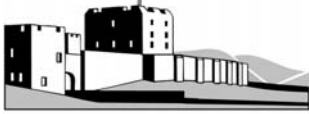


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COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Date of Meeting: 17th July 2008

Title: Homelessness Strategy

Report of: Director of Development Services

Report reference: DS.85/08

Summary:

This report presents Members of the Community Overview and Scrutiny committee with the report that went to Executive on 30th June 2008 that outlined to Members of the Executive the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

Input from this committee regarding the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013.

Recommendations:

That the attached report that went to the Executive on the 30th June 2008 be considered and comments forwarded to the Executive.

C Elliot

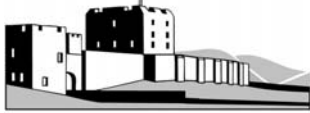
Director of Development Services

Contact Officer: Simon Taylor

Ext: 7327

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

Executive Report DS.76/08



REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: Health and Communities

Date of Meeting: 30 June 2008

Public

Key Decision: Yes

Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes

Inside Policy Framework

Title: Homelessness Strategy

Report of: Director of Development Services

Report reference: DS. 76/08

Summary:

The Council must carry out a homelessness review and submit a new homelessness strategy to the Government for the period from 2008 – 2013, by 31 July 2008.

The draft strategy was sent out for wide consultation with a range of agencies and organisations within Carlisle and beyond and any feedback and comment received has been incorporated in the attached Homelessness Strategy document.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to consider and comment on the attached Homelessness Strategy document.

C Elliot

Director of Development Services

Contact Officer: Rob Stephenson

Ext: 7217

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 The Government requires each local authority to carry out a review of homelessness and devise a new homelessness strategy every 5 years. The Council has to submit its new homelessness strategy by 31 July 2008 covering the period from 2008 –2013.

2.0 CONSULTATION

2.1 Consultation to Date

The draft strategy was sent to all housing agencies including RSLs, statutory bodies and other voluntary agencies and relevant organisations in Carlisle in March 2008 and responses invited by 2 May 2008. There were three responses, one internal and two external and those comments have been included within the revised strategy document.

2.2 Consultation Proposed

Consultation on this report will be through the authority's formal process including Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are invited to consider and comment on the attached Homelessness Strategy document.

4.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To enable the Council to agree its new homelessness strategy and submit it to the Government.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources – The strategy has been prepared within existing resources and there are no additional resources required to implement the strategy beyond those already identified and funded.

- Financial – The costs of this strategy can be met from within existing revenue and capital budgets set for 2008/09 to 2010/11 included in the Council's February 2008 Budget Resolution.
- Legal – This strategy fulfils the Council's obligation under the Homelessness Act 2002 to carry out a homelessness review and have in place a homelessness strategy.
- Corporate – the homelessness strategy links to and supports corporate objectives.
- Risk Management – the implementation of the strategy will enhance the Council's reputation and reduce risks of funding reductions by demonstrating a commitment to tackling homelessness in line with government policy priorities.
- Equality and Disability – the strategy will help address equality and disability issues.
- Environmental – not applicable.
- Crime and Disorder – the homelessness strategy will enhance and support crime and disorder activities and programmes.
- Impact on Customers – the homelessness strategy will impact significantly on homeless and vulnerable customers.

C Elliot

Director of Development Services

Contact Officer: Rob Stephenson

Ext: 7217

Carlisle Homelessness Strategy 2008 -13

Section 1 - Introduction

Section 2 - Background

Section 3 - Achievements To Date

Section 4 - Review Of Homelessness In Carlisle

Section 5 - Aims Of Homelessness Strategy

Section 6 - 3 Key Objectives:

- **Reduce temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010**
- **Stop placing 16/17 year olds in B and B by 2010**
- **Maintain reductions in and prevent rough sleeping**

Section 7 - Supply Of Affordable Housing

Section 8 - Other Relevant Strategies

Section 9 - Review And Monitoring Arrangements

1-Introduction

Carlisle City Council carried out its first review of homelessness in 2003 following its stock transfer. Since that time there have been significant changes in the housing and homelessness situation, not only in Carlisle but in the country as a whole. The Council's homelessness services have changed in that time in response to needs, to government policy and expectations and to match the Council's own aspirations in meeting housing and social needs in Carlisle.

Homelessness is an increasing concern reflecting not only severe shortages in affordable housing supply but also difficult economic and social changes which affect people's life chances and futures. The Council is committed, working with partners who have already made, and continue to make, significant contributions, to tackling homelessness and helping the wide range of people from all backgrounds and ages who face, or are experiencing the prospect of not having their own home.

