

# HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW

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<b>Cabinet Portfolio</b>	Social Services, Housing, Health and Wellbeing
<b>Officer Contact(s)</b>	Dan Kennedy, Resident Services
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix 1 - Homelessness Strategy Review 2016

## 1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

<b>Summary</b>	This report presents the outcomes for the Council's Homelessness Review 2016 for approval by Cabinet. This review details the extent of homelessness in Hillingdon, any future trends as well as mapping existing schemes in place to support vulnerable households. As the evidence base, this review marks the first stage of developing Hillingdon's wider Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021.
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>	<p>This report supports the following Council objectives of: <i>Our People; Our Built Environment and Strong financial management.</i></p> <p>The Homelessness Review underpins the development of the Homelessness Strategy; will complement the wider Housing Strategy and also contributes to the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast by identifying and eliminating duplication and enhancing the efficiency of service provision.</p>
<b>Financial Cost</b>	There are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations of this report.
<b>Relevant Policy Overview Committee</b>	Social Services, Housing and Public Health
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

**That the Cabinet:**

- 1) Notes the contents of the Homelessness Review**
- 2) Endorses the Homelessness Review as the first stage towards the development of Hillingdon Council's Homelessness Strategy 2016-2020.**

## **Reasons for recommendation**

Hillingdon Council has a statutory obligation to produce a strategy to address homelessness. Any development/revision of the Homelessness Strategy should therefore be based on the findings from reviewing homelessness in the Borough. The purpose of the review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the Borough, assess its likely extent in the future and map what is currently being done, and by whom to prevent and tackle homelessness. Appendix 1, which accompanies this report presents the findings from a review of homelessness for Hillingdon.

## **Alternative options considered / risk management**

No alternative option has been considered. The responsibility for carrying out a review of homelessness is a statutory requirement and a key element of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.

## **Policy Overview Committee comments**

None at this stage

## **3. INFORMATION**

### **Supporting Information**

#### Background and Legislative Context

1. Under the provisions of the homelessness Act 2002 all local housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of homelessness in their area.
2. The Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (DCLG, 2006) sets out key questions that must be considered in any review. These include:
  - a. Current and likely future levels of homelessness in the Borough;
  - b. Services currently provided to prevent homelessness, to secure housing for homeless people and to provide them with support;
  - c. The resources available to the Council, other statutory organisations and voluntary organisations to provide services to homeless people.

#### Process for Carrying Out the Review

3. The review was completed during May/June 2016 and consisted of;
  - a. An initial desktop analysis of homelessness trends including looking at demand through the door, patterns of homelessness decisions and acceptances, comparative analysis with West London neighbours and demographic analysis of the existing customer base.
  - b. Wider analysis of external factors that have impacted/are likely to impact homelessness trends including changes to welfare (restrictions to Local Housing Allowance (LHA), benefit cap, Universal Credit) and local house market trends.
  - c. Analysis of underlying causes of homelessness locally and nationally.

- d. Follow up meetings with key internal service areas including Homelessness Prevention Team, Housing Lettings, Tenancy Services, Procurement, Social Care and Revenues and Benefits Services to triangulate the information gathered and to source additional qualitative intelligence.
- e. One to one meetings with select partner agencies.

## Key Findings

4. Key findings from the review include the following;

### **National/London Trends**

- Statutory homelessness has increased in more pressurised markets especially London. Increasingly London boroughs have sought to place homeless families outside their own boroughs due to the difficulty in accessing suitable accommodation in borough.
- According to recent research, the most frequent reason cited for a loss of a last settled home was the ending of an assured shorthold tenancy. At the last quarter of 2015 this accounted for 40% of all statutory homelessness acceptances in London
- Impact of welfare reforms in relation to homelessness were different in London than other parts of the country with the maximum cap on Local Housing Allowance rates being by far the most frequently identified welfare change reported by London boroughs as inflating homelessness.
- Although accessing robust data on single homelessness is difficult (due primarily to the absence of a comparable dataset to that relating to statutory homelessness) as well as an overlap - the number of vulnerable single homeless people within 'priority' categories has remained relatively stable. Across England such cases grew by 9% in the five years to 2014/15 compared to a 47% increase in other types of household.
- Data on national estimates of rough sleepers produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) shows an upward trend in overall numbers particularly in some parts of London. More robust data from the St Mungo's Broadway CHAIN system in London concurred with the DCLG findings showing that rough sleeping in London had been rising since 2007/08. Analysis of CHAIN data showed a 40% increase in the number of 18-25 year olds sleeping rough in London since 2011/12. A further finding from the analysis was the disproportionate number of rough sleepers from Central and Eastern Europe with those of UK origin accounting for less than half of all London's rough sleepers.

