Potential future financial implications are highlighted in the Strategy Action Plan.
Equalities Implications: - The actions identified in the Strategy Action Plan will be subject to an equality impact assessment.
Legal Implications: -The Homelessness Act 2002 imposes a statutory duty on all local authorities to publish a new strategy every five years.
Options: - There are various actions suggested in the Strategy Action Plan.
Risks: - If our priorities and actions are not correctly identified with an appropriate plan of action, we would risk homelessness increasing.

Please Note: The Draft Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008 – 2013 can be downloaded from the Council's web site using the following link:-

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/9570B90E-3B59-49E6-AC22-38C629128070/0/Reviewandstrategyfinaldraftapril08.pdf>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY The Council produced the first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003. The strategy set out the Council's key priorities for preventing and tackling homelessness for a five-year period.

The Strategy has supported the development of services that help to prevent homelessness by ensuring that good advice, co-ordinated working and accessible, appropriate housing is available to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. There is still more work to do.

The existing strategy is due to expire this year. The Council has conducted a further review to identify any outstanding areas and set new strategic priorities for the next five-year period.

The new strategy will take the form of an action plan, which will be reviewed on an annual basis. It is believed that this approach will ensure that our attention will be concentrated on providing deliverable and measurable targets.

The Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008 – 2013 are currently in a draft format for consultation purposes. Following the end of the 12-week consultation period, the document will be updated, as required. This report and presentation to the Local Committees forms part of the overall consultation process. The final version will be considered by the Cabinet on 7th July 2008.

DECISION: Members are requested to consider the Homelessness Review and Strategy Action Plan and comment as part of the consultation process.
Have we got the priorities and actions right?
Have we missed anything out?

HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND DRAFT STRATEGY 2008 -2013

Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013

A Summary of the New Strategic Aims for the Next Five Years

Priority 1 Joint Working and Partnerships

The Council has good links with all its key partners. Further work has been identified to build on these existing links and to facilitate better working practices. This work includes the development of service protocols and joint training.

Priority 2 Prevention of Homelessness

In terms of homelessness, a renewed focus on developing further preventative measures is needed to assist any person who is at risk of becoming homeless.

As part of the development of the strategy, the Council intends to take account of good practice guidance and examples. Through the strategy, the Council aims to ensure that its prevention solutions provide effective and sound solutions, and the systems do not act as a mechanism for gate keeping resources.

Priority 3 Support for Vulnerable People

The strategy aims to review and improve the support services for vulnerable people. This includes reviewing the existing floating support service and advice services.

From the review, it has been identified that there is a need to create more movement within supported housing schemes. It is proposed that the schemes will be given a set number of nominations each year specifically for residents who are ready to move into permanent accommodation.

Priority 4 Provision of Accommodation

A key council priority over the next four years is to develop more affordable housing in the district.

Another key area is to continue to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and maintain the Council's record for not using bed and breakfast accommodation.

The strategy includes further work with the private rented sector. The actions include working with private landlords and Colne Housing Society (Private Sector Leasing Scheme) to increase the access to private sector accommodation.

Priority 5 Invest to Save

This strategic aim focuses on making the best use of available financial and staff resources. This will include pooling existing budgets as one prevention fund, to allow greater flexibility when preventing homelessness.

Priority 6 Administering Homelessness More Effectively

The strategy aims to ensure that standards and performance are monitored and improved.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, the Council intends to review the service, so as to identify any areas for improvement. This will include the introduction of quality assessments on casework, a formal audit of the service and looking at examples of good working practices from Councils that are Homeless Regional Champions.

There is also a commitment to developing customer involvement to help shape the service.