

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 12th December 2017

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Wellbeing and Independence /
Head of Community Support Services

Report Author: Liana Duffy, Homelessness Prevention Commissioning and
Tendering Officer

Title: The Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21

1. What is the report about?

The Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 (the Strategy – Appendix 1) – which outlines the plans and actions of the Homelessness Prevention Team (and our partners) in tackling homelessness and its causes.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

For Cabinet to approve the Strategy ahead of its submission to the Regional Collaborative Committee in January 2018, and implementation up to 2021.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Cabinet approves the Homelessness Strategy, ahead of its submission to the Regional Collaborative Committee in January 2018, and implementation up to 2021.

4. Report details

4.1

The Homelessness Prevention Team in Denbighshire (comprising Supporting People and statutory homelessness, formerly known as Housing Solutions) currently has in development its 4 year Homelessness Strategy (Appendix 1).

4.2

Supporting People is a Welsh Government Programme, funding support across a broad range of projects for people 16+ who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, working with the community and partners to identify and tackle its causes, and empower people to live as independently as possible. Statutory homelessness means the Legal response when someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness, including support to prevent and relieve homelessness, and provision of temporary accommodation where appropriate.

4.3

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires every Local Authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their area, and then to develop a Homelessness Strategy based on the review findings. This is Denbighshire's first Homelessness Strategy, detailing our 6 strategic priorities for the next 4 years to tackle, and ultimately end, homelessness in Denbighshire - with a strong commitment to early intervention and prevention.

- 4.4 The 6 Strategic Priorities identified in the Homelessness Strategy are:
- Developing a holistic Homelessness Prevention Service
 - Prevention of homelessness against the main causes
 - Reducing the use of temporary accommodation and seeking to end the use of Bed & Breakfast
 - Improved access to accommodation
 - Developing an integrated approach for homeless people with complex needs
 - Preventing youth homelessness

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The proposed actions within the Strategy will contribute to supporting Denbighshire's Corporate Plan 2017-22 in the following areas:

- Everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs
- The Council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience
- Younger people want to live and work here and have the skills to do so

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The actions required from the 4 year Strategy will have significant implications for the statutory homelessness budget, and the Supporting People Grant - the latter of which is ring-fenced from Welsh Government; the former coming from central Community Support Services budget. As with any such strategy, significant resource investment will be required. This will be managed within the existing allocated budgets; however there will be also be a requirement for the Homelessness Prevention Team to work and invest collaboratively with both internal and external partners. Any such plans will be developed and managed via relevant channels, including the Homelessness Prevention Planning Group. It's also vital that we achieve buy-in at all levels, including corporately.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Wellbeing Impact Assessment for the draft Homelessness Strategy was completed 28/03/2017, in collaboration with a sub-group of the Homelessness Prevention Steering Group. The Strategy scored 21 out of 24 in terms of its sustainability, and was determined to have a positive impact for all of the 7 Wellbeing Goals (with clear strategies identified to address any potential unintended negative consequences). The Strategy clearly recognises that housing is not only about bricks and mortar issues, and that quality accommodation and support contributes to improving health, wellbeing and quality of life. The Assessment was reviewed following the close of the Strategy's formal consultation period (13/07/2017 – 10/08/2017), and no changes were required – see Appendix 1(a).

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1 The Strategy is primarily based on the findings of the 2016 Homelessness Review, which was informed by significant consultation. It was then primarily developed by the

multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Steering Group, with additional input from the Homelessness Prevention (previously Supporting People) Planning Group. It has also been subject to a formal consultation period (13/07/2017 – 10/08/2017), during which time feedback was sought from citizens, service providers, and our other partners. It was also consulted on at the Annual Homelessness Prevention Day in August, which was well attended by citizens and other stakeholders.

- 8.2 The Strategy (along with the Homelessness Prevention Annual Commissioning Plan) was taken to Partnership Scrutiny 2nd November. Members were of the view that the Strategy was deliverable and sustainable in the long-term, subject to the availability of funding. Members requested that clearer reference be included in the Strategy to local connection criteria, which has been included (p.5 and p. 11). Members commended the Homelessness Prevention Team on their work and on the Strategy, emphasising the importance of educating people on financial matters to prevent homelessness. It was agreed that a progress report on the implementation of the Strategy be presented to the Committee at its meeting in May 2018. Scrutiny's recommendation to Cabinet was that the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 be approved and adopted.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Cost implications will become clearer as the two plans develop. Whilst Supporting People grant funding levels are thought to be fixed overall in the short term, changes to policy or distribution may have an impact in future. The council's general approach is to pass reductions in grant funding through to the service area being provided.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

Despite recent budget announcements from Welsh Government, stating that the Supporting People grant will not be reduced at a national level, Welsh Government may still continue with the redistribution formula of the SP Grant. This would mean a grant reduction for Denbighshire. Ongoing planning is taking place in Denbighshire to mitigate any future grant reduction, to ensure the plan remains financially viable and within the resources available.

11. Power to make the Decision

To determine the content of any plan, strategy or other policy document requires approval by the Lead Cabinet Member, in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 2291 (W,179) Regulation 4 (3)(c) + (d)

Scrutiny's powers with respect of policy development and review are outlined in Section 7.4 of the Council's Constitution.

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