

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 11TH MAY, 2018

SUBJECT : HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Purpose:

To outline the approach with regard to the development of a Homelessness Strategy.

To consider and comment on the following issues:

To recommend to Executive Board:

- To approve the approach and consultation plan outlined.
- To confirm our intention to develop opportunities to work on a regional basis.

REASONS:

- Each local authority in Wales will be required to produce a homelessness strategy by December 2018.
- The development of the strategy will require a comprehensive approach in engaging and consulting with all key stakeholders. This will involve service users, local members and internal and external partners.
- Preliminary discussions have taken place with Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Powys to work on a regional basis. This will offer opportunities in terms of a potential regional approach in the development of the strategy, particularly in defining some key principles in the approach to homelessness that will inform local action plans.
- Developing a regional approach will be more advantageous because we could share the tasks involved between us and pool our knowledge and skills.

To be referred to the Executive Board/Council for decision:

Exec Board Decision Required - **Yes** - 4th June, 2018

Council Decision Required - **No**

Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder:

Cllr. Linda Evans(Housing Portfolio Holder)

Directorate Communities Name of Head of Service: Jonathan Morgan Report Author: Jonathan Willis	Designations: Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities. Advice and Tenancy Support Manager	Tel Nos. 01267 228960 01554 899232 E Mail Addresses: jmorgan@carmarthenshire.gov.uk jnwillis@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE: 11TH MAY, 2018

SUBJECT:
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline the approach with regard to the development of a Homelessness Strategy.

Context

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced new responsibilities on local authorities to prevent homelessness. In Carmarthenshire we undertook a service review prior to the new legislation coming into force. Key changes involved the re-alignment of our Housing Options Service which involved creating a single point of contact for service users seeking housing advice. The team pooled a range of expertise and the team now has a range of specialist advisors and partners whose aim it is to tackle the root cause of any particular housing problem presented.

Partnership working has been key to meeting these new duties and providing a better service. Key partners who are co-located with our housing teams are:

- The Wallich who provide mediation services.
- Shelter, who provide money advice and general advocacy.
- Care and Repair who support older people install adaptations and help with other home improvements.
- Pobl who provide financial support to access the private rented sector.

The changes have had a significant effect on the number of people who are defined as homeless under the Act. In 2013 there were in excess of 500 households defined as homeless compared to 135 in 2016.

What do we need to do next?

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also requires local authorities to regularly review their homelessness services. Welsh Government produced guidance last year and confirmed that local authorities should formulate homelessness strategies by December 2018. Once a strategy is produced there is a requirement to review its content at least every four years.

The main elements of a homeless strategy should relate to how local authorities:

- Prevent homelessness.
- Secure accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- Provide support to those homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Strategic approaches should reflect Welsh Government's Ten Year Homeless Plan which emphasises prevention, placing the service users at the centre of service delivery and making the best use of resources.

Welsh Government have also suggested that local authorities may wish to consider developing a regional approach. With this in mind, officers have had preliminary meetings with colleagues from Powys, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. There are clear advantages of adopting a regional or sub-regional approach. These include:

- There are many similarities between the issues faced by local authorities which could be addressed together;
- Many third sector organisations work across authority boundaries so there could be a joint approach;
- Research and development work can be shared; and
- There is a broader pool of expertise.

In terms of managing the approach it is proposed that a set of key principles will be developed regionally, based on the review of data and the stakeholder engagement process. These principles will then underpin our local action plans.

How will we approach it?

In terms of developing the strategy it is proposed that the process will involve the following steps:

1. Review of data and information

This will essentially be a desk top exercise which will involve an analysis of a range of homeless statistics such as the numbers of homeless, cases prevented and re-housed, trends and causes. Other relevant information about housing supply and demand, and the resources dedicated to prevention, will also be considered.

2. Stakeholder engagement

This will be done by gathering feedback locally and regionally from stakeholder events and surveys. A range of service users and local members will be involved with the aim of gathering their views, needs and experiences. Similarly there will be a range of internal and external partners who need to be involved such as third sector organisations, teams providing services to children, care leavers, older people and those with mental health problems.

Appendix 1 outlines the intended approach.

3. Strategy Development and Statement of Principles

This is likely to involve the collation of key findings and statement of broader principles which will be applicable across the region. For example, we may wish to place more emphasis on much earlier prevention of homelessness, with greater involvement of other services, such as Health and Education, and third sector organisations. We may also wish to broaden the

range of housing solutions for groups who are more likely to become homeless, such as young, single people.

4. Development of Local Action Plans

This will involve individual actions applicable to each local authority. For example, education campaigns amongst young people who are at risk of homelessness; ensuring access to mental health services for people who are at risk of homelessness; reducing the time spent in temporary accommodation, particularly high-cost supported housing projects, by faster move-on into ordinary housing.

5. Formal Public Consultation on Draft Strategy and Action Plan

A report on the draft Strategy and Action Plan will be prepared for consultation

To recommend to Executive Board:

- To approve the approach and consultation plan with regard to the development of a homeless strategy.
- To confirm our intention to develop opportunities to work on a regional basis.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	NO – Attached - Appendix 1 Homelessness Strategy -Consultation and stakeholder engagement
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Jonathan Morgan

Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

This report sets out a proposal in relation to the development of a new homeless strategy. The homeless strategy will need to link with a range of other service strategies and Future Generations five ways of working.

2. Legal

Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to carry out a homeless review and formulate a homeless strategy.

The Welsh Government Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness Chapter 5 sets out how local authorities plan homeless services.

4. Finance

Any review of homelessness services will need to consider if there are sufficient resources to be able to meet our statutory duties. This will be fully considered as part of the new strategy development.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Jonathan Morgan

Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities

1. Local Member(s)

Local Members will be involved in stakeholders' activities/events and will be consulted as part of the political process when the new strategy document has been produced.

2. Community / Town Council

Community and Town Councils be involved as part of the stakeholder activities/events.

3. Relevant Partners

Relevant partners will be involved in stakeholders' activities/events and will have the opportunity to comment on the new strategy document.

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Relevant staff will be fully involved throughout the process

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Wels Government Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness		Welsh Government Website