### **Homelessness in Hillingdon**

- Like other London borough's changes in welfare including the lowering of the benefit cap will likely impact local households. Indicative information received from the Department of Work and Pensions suggests that the planned lowering of the cap to £23,000 will impact an estimated 550 households in Hillingdon (including those already impacted by reforms since 2010).
- Again mirroring national and regional trends, the most common reason cited by Hillingdon households presenting as homeless was the loss of their private sector rented accommodation. The next most common reason for homelessness was parents unwilling to accommodate.
- Between 2013/14 and 2015/16 an average of 2,450 households a year contacted the Council seeking assistance regarding potential homelessness.
- The number of homeless households in Hillingdon is comparatively small when compared to neighbouring London boroughs. For instance when drawing on figures for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2015/16 for all seven West London authorities, statistics shows that Brent

and Ealing had a higher level of both total decisions and numbers accepted. For Brent total decisions numbered 402 with numbers accepted being 161; for Ealing total decisions were 393 with numbers accepted being 187. In comparison Hillingdon had 188 total decisions with numbers accepted being 97.

- Looking at priority need, households with dependent children accounted for in excess of 80% of homelessness acceptances.
- Looking at other demographic characteristics showed that;
  - 44% of all approaches for homelessness in 2015/16 were from single people with more single men approaching as homeless than single women.
  - 57% of all homeless approaches in 2015/16 were from applicants aged 25-44. 15% of applicants were aged 16-24 with 6% of applicants aged 60-74.
  - Of the 329 households accepted as homeless in 2015/16, 120 of these were couples with children. A further 158 households were lone parents
- The number of households in temporary accommodation in Hillingdon has remained fairly stable but the mix has changed with much less lower cost private sector leased accommodation and much more higher cost nightly paid accommodation.

### **Homelessness Prevention and Support & Accommodation Provision**

- During 2015/16, there were 10,413 contacts for housing of which 2,301 were seeking advice in relation to homelessness.
- Of those accepted as homeless and meeting a priority need, the Council managed to prevent homelessness in 944 cases during 2015/16.
- Although not specifically designed to support homeless families, the implementation of the Right to Buy 'buy-back' scheme has nonetheless increased the supply of suitable housing. During 2015/16 a total of 17 completions were achieved.
- As part of the wider push to increase supply of suitable temporary accommodation, a total of 39 properties were signed up to the in-house Private Sector Landlord (PSL) scheme in 2015/16.
- In addition to support provided by the Council's own Housing Support and Homeless Prevention Team - homelessness support, including advice and guidance is provided through a number of partners including Citizen's Advice (contracted 1 day per week to provide debt and financial management advice) and Trinity Homeless Projects (who provided support to 56 referrals in 2015/16). Other significant partners included the P3 floating support service and YMCA, who through provision at Jupiter House, Ventura House and St. Andrews supported 225 young people in 2014/15.
- There was a continued focus on prevention. The number of households in temporary accommodation as of 31/03/2016 was 578. This compared to 577 as of 31/03/2015.

### Emerging themes/implications for Homelessness Strategy

Whilst the range of issues covered in the Review remain broad, it's clear that there are a number of emerging themes/priorities that will need to be considered to inform Hillingdon's Homelessness Strategy. This includes;

- **Prevention** - a need for a continued focus on prevention working closely with landlords, partners and other stakeholders to ensure that opportunities to maintain tenancies are maximised. This includes challenging landlords who are seeking to evict.
- **Discharging Homelessness** - into the private rented sector wherever possible to ensure households can access settled accommodation as quickly as possible.

- **Increasing housing supply** - ensuring that there is a right mix of supply, in sufficient numbers to meet demand.
- **Improved internal processes** - streamlining processes for fast turnaround of decisions, closer working with social care teams and improved use of information technology.
- **Managing ongoing impacts of welfare reform** - including impact on families and larger households as well as single people.

### **Next Steps**

Officers are in the process of refreshing the Homelessness Strategy in light of the findings from the review. An updated strategy will be prepared for Cabinet in Autumn 2016.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial implications arising from the Homelessness Review.

## **4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES**

### **What will be the effect of the recommendation?**

The Homelessness Review provides the evidence base for the development of the wider Homelessness Strategy with the role of the Review being to map out need and existing support offered as a means to identify future priorities and shape future provision. As such the review has a direct bearing on the Council's priority of Putting Resident's First, namely to ensure that:

- People that are homeless or are at risk of homelessness receive or are signposted to appropriate advice on all the options open to them so that opportunities to prevent homelessness are maximised.
- Hillingdon residents can access affordable and settled housing.
- Vulnerable people receive the necessary support in order that they can access secure, affordable housing or maintain the tenancy of a settled home.

### **Consultation Carried Out or Required**

As part of the statutory requirements, the homelessness strategy must be subject to consultation. The results of the homelessness review will form part of a consultation process for the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. This will update the existing Housing Strategy, which is a policy framework document. As such, part of this the report will be considered by the Social Services, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the appropriate time following Cabinet approval.

## **5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Corporate Finance**

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concur with the financial implications set out above.

### **Legal**

There are no specific legal implications with endorsing the recommendations of the report i.e. that the Cabinet:

- 1) Notes the contents of the Homelessness Review
- 2) Endorses the Homelessness Review as the first stage towards the development of Hillingdon Council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2016-2020.

As has been confirmed in the body of the Report the Homelessness Act 2002 places the Council under a statutory duty to carry out a homelessness review of their district and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. Each new homelessness strategy must be published within the period of five years beginning with the day on which the last homelessness strategy was published.

The results of the review must be available for inspection and, as identified in the body of the report, the homelessness strategy must be subject to consultation.

### **Relevant Service Groups**

None

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None