

**HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY: CONSULTATION DRAFT  
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being))**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) considered a report by the Head of Housing Services seeking endorsement of the Council's draft Homelessness Strategy for the purposes of consultation. This report sets out the Panel's discussions.

**2. COMMENTS**

- 2.1 The Panel has been informed by the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health of the statutory duty the Homelessness Act 2002 places on the Council to review the Homelessness Strategy. The draft Strategy outlines the future strategic direction of homelessness prevention, which is a matter of growing concern for the Council. Increased financial and resource pressures and changes by the Government to housing benefit, which will start to come into effect next year, will further add to already increasing levels of demand for housing advice and homelessness within the District.
- 2.2 The Panel's attention has been drawn to trends in homelessness in Huntingdonshire in the last ten years. Members have been advised that reductions in homelessness are the result of the introduction of various measures, including the Court Advocacy Service, Young Persons Mediation Service and Rent Deposit/Rent In Advance Scheme. The latter has been the most effective measure and opportunities are being taken to maximise its use. The only limit on its use is the debt allowance and the only cost to the Council arises from defaults on loans.
- 2.3 The Panel has discussed the financial and other resources required to achieve the Strategy's Action Plan. Members are concerned that the Homelessness Prevention Budget might not continue beyond 2010/11. In addition, the Panel has also registered concern at the need to identify funding and resources for a number of actions identified within the Strategy. The Strategy document had been compiled in advance of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review announcement, at a time where there was a number of uncertainties surrounding the Council's future budget process and efficiency programme. The Strategy will need to be updated to reflect these developments. The challenges of identifying resources will remain.
- 2.4 Other matters discussed include the types of accommodation available, migrant workers and the factors that constrain the Council from using exception sites within the District to tackle homelessness. At the conclusion of these discussions Members have expressed their satisfaction with the content of the Strategy.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to consider the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of Housing Services.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Minutes and Reports of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010.

**Contact Officer:** Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer  
☎ (01480) 388006  
✉ [Habbiba.Ali@huntsdc.gov.uk](mailto:Habbiba.Ali@huntsdc.gov.uk)