2-Background

Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to:

1. Have a homelessness strategy which:

- seeks to prevent people becoming homeless
- ensures there is enough accommodation in the area for people who might become, or are homeless
- ensures people who might be, or are homeless, have support to stop them being homeless or becoming homeless again.

2. Carry out a review of homelessness in the area

- The Council must consult with other relevant agencies in carrying out the review and preparing our strategy.

Homelessness review 2003 and Housing Strategy 2005

Following the transfer of its stock in 2002 the Council carried out a review of homelessness and subsequently a housing needs analysis. These contributed to the 2003 Cumbria Homelessness Strategy and helped, through consultation with the Housing Strategy Groups set up by the Council, to inform the Council's Housing Strategy for 2005 – 2010.

As part of the Housing Strategy we devised a Homelessness and Hostel Action Plan, to be implemented in two phases. Phase 1 was completed in 2007 and Phase 2, incorporating any actions still outstanding from the first phase is being progressed.

3-Achievements to Date

The Council itself and through working with partner agencies, has achieved the following actions identified in the Homelessness and Hostels action plan:

- Introduced a mediation scheme for young people threatened with homelessness;
- Set up a homelessness prevention fund;
- Increased home visits to prevent or reduce parental exclusions;
- Introduced an effective rent deposit guarantee scheme to help people access private sector accommodation;
- Increased the use of private sector housing for housing homeless people;
- Established through strategy review groups regular consultation and input into policy development for homeless and other vulnerable people;
- Increased with assistance and funding from Supporting People, services to support people in our women and families hostel;
- Developed to the point of full implementation, a protocol for 16-17 year olds including joint assessment with Children's Services, Connexions, Youth Offending Service and other agencies;
- Set up, as a pilot initially, a now successful Youth Housing Panel to encourage and implement joint working to focus on meeting the needs of each vulnerable young person with housing and support needs;
- Established the Carlisle Homelessness Improvement Partnership (CHIP) with the City Council, RSLs, voluntary and statutory agencies working together to develop new services for homeless and vulnerable people in Carlisle;

- Made a successful bid to the CLG for capital funding under the Places of Change programme to develop a new Centre of Excellence including a new women's and families hostel;
- Reviewed our homelessness operations to focus on prevention and options advice including a no appointments system for anyone with housing or homelessness problems;
- Worked with RSL Partners to develop new affordable housing and improve access to existing social housing for vulnerable homeless households;
- Supported and funded a feasibility study for a Foyer for young people in Carlisle in partnership with the YMCA, and made a bid to the CLG for funding under the Places of Change programme; and
- Increased significantly the number of people the Council assists by preventing them becoming homeless in the first place.

4-Review of Homelessness in Carlisle

There has been an ongoing review of homelessness in Carlisle since the initial review in 2003 and prior to the establishment of our updated Housing Strategy for 2010 – 2012.

The main features arising from our homelessness review and experiences over the past 5 years, which form the context for our new strategy are:

1 Levels of homelessness/trends –

The number of homelessness applications rose from 200 in 2002/3 to 531 in 2005/6. In 2006/7 the number of homelessness cases fell to 360.

The number of advice and assistance cases where we sought to prevent homelessness rose in the same period from 56 cases in 2004/5 to 858 cases in 2006/7. These changes are substantially attributable to an approach which emphasises looking at people's housing options and giving advice, assistance and practical help to stop them becoming homeless in the first place.

In terms of the circumstances of people becoming homeless:

- 77% of cases involved households where there were dependent children or a woman was pregnant.
- 6% were vulnerable young people including care leavers.
- 7% were people with mental illness or a learning disability.

There is a relatively insignificant level of rough sleeping in the City but it does exist, usually intermittent and short term and usually the people affected have complex needs, including:

- drug and/or alcohol issues;
- mental health problems;
- an offending background; or
- behavioural issues leading to continuing social exclusion and an inability to access sustainable permanent housing.

The Council has 60 bedspaces available for temporary accommodation and these are occupied between 80% and 90% of the nights available. The Council does use B and B accommodation, but only in emergencies and for short periods when our own hostel accommodation is full or inaccessible.

2 Causes of homelessness – the main causes of homelessness in Carlisle are:

- loss of home following a relationship breakdown between adult partners, sometimes involving domestic violence;
- relationship breakdown involving young people losing accommodation with their family, carers or friends;
- loss of rented accommodation when tenancy ends; and
- increasingly mortgage arrears leading to repossession.

