

**Homelessness Strategy, Consultation Draft
(Report by the Head of Housing Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's Homelessness Strategy forms part of the suite of strategies that informs the strategic direction of Housing Services. The Council has to produce a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years and it is now due for a renewal.
- 1.2 The Council has produced a consultation draft that puts homelessness within the district in context, explains the successes achieved in the lifetime of the previous strategy and outlines the future strategic direction of homelessness prevention. Feedback is to be sought on the draft strategy from the wider range of partners, stakeholders and customers so that this consultation can shape the final strategy for adoption by the Council.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Statutory homelessness nationally and locally has been reducing over the last few years up until the beginning of this year. The homelessness prevention measures and initiatives introduced have led to significant increases in the number of households that have managed to avoid the homelessness route through positive interventions by the Council. This in turn had led to a reduction in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by the Council.
- 2.2 The start of 2010 has seen an increase in homelessness applications, in turn leading to an increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation. Prevention measures still remain effective but the increase in households requiring help, a number of these being cases where prevention is not possible, means that those accepted as statutorily homeless are increasing. This is happening at a time when the resources available, both in terms of government grants given to the Council to combat homelessness, as well as the Council's own resources are under increasing pressure.
- 2.3 A further complication is that the availability of the private rented sector (the most successful prevention tenure utilised by the Council) is likely to be reduced through imminent changes to the Housing Benefit system by central government. Together with the reduction in resources this is likely to reduce the Council's prevention options, potentially leading to higher rates of statutory homelessness and the number of households placed into temporary accommodation.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Homelessness prevention remains a priority so that the affects of homelessness, together with the use of temporary accommodation, are minimised. The outcomes achieved through the previous strategy show that

prevention works. The revised strategy focuses on maintaining and increasing these services in light of higher levels of demand.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 That Cabinet:

- i) comment on the content of the draft strategy; and
- ii) approve the draft Homelessness Strategy for wider consultation with partners, stakeholders and customers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

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