

Report title	Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson City Assets and Housing	
Corporate Plan priority	People - Stronger Communities	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Kate Martin, Service Director, City Housing	
Originating service	City Housing	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	28 August 2018

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

Approve the City of Wolverhampton Homelessness Prevention Strategy for 2018-2022.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To approve the City of Wolverhampton Homelessness Prevention Strategy for 2018-2022.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and develop and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness.
- 2.2 This is Wolverhampton's fifth homelessness strategy and has been developed at a crucial period for the City. The current state of the economy has put increased pressure on housing and homelessness services, whilst at the same time changes to the welfare system have decreased the security of tenure for many households.
- 2.3 With the introduction of the HRA (Homelessness Reduction Act) in mid-2018 local authorities were requested to refresh their strategies in line with the new duties, therefore the current strategy came to end two years early.
- 2.4 Across the period covered by the last strategy (2015-2018) there has been a reduction in public spending which unfortunately has meant pressure on statutory and voluntary organisations, and in some extreme cases the closure of important services leading to an increase in most forms of homelessness therefore this strategy.
- 2.5 Through joint working between the Local Authority and partners, Wolverhampton had reduced the numbers of homeless applications to incredibly low numbers via well-developed processes to prevent homelessness. However, over the last 24 months the numbers of applications have increased as well as a reduction in the number of prevention.

3.0 Development of the Strategy

- 3.1 In October 2017 work began on developing the new strategy by working with partners and organisations in relation to reviewing:
- Current numbers of homeless clients
 - Gaps in provision
 - Trends
 - General data
- 3.2 From the collection of this quantitative and qualitative data the findings led to the development of the strategy for the City, concentrating on four keys areas of homelessness.

3.3 These four elements are:

- **Homelessness prevention** - deliver a prevention service to meet the aims and intentions of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- **Tackle rough sleeping** - continue to work on tackling rough sleeping in Wolverhampton with a plan on reducing to as close to zero by 2022 and linking into the national rough sleeper strategy.
- **Vulnerability and Health** - ensure services remain accessible to the most vulnerable households and can support those who need it most, such as those affected by domestic abuse, modern day slavery, etc. We aim to increase the resilience of households and communities, equip them with the necessary skills to prevent crises, such as homelessness, before they occur.
- **Responding to the local housing market** - respond to the challenging local housing market conditions by working collaboratively with, and offering advice and support to, households and landlords to develop suitable private rented sector offers for all client groups.

3.4 The plan is that these four key themes will form the strategic foundation for an action plan to reduce homelessness as well assist those who find themselves in housing need.

3.5 Consultation Process

3.6 Since March 2018 consultation has been undertaken with variety of groups and organisations ranging from housing providers, faith/community groups and homeless related charities. (Shelter, Homeless Link and West Midlands Combined Authority).

3.7 A total of 64 stakeholders have been met with and consulted with via events and will be continued to be worked with via the development of a new Homelessness Strategy Steering Group that will feed into the Improving City Housing Board.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

4.1 The strategy is requirement under current legislation and must be developed and set in line with the Government framework.

5.0 Reasons for decision

5.1 There is statutory requirement for the City to have a strategy therefore approval must be sought prior to circulation.

5.2 Even though the current strategy has not finished its tenure the change in legislation means that there is need to refresh the document.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications from the strategy. However, a successful strategy for preventing homelessness will help to ensure that the council spends within budget in this area.

[JM/17082018/G]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The strategy must be renewed at least every five years. The strategy must set out the authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are or will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.
- 7.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. As such, an early review of the strategy has been undertaken.
- 7.3 Before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy the authority shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken as detailed in paragraph 3 of this report.

[17082018/DC/F]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 A full equality impact assessment is to be undertaken.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no direct environmental implications from the strategy.

10.0 Human resources implications

- 10.1 There are no direct human resources implications from the strategy.

11.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 11.1 There are no direct Corporate landlord implications from the strategy.

12.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Homelessness Prevention Strategy