A substantial proportion of homeless people are economically excluded and we aim to address this by working with training and employment agencies and employers to create opportunities for homeless people to access jobs

2 Housing availability – there is a growing shortfall of affordable housing in the City

The supply of such housing is not being increased at a sufficient rate to cope with rented stock losses, the growth in households, increasingly difficult economic outlook and the housing market's inability to respond to the needs of the homeless and vulnerable. The availability and supply of rented housing, particularly social housing hits the vulnerable and homeless most. Real increases in housing costs through price rises and interest rate increases, lack of supply of rented housing and the worsening earnings to prices ratio for buying a home means we anticipate continuing pressures and demand for homelessness services. This will result in an ongoing need for temporary and permanent accommodation in the foreseeable future.

3 Vulnerable people/complex needs - in many cases homelessness is more than just not having a home

There is a growing recognition that there are a number of people with complex needs who can and do become homeless or whose background and circumstances can mean it is difficult for them to avoid repeat homelessness. These complex needs include mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse issues, an offending history, domestic violence, learning difficulties, unemployment or having left care. These issues are often combined with each other. Some homeless people, especially younger people will have been, and are still at risk of, rough sleeping or sofa surfing with friends or relatives.

There is a real and growing need for support services which are promoted and developed through the Supporting People programme and delivered by support agencies such as the City Council, RSLs and voluntary support agencies.

4 Working in partnership – increasingly the Council is working closely with other agencies in the housing, social and voluntary sectors in order to combat homelessness.

The ability to bring together a range of accommodation and service providers has become - and this pattern is likely to continue – essential in combating homelessness. Productive joint working creates better outcomes, makes more effective use of all our resources and enables the Council to help more homeless people. It will be central to delivering the Councils homelessness strategy in future.

The City Council will continue to support and be a key player the Carlisle Homelessness Improvement Partnership (CHIP) as a means of developing and broadening services, improving service quality and enabling homeless and vulnerable people to participate more fully in community life across the City.

5 Homelessness among young people – this is a substantial and increasing problem among 16 – 25 year olds.

Their vulnerability because of their age and other complex needs mean they are often less able to cope and are more at risk when homeless, than other people. Youth homelessness will continue to be a key focus for the Council and its partners, building on what has already been achieved in the City over the past 5 years.

6 Gypsies and travellers - **there** is a particular need, following the closure of a privately owned site in 2007, for a site/accommodation within Carlisle for gypsies and travellers, together with support services.

The needs assessment for Cumbria has identified that 50 pitches are required across the County with a substantial proportion of those needed to meet demand in the City of Carlisle and surrounding area, including Eden. The City Council is developing proposals, and bidding for funds for, a new site north east of the City which will provide 24 pitches – permanent and transit, for gypsies and travellers together with limited provision of emergency, temporary sites.

5-Aims of our Homelessness Strategy

Government targets - Government requires each housing authority, including the City Council, to focus on 3 specific targets in developing its homelessness strategy. The Council must aim to:

- 1 Reduce temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010**
- 2 Stop placing 16-17 year olds in Bed and Breakfast by 2010**
- 3 Prevent, and reduce further, rough sleeping**

Linked to these the Government wishes to see a strategy through which the Council:

- Focuses on prevention, and
- Adopts a wider options/advice approach to homelessness.

The Council's aim is to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. Where this cannot be achieved our aim is to help each homeless client look at all their housing options and find the best individual solution for them. The Council will do this by carrying out a comprehensive assessment of each clients' needs and put in place where necessary, support and resettlement services which respond to those needs and which will reduce the chances of future homelessness.

This continues the approach the Council has implemented under its previous strategy and action plan and will be further developed in the new Homelessness Action Plan over the next 5 years.

6-Three Key Objectives:

1 Reduce temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010

The Council will achieve this by:

1. Increasing prevention –

- reviewing and recommissioning an external mediation service for young people losing their accommodation and develop further in house mediation skills
- negotiating with floating support providers more flexible and responsive housing support to increase its availability as a crisis intervention tool to prevent homelessness
- improving debt advice by working more closely with existing advice agencies and developing service level agreements
- increasing the number of home visits by homeless officers to try and prevent loss of accommodation for young people in particular
- providing better advice and assistance to prevent homelessness and working out better options for people who are threatened with homelessness options
- developing a clearer understanding of, and challenge where necessary, practices of private landlords re evictions
- further developing joint working through the Youth Housing Panel and 16/17 year old joint protocol
- encouraging children's services/schools to help develop and embed the schools homelessness prevention work carried out by homelessness staff
- making full use of discretionary housing payments.

