

Establishing a more strategic/corporate approach to Homelessness and the review of the Housing Strategy

1. Housing Strategy (HS):

The HS and associated Action Plan is the corporate document that pulls all things “housing” into a single coherent strategy.

The HS was adopted by Council in December 2015, and provides a clear statement of the Council’s vision and aims for all housing related matters across the County for a five year period. The current HS therefore ends in December 2020 and is due to be reviewed/renewed.

The HS is produced, coordinated and led by Planning & Public Protection, whilst the operational responsibilities for delivering a range of housing issues contained within the HS are delivered via the relevant Services e.g. Local Authority Social Housing is delivered and managed by Facilities Assets & Housing Service, Homelessness is delivered and managed by Community Support Services etc.

2. Homelessness:

Homelessness is delivered and managed by Community Support Services, who have led on the production of the Homelessness Strategy and associated Action Plan. To some degree the approach to homelessness has become slightly separated from the HS.

Homelessness however is a corporate issue best addressed through effective partnership working across all relevant DCC Services and partners organisations. It is the HS that should provide the strategic framework for addressing homelessness, and should be the vehicle for agreeing homelessness priorities and monitoring progress against them.

3. Monitoring of the HS & Corporate approach to Homelessness:

Discussions have taken place between the Corporate Director (Economy & Public Realm), Lead Members for Housing and Homelessness and relevant senior managers to consider how best to monitor/review the HS, better integrate the work on homelessness into the HS and provide more corporate ownership to the work on homelessness

It has been agreed that progress with the HS should be closely monitored via the “relaunch” of the existing HS Officer/Member Group, which over recent years has lost some impetus. It has also been agreed that this Group should provide a corporate “refocus” on the homelessness strategy/action plan, with a view to merging it into the HS.

The proposal is to “divide” the HS monitoring group meetings into two halves and relaunch it as “Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group” (SHHG), with the group meeting on a bi-monthly basis.

The first half of the agenda will discuss broad HS priorities such as empty homes, affordable housing supply, SARTH etc. This will be chaired by Councillor Tony Thomas as the Lead Member for Housing, Regeneration and the Environment.

The second half of the meeting will specifically discuss issues in terms of Homelessness and be chaired by Councillor Bobby Feeley – Lead Member for Well-being and Independence.

The proposed attendees for the SHHG Group are:

Councillor Tony Thomas (Chair the first part of the meeting)
Council Bobby Feeley (Chair the second part of the meeting)
Councillor Brian Jones – Lead Member for Highways, Planning and Sustainable Travel;
Councillor Brian Blakely – Homeless champion
Graham Boase – Corporate Director: Economy and Public Realm
Emlyn Jones – Head of Planning and Public Protection
Phil Gilroy – Head of Community Support Services
Paul Barnes – Business Support Manager
Ann Lloyd – Principal Manager – Support Services
Abbe Harvey – Service Manager – Community and Business Services
Angela Loftus – Strategic Planning and Housing Manager
Gareth Roberts – Built Environment and Public Protection Manager
Geoff Davies – Lead Officer (Community Housing)
Mark Dixon – Housing Development Officer
Nicola Kneale – Strategic Planning Team Manager
Jane Abbott/Sue Lewis – Strategic Planning and Housing
Education and Children’s Services representative
Communications Service representative

4. Conclusion:

This will allow for;

Better integration of the complex interrelated range of housing functions

A more strategic/corporate approach to addressing Homelessness

In addition;

A report is to be presented to Partnership Scrutiny on 11 July regarding Homelessness, which will include this new governance arrangement.

A Member briefing/workshop is to be held in the autumn to provide all Members with an update on key aspects of the Housing Strategy to include affordable housing, empty homes, Tai Teg, SARTH and of course homelessness.

A programme of engagement will also be developed for the review of the Housing Strategy, which will include how partner organisations can help support our homelessness actions.

