

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 19 December 2018
Report Subject	Regional Homeless Strategy and Local Action Plan
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Assets)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced new homeless legislation in April 2015. Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act places a statutory duty on each Council in Wales to carry out a homelessness review and formulate a homelessness strategy.

North Wales Councils agreed to develop a regional strategy and a high level action plan, with local action plans informed by independent reviews in each county. The regional approach will enable sharing of best practice; developing a better understanding of the issues; and promote collaborative working where possible.

The homeless strategy objectives are to prevent homelessness and ensure suitable accommodation and satisfactory support is available for those who are homeless.

The region has signed up to the common themes of People, Homes and Services. Within those themes the local review and action plan in Flintshire has identified priority actions to tackle and prevent homelessness in the County.

The key areas identified include youth homelessness; prison leavers, addressing complex needs; developing housing first approaches; improving access to accommodation; mitigating welfare reforms; and improved partnerships with health and social care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny Committee support the North Wales Regional Homelessness Strategy and high level action plan.
2	That Scrutiny Committee support the priority actions highlighted within the Flintshire Homelessness Local Action plan detailed at paragraphs 1.09 to 1.14 of this report.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN
	Background
1.01	The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 reflects the Welsh Government commitment to reinforce the prevention of homelessness as set out in its Ten Year Homelessness Plan. The legislation, introduced by the Act on the 27 th April 2015, represents the most fundamental change to homelessness legislation since the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act was introduced in 1977.
1.02	The legislation has introduced an explicit focus upon the prevention of problems rather than simply processing people through crises and, if implemented effectively, aims to result in fewer households experiencing the trauma of homelessness.
1.03	Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on each Council in Wales to carry out a homelessness review and formulate a homelessness strategy.
1.04	A homelessness strategy, under section 50 of the Act, is a strategy for achieving the following objectives in the local housing authority's area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevention of homelessness• That suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless• That satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
	Regional Homelessness Strategy Development
1.05	In June 2017, the Heads of Housing of the six North Wales local authorities, together with the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru, undertook a commitment to work together to develop a regional homelessness strategy.
1.06	The core strategic commitment from the six local authorities in North Wales is to create a culture of improved and effective collaboration across the region, in terms of addressing the specific issues causing homelessness.
1.07	The aim of this strategy is to address the root causes of homelessness,

	whether that be rough sleeping, reducing the numbers on the housing waiting list, reducing the numbers of sofa surfers, and any other type of homelessness, with the ultimate goal of ending it altogether in North Wales.
1.08	<p>That agenda will be cemented into the strategic approach of each authority by the adoption of the Regional Homelessness Strategy. The common themes within the strategy are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People (youth homelessness, rough sleepers, complex needs and prison leavers) • Homes (housing first, improved access to accommodation, temporary accommodation) • Services (prevention, mitigation of welfare reform, health)
	Flintshire Local Homelessness Action Plan
1.09	Each authority has developed its own local action plan based on the themes within the regional strategy but which reflect local priorities. The independent homeless review in Flintshire included analysis of past, current and future levels of homelessness and an audit of current services and level of resources available. The issues and priorities for tackling and preventing homelessness highlighted within the local review have been fed into the local action plan (see appendix 2) which fits within the regional overarching themes.
1.10	The local action plan will influence the targeting of homeless prevention funding and the development of the Supporting People Commissioning Plan. It will also inform the priorities to be reflected in housing and homeless service plans.
1.11	A summary of the priorities within the Local Action Plan under the three key themes are as follows:-
1.12	<p><u>People</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End youth homelessness by developing a multi-agency approach to homeless prevention for young people; develop specialist provision for young people who are homeless. • Prevent rough sleeping by better understanding the potential for it in Flintshire and establish a better understanding of the services required. • Managing complex needs by identifying the challenges and gaps in current provision; delivering services in psychologically informed environments • Ensuring suitable accommodation and support for prison leavers through a more co-ordinated approach for people leaving custody; continued commitment to the Prisoner Resettlement Post and develop a reciprocal agreement across the region.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the Armed Forces Covenant steering group and continue to evaluate whether housing and homeless policies and approaches support the commitments within the Armed Forces Covenant.
1.13	<p><u>Homes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop pilot projects to test housing first principles and share best practice across the region. Improve access to accommodation by improving access to the private rented sector; ensure new build social housing contributes to meeting the demands for housing homeless people; develop tenancy support for landlords and mediation to sustain tenancies. Explore innovative solutions to reduce the cost of temporary accommodation; undertake a review of existing temporary accommodation linked to demand.
1.14	<p><u>Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the work of the supporting people programme and ensure there is a pathway of services to meet a range of needs; prevent evictions from social housing through the pilot support project, improved pre-tenancy work and a two week rent campaign in 2019; consider non eviction or exclusion policies in certain settings. Develop a collaborative approach to reducing the impact of welfare reform on working age claimants affected by Universal Credit. Develop closer working relationships with Health and Social Services including protocols for flexible funding, mental health and hospital discharge.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The demand on the homeless service is growing and successful prevention is important to mitigate the risks of increased interim and temporary accommodation costs.</p> <p>Successful implementation of the strategy and action plan will rely heavily on Supporting People Programme Grant funding. Welsh Government has announced the phased transition to a housing support grant including Supporting People, Homeless Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales funding.</p> <p>The Supporting People Grant has been protected from any reductions in 2019/20. The commissioning plan which will be signed off by Cabinet in the spring will demonstrate how Supporting People funds will be targeted to contribute and support the delivery of the Flintshire Homelessness Action Plan.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Regional Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan has been out to consultation across North Wales through each Local Authority, including in Flintshire through a Stakeholder event held in September 2018. Feedback on the strategy were sought through an online Survey with the responses received being positive to the approach and the key priorities.
3.02	The Local Action Plan was consulted upon at the same Stakeholder event and, through workshop discussions, the priorities were identified which ultimately have informed the development of the final plan.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Regional Homelessness Strategy

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Contact Officer: Katie Clubb (Customer Support Manager) Telephone: 01352 703518 E-mail: katie.clubb@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Welsh Government Ten Year Homelessness Plan – This ten year plan describes how homelessness in Wales will be tackled between 2009 - 2019. This Ten Year Plan sets out some guiding principles for the development and delivery of homelessness services.</p> <p>Psychologically Informed Environment – delivering services that take into account the psychological makeup (the thinking, emotions, personalities and past experience) of its service users in the way that it operates.</p>