2. Better joint working with housing associations -

- further developing an early warning system to reduce and prevent evictions by ensuring more effective support and management action is taken by housing associations to prevent evictions
- reviewing the Council's allocations policy in the context of developing choice based lettings
- negotiating improved nomination arrangements to ensure more homeless people – both priority need and non priority need, can access available social and other affordable housing
- Adopting and implementing a Move on Plan Protocol (MOPP) with RSLs working in Carlisle

- Investigating a private sector leasing scheme with housing associations and private sector landlords working together to make available well managed accommodation in the private sector for homeless people
 - Working with housing associations to develop a scheme to purchase properties being sold to prevent the tenant becoming homeless and having to move
 - Working with housing associations and their homelessness champions to develop and implement their own strategies for homelessness.
2. **Reviewing the operations, staffing and practices within the homelessness and hostels teams** - to develop more integrated working and focus more on homelessness prevention and effective, sustainable resettlement.
 3. **Protocols** - achieving more effective and/or full implementation of protocols for offenders, 16/17 year olds and mental health and aim to develop new protocols covering hospital discharge and vulnerable adults.
 4. **Developing further, and embedding the “Crisis Intervention” approach** – this last stage intervention aims to prevent a tenant losing their home where previous actions have failed to prevent eviction. The Council does this by working with the Housing Association landlord, the tenant and support agencies to avoid eviction. This has been piloted successfully with young people and the Council's aim is to extend it to prevent homelessness in all age groups and across all tenures.
 5. **Temporary accommodation** - developing a supply and demand model to show how the temporary accommodation target will be met and then sustained. This is likely to include reclassifying some temporary accommodation as supported accommodation for those applicants who need, and will engage in ongoing housing support and resettlement beyond the time the Council is required to provide temporary homelessness accommodation under the Housing Act 1996

2 Stop placing 16-17 year olds in B and B by 2010

The Council aims to do this by:

- **Developing better partnership working** with housing, support and statutory agencies, building on the work of the Youth Housing Panel and Crisis Intervention team to prevent youth homelessness
- **Developing 20 units of new supported housing for young people** with medium to high support needs in a Foyer and/or similar developments

- **Supporting the development and commissioning of an integrated youth homelessness service** - “a one stop shop approach” which will create an individualised response to each young person's needs, and better links all accommodation and support providers' services to achieve this
- **Implementing joint assessment**, along side Children's Services, Connexions and the Youth Offending Service, of young people's support and housing needs
- **Implementing the Joint Protocol for 16-17 year olds**
- **Further developing schools homelessness prevention** work sessions
- **Encouraging the further development of Nightstop, supported lodgings and respite/crash pad type accommodation**, linked to mediation services
- **Prioritising floating support and supported housing for young homeless priority cases** so that it is available and accessible immediately and out of hours when necessary
- **Improving access to wider services for young people** - encourage inclusion, better health and access to training/work through the development of a Foyer in Carlisle
- **Linking mediation to emergency/respice housing and long term relationship restitution where possible**

3 Maintain reductions in, and prevent rough sleeping

- Developing, in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies, a **Centre of Excellence** – a resource centre and day services for homeless people
- Having in place **emergency accommodation arrangements for severe weather**
- **Adopting a “Places of Change” approach** to provide homeless people with access to positive and meaningful activities, education, training, volunteering and access to employment opportunities through skills training
- **Involving residents** in developing and running services
- Providing a **better quality physical environment** which encourages aspiration and ambition
- **Freeing up bed spaces by developing a Move on Plans Protocol –MOPP** - to get homeless people into settled accommodation more quickly
- **Fully implementing the “Its Your Move” programme** to equip homeless people with the skills, abilities and knowledge - and certification of their achievements – to obtain and sustain a tenancy
- **Developing more integrated working** with substance misuse, mental health, primary health and young people's services focused on service users needs
- **Training and equipping staff to support homeless people** in developing their own outcomes to help them to move on successfully to settled housing and maintain their independence.

- **Working with partners the Council aims to increase the availability and quality of supported housing** to enable vulnerable homeless people to access the temporary accommodation and support they need to move on to sustainable independent living

7-Supply of Affordable Housing

Underpinning all the activities the Council will undertake to prevent and reduce homelessness, is the issue of the inadequate supply of affordable housing, especially housing for rent. The Council through its wider Housing Strategy action plan will encourage housing associations and developers to increase the amount of affordable housing for rent and low cost sale in the City of Carlisle. The Council aims to achieve this through use of the land it owns, through the planning system and by working in partnership with RSLs, the Housing Corporation and private developers to create more affordable housing.

8-Other Relevant Strategies

The Carlisle City Homelessness Strategy fits alongside the Cumbria Sub Regional Homelessness Strategy and through joint working under the auspices of the Cumbria Housing Group, common actions and initiatives will be implemented. The strategy also forms part of the Carlisle Housing Strategy and other Council policies and programmes.

The Homelessness Strategy will be implemented through the Homelessness Action Plan.

9-Review and monitoring arrangements

The Council will monitor progress in delivering the strategy through regular reports to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and through the Carlisle Strategy Partnership.