

Report To: Corporate Governance/ Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 25April/ 3rd May 2018

Lead Member / Officer: Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Wellbeing and Independence / Phil Gilroy, Head of Community Support Services

Report Author: Liana Duffy, Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Officer

Title: **Homelessness Prevention Action Plan Update**

1. What is the report about?

To update Partnerships Scrutiny on the progress of the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan, incorporating actions required by the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21; the Denbighshire Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Annual (Commissioning) Plan, and the recommendations of the Welsh Audit Office report: 'How Local Government Manages Demand – Homelessness' (January 2018).

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To report on the progress to date in implementing the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan (including the latest position with respect of future Supporting People funding). It was agreed at Scrutiny in November 2017 that a progress report on the implementation of the Strategy and Plan (the Action Plan) be presented to the Committee at its meeting in May 2018.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. For Scrutiny to support the delivery of the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan, to ensure that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs;

3.2. For Scrutiny to be assured that plans are being developed to mitigate any risks associated with the potential future withdrawal of the protection currently afforded to Supporting People funding for homelessness prevention work.

4. Report details

4.1. The Denbighshire Homelessness Prevention Team continue to develop and work to a broad action plan, based on the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21 (the Strategy) and the Supporting People/Homelessness Prevention Annual Commissioning Plan 2018/19 (the Plan), as well as the recommendations of the Welsh Audit Office report: 'How Local Government Manages Demand – Homelessness' (January 2018).

4.2. The Strategy, which provides the over-arching direction, has been developed, and will be delivered, in accordance with the statutory requirement placed on us as a Local Authority by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The Strategy must be delivered in partnership across Council departments and with our external partners, if we are to be successful in achieving its vision: To end homelessness in Denbighshire. This is all the more imperative given budgetary pressures in Homelessness Prevention.

4.3. The table in Appendix 1 provides an overview update on key actions for 2017/18 and 2018/19, grouped under over-arching priority areas based on a collation of priorities set out in the Strategy, the Plan, and the eight recommendations of the WAO report, as follows:

- 4.3.1. Develop a Holistic Homelessness Prevention Service, that is psychologically informed
- 4.3.2. Prevention of Homelessness Against the Main Causes, including tackling poverty
- 4.3.3. Reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation and seek to end the use of Bed & Breakfast Accommodation
- 4.3.4. Improve Access to Accommodation
- 4.3.5. Develop an integrated approach to supporting people with multiple/complex needs
- 4.3.6. Prevent Youth Homelessness, including embedding a 'Positive Pathway' approach
- 4.3.7. Citizen Involvement
- 4.3.8. The sustainability of housing related support, including maximising existing provision

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

The Action Plan contributes 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?

6.1. The ongoing and future actions required will have significant implications for the statutory homelessness budget, and the Supporting People Grant - the latter of which is currently ring-fenced from Welsh Government; the former coming from central Community Support Services budget.

6.2. As with any such strategy/action plan, 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?

Wellbeing Impact Assessments have already been completed and shared with Scrutiny and Cabinet in 2017 during the Strategy and Plan's development.

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. The Strategy itself 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 was also 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. Following Partnerships Scrutiny in November 2017, the Strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2017.

8.2. The priorities and actions set out in the Annual Plan were informed by a range of information we gather throughout the year, including the views of citizens, with our Citizen Involvement Officer working closely with projects to make sure people have their voices heard. At each stage of the Plan's development, the Homelessness Prevention Planning Group were consulted and given sign-off. The Plan was also subject to a formal consultation period (27/06/2017 – 22/08/2017), during which time it was discussed in several planning and other forums. It was also consulted on at the Annual Homelessness Prevention Day in August, which was well attended by citizens and other stakeholders. Following Partnerships Scrutiny in November 2017, the Strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2017.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Cost implications will become clearer as actions within the Plan and should be contained within existing resources. 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?

10.1. 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 in future.

10.2. We must also await the outcome of the proposed super grant, and contribute to its development wherever possible, to ensure that front-line homelessness prevention services are protected. Guidance from Welsh Government is at present inconclusive.

10.3. Ongoing planning (as per appendix 1) is taking place in Denbighshire to mitigate any future grant reduction, to ensure the Action Plan remains financially viable and within the resources available.

11. Power to make the Decision

Section 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution outlines Scrutiny's powers in respect of scrutinising and reviewing the Council's performance in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas.

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