

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 26th January 2015
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Economic Growth and Planning

Report Title

Trafford Homelessness Strategy 2015 - 2018

Summary

The Trafford Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2018 is a statement of how the Council will deliver its statutory homelessness responsibilities over the next four years. The Trafford Homelessness Strategy has three overarching objectives. These objectives are: Prevention of homelessness by improving the range and quality of ways in which we assist those people at risk of becoming homeless. Provision of acceptable temporary and permanent accommodation in the public and private sector. Support to the households provided with a temporary or permanent home to ensure allocations to new accommodation are sustained. The Strategy contains the Council commitments to improving homelessness policy and practice across several service areas and also with external partners as well as commitments to securing scarce resources that will support the delivery of the Strategy.

Recommendation(s)

1. To note the contents of the report and the outcome of the consultation.
2. To approve and adopt the Trafford Homelessness Strategy.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: David Thompson (Interim Housing Strategy Manager)
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Appendix One: Trafford Homelessness Strategy

Background Papers:

Background Paper 1; Trafford Homelessness Strategy; Consultation Responses

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	This draft Strategy relates directly to the corporate priorities of economic growth and development and to services focussed on the most vulnerable people.
Financial	The services and policy initiatives identified within this draft Strategy will be contained within existing capital and revenue budgets.
Legal Implications:	A Homelessness Strategy is a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002. The obligations of a local housing authority are to review the extent of homelessness in their area and to draw up proposals to prevent homelessness; secure accommodation for the homeless; provide support for those who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.
Equality/Diversity Implications	The Strategy proposes improvements to policy and practice and modernises the services focussed on some the most vulnerable people requesting services from the Council. A full equality impact Assessment has been carried out and has identified no impact. This Assessment will be reviewed and updated during the life of the Strategy.
Sustainability Implications	The Strategy supports and safeguards a fit for purpose homelessness service to meet the current and future statutory responsibilities of the Council.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	None directly related to this report
Health & Wellbeing Implications	The draft strategy supports the maintenance of sustainable communities and provides a number of beneficial social impacts.
Health and Safety Implications	None directly related to this report

1.0 Background

1.1 Councils are required to periodically carry out a review of homelessness in their area and following the review prepare a strategy describing Council policy and practice in relation to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The production of a strategy describing how the council's homelessness obligations will be delivered is a statutory duty for all housing authorities and is set out in the Homelessness Act 2002.

1.2 The current Trafford Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 to 2011 needs updating. The preparation of a new Homelessness Strategy over the last year has included consultation with service users and service providers, a service delivery partner's review of the achievements and weaknesses of the existing strategy and also an external peer review. The outcome of the review is set out in the attached document incorporating the strategy.

1.3 Following the review the Trafford Homelessness Strategy has three overarching objectives:-

- Prevention of homelessness; by improving the range and quality of ways in which we assist those people at risk of becoming homeless.
- Provision of acceptable temporary accommodation; by improving the range and quality of short term accommodation
- Sustainable allocations to new accommodation; by improving the range and quality of support to households allocated a new home.

1.4 In 2013 the coalition government introduced a new Gold Standard for all local housing authority homelessness services so that nationally the very best services can be recognised by reference to a national standard. Trafford Council has joined with Salford and Wigan as the first Gold Standard peer group to be established in the North West. A peer group review was carried out in January and February 2014 and gave a strong indication of how the current service compares against the ten Gold Standard tests. If the Council scores over 60% in each of the ten tests it will secure Gold Standard. The Council service scored an average of 58% overall in the peer review and the area that required the greatest attention was the requirement for a refreshed Homelessness Strategy.

1.5 The homelessness service is delivered by Salford Council Housing Options Service Trafford (HOST) the contract is currently being extended for a further year and a half as HOST has met all Trafford Councils savings, service improvement and satisfaction targets over the last three years.

1.6 Following the publication of the Peer Group review results the Council and the service provider Housing Options Service Trafford (HOST) jointly prepared an Improvement Plan covering all elements how and by when the current service needs to improve against the ten Gold Standard tests of a homelessness service. The key commitments in the Improvement Plan show what the current service needs to do to meet the ten Gold Standard tests and the commitments are integrated into the Appendix 1.

1.8 The Councils homelessness service will be peer assessed against the Gold Standard in March 2015.

2.0 The Trafford Homelessness Strategy

2.1 The review section summarises a partnership assessment made of the achievements and challenges of the previous Trafford Homelessness Strategy and also describes the nature of current increase in demand for accommodation particularly from households coming to the end of a fixed term tenancy in the privately rented sector and also the limitations on new social housing supply as well as the increasing impact of Welfare Reform.

2.2 The formal Trafford Homelessness Strategy is contained in Appendix 1 and follows the three overarching themes of Prevention, Provision and Support for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Under each of the three themes are the ten local challenges that the Council needs to meet to achieve the governments Gold Standard. The ten challenges are (i) Corporate commitment (ii) Partnership working (iii) Improved prevention (iv) Adoption of the No Second Night Out programme (v) Clear pathways to new housing (vi) Increase private rented sector involvement (vii) Repossession prevention (viii) Increased policy responsiveness (ix) No young people to be placed in bed and breakfast (x) No families to be placed in bed and breakfast.

2.3 Dates for the achievement of policy and practice change stretch over the four years of the Strategy. Monitoring of the achievement of commitments will be carried out as part of operational performance or contract management and in addition a Homelessness Champions Group will monitor overall achievement on a quarterly basis and a full review of the Strategy will take place on an annual basis. The Homelessness Champions Group and the annual review will also look to develop new policy and practice in the light of any emerging trends throughout the four years.

3.0 Other Options

3.1 The production of a homelessness strategy setting out how the Council is to deliver its obligations under the Chapter 7 Section 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 is a statutory requirement for a local housing authority and therefore the Council has no alternative but to undertake this duty.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 Consultation on the Draft Homelessness Strategy was undertaken through the following channels during late October, November and early December, (a) The Councils website, (b) Focus groups and workshops for internal and external partners (c) The service user group at Nansen Close (temporary accommodation for homeless families) (d) The service user group at Greenbank (supported accommodation for homeless young people) (e) The Strategic Housing Partnership (f) The Stronger Communities Board (g) Salford Council (the provider of the day to day homelessness service) and (h) Supported Accommodation Group.

4.2 The consultation responses raised a number of issues including the following key issues:-

- Partnership commitment is vital for the implementation of the Strategy
- Corporate commitment needs to include the Councils parenting responsibilities
- Improve the move on timescales from supported accommodation
- Clearer advice information required for young people
- Accommodation for singles households to share to be developed
- Review existing and develop new protocols to improve inter service working
- Education and training should include life skills to ensure sustainability of tenancies

4.3 Having considered all the responses following the consultation, the following amendments were made to the policy:-

- Confirm location of a severe weather night shelter within the borough.
- Stronger emphasis in Strategy on the Councils parenting responsibilities.
- Timescales for inclusion of the privately rented sector have been enhanced.
- Tenancy support resource increases in the Registered Provider sector included.
- Introduced Learning Disability, Mental Health and Domestic Abuse protocols.
- Inclusion of life skills support and training has been added within the Action Plan.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires a housing authority to periodically review and renew their homelessness strategy. The recommendation supports the statutory requirement by asking for approval to consult on a draft strategy that updates the Council's existing homelessness strategy.

Key Decision Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? Yes

Finance Officer Clearance ...G Bentley.....

Legal Officer Clearance ...H Khan.....



CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE (electronic)